

SODC A Conservative District Councillor's View
(Or What The Council Is Doing)

November 2016.

Planning Matters.

We continue to see a very heavy load of cases coming forward with many of these coming to Planning Committee which is presently sitting twice a month.

The Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan went before Full Council at SODC on the 13th October where it is expected to be formally 'made' which will provide additional support in planning matters and deliver 25% of CIL money instead of the previous 15%.

Some information about the work our Planning Department does:

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Our average call number per day is 166
- We are maintaining our target of less than five per cent abandoned calls
- We have collected data to understand the reasons why our customers contact us to see if we can improve our website information.

APPEALS

- Current year to date performance remains at 66% rejected This is an improvement on last year, when performance at this stage of the year was only 45%.

Public Inquiries Recently decided (last month):

- Land at Manor Road, Goring (P15/S3480) – appeal dismissed.

Inspector concluded that harm to AONB (flooding, arboricultural and other AONB issues) outweighed having no 5YHLS. This was the first major appeal success we have had for some time.

Judicial Reviews/Challenges

- Goring Lock – dates confirmed as 8-9 November 2016 at the High Court, London
- Emmington (Chinnor) – appellant is challenging the way Inspector assessed scheme for two houses
- Thames Farm, Shiplake – hearing in the High Court scheduled for 27-28 Nov 2016

Determining of applications:

1. Majors: 70% decided within 13 weeks against local target of 70% (national target 60%)
2. Minors: 87% decided within 8 weeks against local target 75% (national target 65%)
3. Others: 93% decided within 8 weeks against a local target of 90% (national target 80%)

Enforcement

- 28 new cases opened
- 48 cases closed
- 16 cases closed were more than six months old

The closures for October can be broken down to:

Type	Total number of cases	Av length of time to close in weeks
No breach of control	14	9
Voluntary Compliance	14	17
Not expedient to pursue	10	22
Planning permission granted	4	15

New mobile payment car park service starts next week

From the 1 November, people who wish to use a mobile phone to pay for parking can do so using the new Connect Cashless service. The new service can be used in all district council car parks across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse and replaces RingGo. Payment by cash will still be an available option.

More information about the service and how to download the free App is available on the Connect Cashless website. <http://www.connectcashlessparking.com/>

Scrutiny

Last month we looked at the Strategic Economic Plan and this month, and this month Cabinet supported the Joint Scrutiny Committee's recommendation that the Plan should be debated at Full Council. A presentation was made by the Need Not Greed coalition and by Nigel Tipple of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, which owns the Plan. Full Council debated the Plan and supported the Cabinet's and Scrutiny Committee's views that whilst the Plan was a good start, there are several areas that need to be addressed. A further review has been carried out by the Joint Scrutiny Committee with representatives of the Plan's owners, who are now working to produce a new draft, which will go out for the second cycle of consultation and hopefully address our concerns.

Volunteering survey

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are looking at ways to encourage more people in the districts to volunteer.

We would like to hear from volunteers and are encouraging them to complete a survey telling us about their volunteering experiences. The feedback we collect will help inform our understanding of volunteering so we can identify solutions which might support and encourage other people to volunteer in the future.

All responses to the survey will be treated in the strictest of confidence and whilst we will publish a report detailing key findings, it will not be possible to identify individual respondents from this.

The survey closes midnight, Monday 21 November.

For more information about the survey or our plans to support volunteering in the districts, please contact volunteer.support@southandvale.gov.uk

Reminder to encourage residents to sign up for newsletter

We are now publishing South News as a separate newsletter which will include information of interest to residents in the district. Please can you encourage local residents to sign up for the newsletters which will be published every two months.

South News keeps residents in touch with news from the council, including the latest on planning and housing in South Oxfordshire, news on recycling collections and events at our leisure centres and Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot.

To receive South News visit www.southoxon.gov.uk/southnews

Waste Recycling

Changing sacks to boost recycling

Last month we included a reminder that from 3 November, we'll only empty green wheelie bins if the recycling in them is loose or in clear sacks.

