

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 11th May 2026

Elections

There are local council elections in some areas of England on Thursday 7th May. In the period before then we will have been in a "Pre-Election Period" when controversial or major decisions at councils are avoided to prevent them influencing voters unduly.

There are no elections in SODC or OCC this time. However there are elections in WODC, Cherwell DC and Oxford City as well as in neighbouring Reading BC and Wokingham BC.

At the time of writing the results are unknown.

Renters' Rights Act

From **1 May 2026**, the Renters 'Rights Act will begin to come into effect, introducing the most significant changes to the private renting sector in nearly 40 years. The legislation brings new powers for councils alongside stricter standards for landlords and their properties, with a statutory duty placed on councils to enforce the changes. An increase in demand for housing services is anticipated as a result.

Preparations are underway, including raising awareness among landlords and tenants and supporting the national 'Renting is changing 'campaign.

Further information is available at www.southoxon.gov.uk/renters-rights-act and gov.uk/rentingischanging. Questions can be directed to housing@southandvale.gov.uk.

Let's Talk Rubbish 2026 – Waste and Street Cleaning Survey

Residents are invited by SODC to share feedback on rubbish, recycling and street cleaning services through the 2026 survey, helping shape future service delivery. Previous feedback led to service improvements, including staff training, enhanced checks and clearer communication on waste sorting.

The survey is open until **4 June 2026** at southandvale.gov.uk/WasteSurvey. Alternative formats are available via waste.team@southandvale.gov.uk or by calling **01235 422146**.

Introduction of Full Council Livestreaming

SODC Full Council meetings will now be livestreamed for the first time, improving access to local decision-making. Previously limited by space and technical constraints, meetings can now be hosted at Abbey House, which is equipped for broadcasting.

The first SODC Full Council livestream will take place on **14th May**, with recordings available via Microsoft Teams on the SODC YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTj2pCic8vzucpzlaSWE3UQ?cbrd=1&themeRefresh=1>.

This development strengthens transparency and public engagement.

Extra Funding for Local Wildlife Sites

Additional funding of **£10,000 per year** has been allocated by SODC to support Local Wildlife Sites, helping protect and enhance important habitats. The programme provides expert advice to landowners and supports conservation efforts through long-standing partnerships.

Sites such as Waterstock Mill highlight the ecological value of these areas.

The initiative supports biodiversity and contributes to wider environmental priorities, with more information available via the BBC feature:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m002stj4/secret-garden-series-1-1-oxfordshire>

New Biodiversity Report Published

A new SODC biodiversity report has been published, outlining the district's natural assets and the work being undertaken to support nature recovery. It highlights key sites, including Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and local nature reserves.

The report also details how over 40 per cent of council-owned land is managed for nature, alongside funding programmes and partnerships supporting conservation.

The report fulfils requirements under the Environment Act (2021). See here:

https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/sites/2/2026/03/SODC-Biodiversity-Duty-Report_Published.pdf

Summer Season Preparations at Riverside

Preparations are underway for the summer season at Riverside Park and Pools in Wallingford, with the pool and splash pad opening on **Saturday 23rd May**. Activities will include swimming lessons, aqua aerobics and seasonal events.

The campsite opened earlier on **Friday 1 May**, with bookings already underway.

Pool bookings will open one week before launch via the Better UK website and Riverside Park and Pools Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/riversideparkandpools>

Household Waste Recycling Centre Closures

Oxfordshire County Council has announced short closures of household waste recycling centres during May and June to allow for essential maintenance and deep cleaning.

Each site will close for two days for safety reasons. Residents are advised to check the county council's website for full details before visiting.

Introducing the New Director of Planning

Jeni Jackson has been appointed as the new SODC Director of Planning, bringing nearly 30 years of local authority experience. She joins from Basingstoke and Deane Council and has previously worked across several London boroughs.

Jeni Jackson is currently Head of Planning and Infrastructure at Basingstoke and Deane Council, having previously worked in the London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames and Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. She will take up the role on **Wednesday 1 July**, following the retirement of Adrian Duffield.

Volunteers Join Spring Clean

More than 1,300 litter picking packs were distributed by SODC to volunteers across 60 locations as part of the Great British Spring Clean.

The initiative supported a large-scale community effort to improve local environments. Collected waste was safely disposed of, demonstrating strong community engagement and partnership working.

Funding for Local Good Causes

The SO Charitable Lottery offers community groups, charities and voluntary organisations an opportunity to access unrestricted funding. Participation is free, with supporters able to nominate causes to benefit from ticket sales.

Further information is available on the SO Charitable Lottery website, with opportunities for both organisations and supporters to get involved - <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/so-charitable-lottery/>

Free Garden Waste Collection

A recent SODC competition to boost newsletter sign-ups has concluded, with winners receiving a free one-year Garden Waste Permit subscription. The initiative successfully encouraged wider engagement with resident-communications.

Further competitions are planned, and residents can sign up via the website to take part in future opportunities - <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/about-the-council/council-news/south-news/>

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins

District Councillors