

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 9th September 2024

Revenue Grants - Over £650k available to support communities

A new round of the Revenue grant scheme is now open. The scheme aims to help voluntary and community organisations build and support thriving communities and improve the quality of life of people across South Oxfordshire.

The council offers in principle funding for two years and has a provisional budget of £667,992 to allocate.

As well as covering essential operational costs, this funding can also be used to help voluntary sector organisations become more financially sustainable and have a long-lasting impact in the communities they support.

Organisations can apply for a minimum grant of £10,000 and a maximum grant of £125,000 per annum over the two-year period. The closing date for applications is midday 1 November 2024.

More information about the grant scheme can be found on the SODC website southoxon.gov.uk/grants or organisations can contact the council's Community Enablement team on 01235 422405 or grants@southandvale.gov.uk.

Community grants - Funding available for community projects in South Oxfordshire

Community groups in South Oxfordshire are invited to apply for funding in the new round of Community Grants.

The grant opened for applications on Wednesday 14 August and each SODC councillor has a budget of £5,000 which they can award to projects in their ward.

Those eligible to apply include town councils, parish councils, parish meetings, not for profit preschools and PTAs and local not for profit organisations.

In the last round of funding £165,546 was awarded to 90 projects supporting a range of charities and not for profit organisations.

The minimum grant that can be applied for is £250 and the maximum is £5,000 for each councillor. Applicants can apply to a maximum of five wards.

Applicants are asked to consider the Council's key priorities and how their projects would support them for example; protect and restore our natural world and improve economic and community wellbeing.

The deadline for applications is midday Friday 29 November 2024.

There are more details about who is eligible to apply, what kind of projects can be funded and the decision process on the grants pages of the South Oxfordshire District Council website or organisations can contact the Community Enablement team grants@southandvale.gov.uk.

The next steps for Councils' Joint Local Plan

SODC and Vale of White Horse have set out the next steps for their Joint Local Plan (JLP).

They are nearly ready to submit the joint plan to be examined – anticipating it being ready to submit in December 2024, four months earlier than previously thought.

SODC have updated a document known as the Local Development Scheme that sets out the timetable for this work, which is now [available here](#).

National Planning – consultation on changes

The suggested change to the algorithm of the Standard Method to determine “local housing need” is out for consultation. It proposes to remove the uplift applied to the largest urban areas and to place more weight on other areas. The total value is proposed to go up from 300k homes for England per annum to 380k. On this basis the figure for South Oxfordshire would go up from 579 new homes per annum to 1,179 new homes per annum – more than doubling and representing an extra 600 homes per annum. The suggested need would apply for future plan-making and any planning authority whose Local Plan was more than 5 years since adoption. For decision-making on applications the value of the Local Plan would be the basis until the 5 years had passed when it would become the new Local Plan or failing that the “Standard Method”. These targets will again become obligatory.

The new government state a determination to achieve 1.5m new home completions within the 5 years of this parliament. However new plans and new obligations for planning approvals often don't turn into completions quickly! There are a lot of previously approved applications for developments and strategic sites in Local Plans that have not been developed or progressed quickly towards development.

We will need to see exactly what “transitional” arrangements are applied. The consultation ends on 24th September and the final, potentially revised version may be decided before the new year.

Air quality improves across South Oxfordshire

South Oxfordshire have published its joint Air Quality Annual Status Report, which shows a continuing trend in air quality improvement.

Nitrogen dioxide levels decreased across most of the monitoring sites. In addition, Henley, Wallingford and Watlington reported levels well below the national nitrogen dioxide limits.

This year SODC and Vale unified their efforts by adopting a new joint Air Quality Action Plan, which includes proposals for a feasibility study of green infrastructure to enhance air quality, guidance for developers to consider air quality when it comes to planning and continuing the campaign against the practice of vehicle idling.

The councils are also working with other local authorities in Oxfordshire including on the launch of the new oxonair.uk website which provides easily accessible and up-to-date air quality information for the public. The website boasts a forecast system as well as monitoring data.

The full Air Quality Annual Status Report can be found on the councils' local air quality web pages South/Vale.

SODC become social landlord for the first time in decades

SODC has become a social landlord for the first time since 1997, and can provide genuinely affordable, high-quality homes to people in need.

There will be 45 refurbished homes ready for people living in South Oxfordshire and the Vale who need them most. A mixture of houses and flats, including new combi-boilers and double glazing to make these homes as energy efficient as possible.

The homes are part of our wider work to support the councils' joint Housing Delivery Strategy. Take a look at these infographics

(Link <https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/affordable-housing-South-Oxfordshire-1.mp4>) that highlight some of the key achievements and plans our teams have put in place to provide affordable, sustainable homes and prevent homelessness in the districts.

SODC continues to provide sanctuary to Ukrainians.

Marking Ukraine Independence Day on 24 August Cllr David Rouane Leader at South Oxfordshire District Council, said:

“Since February 2022 we’ve welcomed 803 Ukrainians in South Oxfordshire, and 540 local residents have opened their homes. We’ve also helped 201 Ukrainians make the move from living with host families to private rented accommodation. We will continue to do all that we can to make people feel welcome and supported. Through our ongoing work with our partners we help the co-ordinated county-wide response to provide people seeking sanctuary with accommodation and safety.”

Support for Ukrainian guests living in South Oxfordshire is co-ordinated by the councils' Community Hub. People who need help can get in touch with the Community Hub: call 01235 422600 (option 3) or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

SODC also works with the wider Oxfordshire Migration Partnership to support both Ukrainian guests and their hosts. This includes initial arrival needs, access to funding, health, language and employment support, and working with our housing team for assistance and advice.

Find out more on our Support for Ukraine webpage [South Oxfordshire](#)

If you're interested in becoming a host through Homes for Ukraine, please visit the [Sponsor Support page on the Oxfordshire County Council website](#).

'Ask for Angela'

SODC are encouraging pubs, restaurants and cafes to join the growing list of licensed venues that are signed up to 'Ask for Angela', the national scheme aimed at ensuring help is available for those who are feeling unsafe or receiving unwanted attention.

If someone needs help while in a registered 'Ask for Angela' venue, they just need to ask any member of staff "Is Angela in?"

Staff are trained to recognise the request and to offer the appropriate support, such as keeping an eye on the individual, calling a friend, relative, taxi or the police - or helping them to leave the building via an alternative exit.

Various businesses across South Oxfordshire have already signed up. Please encourage venues in your area to register – any that are interested should email [Community Safety](#) or, for more information, visit the national [Ask for Angela website](#)

Celebrate Christmas at Cornerstone

Pantomime is back at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot this Christmas! The enchanting tale of [Cinderella](#) will be on stage from Wednesday 18 December to Tuesday 31 December.

There will be special discounted tickets available on the opening night on Wednesday 18 December and for members on 19 and 20 December. See details on [how to become a member here](#). Ticket prices start from £17 – see website for more details.

This show will also have a special relaxed and signed performance on Sunday 29 December at 1pm so everyone can enjoy some Christmas magic.

So grab your glass slippers and head to [cornerstone-arts.org](#) !

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins

District Councillors