Our contractor will now leave a bin hanger on any bins containing black or coloured sacks explaining the problem will not empty the bin but will leave a note to explain why.

For more information please contact the waste team on 01235 422406.

Waste vehicle breakdowns

Biffa have put an action plan in place to deal with recent delays to waste collections caused by vehicle breakdowns.

Their fleet is coming to the end of its useful life, meaning breakdowns are occurring on a regular basis. They use all-in-one vehicles that can collect food waste as well as recycling/refuse - these aren't widely-used elsewhere so it's difficult to hire replacements. Biffa will address this issue when they renew the fleet next year.

In the meantime, we'll be monitoring the situation to make sure disruption to residents' waste collections is kept to a minimum.

For more information contact Biffa on 03000 610 610.

Yellow letter

All homes across both districts should have received a yellow letter from us asking residents to confirm who currently lives at their address. We need this information to make sure everyone who is eligible to vote is able to do so in future elections.

By now everyone should have had their letter and if they haven't responded, they will either receive a telephone call or visit from an officer to confirm their details. Visits will take place between 8am and 9pm from 17 October to 28 November, including weekends. Officers will be clearly displaying their ID, so residents should check before passing on any information.

Phone calls will be carried out between 4pm and 7pm each day. The caller will introduce themselves as phoning from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

£648K grants awarded to communities

South Oxfordshire District Council has awarded nine more community organisations in the district a total of £648,000 to help improve their buildings and facilities. This brings the total awarded from the council's capital grants scheme since April to £1 million.

The grant scheme supports local projects delivering new and improved facilities that bring significant positive benefits to South Oxfordshire residents.

Projects receiving funding include:

£10,991 to Sandford Talking Shop to purchase equipment for the community shop and café.

£112,883 to replace the roof for the Nettlebed Village Club.

£3,743 to Goring Heath Parish Charity for village hall replacement windows.

£250,000 to Thame Town Council to rebuild the town cricket pavilion.

Councillor Elizabeth Gillespie our Cabinet member for Grants said: "Once again, I am so pleased to be able to help our communities achieve their projects and look forward to announcing the next round of grant funding in the New Year".

Active Women project...we need your feedback

The Active Women project is aimed to help women live a more active, healthier lifestyle.

At present we are particularly focussing on improving the fitness of women with children under the age of 16.

We can help set up activities including:

- Buggy-a-cise (class aimed at new Mums with babies/toddlers up to 2 years). Pregnant mums are also welcome
- Parent/Carer Toddler Dance
- Mum and Baby Yoga
- Zumba Kids Jr.

More generally we can assist with the organisation of activities for all women including: badminton, netball, hockey, rugby, cricket, Zumba and Clubbercise.

Is there a need for new activities in your area?

Visit our websites: www.southoxon.gov.uk

Keeping safe against cyber crime - Reminder

I've decided to repeat this item in view of the news that Tesco's Bank has been attacked this weekend.

With increasing numbers of people from any background, age or income caught out by online scams, cyber crime is a real concern for many of our residents. If you know someone who is unsure of what they can do to stay safe online then our Community Safety team can help out.

For more information about cyber crime see TVP's cyber crime page at

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=d77734fe07&e=eda6ce4f57>

There is also valuable information available at Cyber Streetwise:

<https://www.cyberaware.gov.uk/>

Focus on prevention sees fall in homeless numbers

Last year working with our partner local authority Vale of the White Horse we successfully prevented 928 households from becoming homeless across the South and Vale districts. This compares with 609 in the previous year, a rise of 52 per cent.

These figures are particularly encouraging because the demand on housing need services in both districts has risen strongly but we have not seen a similar rise in homeless households.

Behind these figures are positive outcomes for both residents and the councils. Our residents avoid the distress and disruption of homelessness while the councils have significantly reduced their expenditure on temporary accommodation.

To achieve these improvements we have strengthened our focus on reaching the most vulnerable residents at risk of homelessness as quickly as possible. The dedicated phone number for households at risk of homelessness is **01235 422452**.

This is just a long brief summary of the work we are doing.

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