

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

**April 2018.**

**There's great news for gardeners as it's the South Oxfordshire District Council annual compost giveaway.**

The council is inviting people to come to collect locally produced compost for free on Saturday 14 April between 9am and 11am at Benson Parish Hall car park, Sunnyside, Benson, OX10 6LZ.

Don't forget to bring a shovel and container (bag, box or bucket; up to 4 per person).

All the compost given away is made from the garden waste collected from residents. Every year the council composts around 20,000 tonnes of garden waste.

Anyone who wants to sign up to the council's garden waste collection service, go to the website [www.south.oxon.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.south.oxon.gov.uk/gardenwaste)

**Enforcement action:**

South Oxfordshire District Council successfully prosecuted Marenglen Dulaj of Magnolia Court, Swindon, on 27 March. He was ordered to pay a fine and other costs at Oxford Magistrates' Court after pleading guilty to the charge of using a motor vehicle to fly-tip.

Magistrates heard that on 21 April 2017 on land off Exlade Street between Woodcote and Checkendon, Dulaj allowed his van to be used to dump rubbish sacks containing compost, plant pots, plastic bottles, plant food containers, cardboard and green waste consisting of cannabis stalks and leaves.

While he told the court that he had loaned the vehicle to a friend, he was still liable as he was the owner of the vehicle at that time.

The court ordered him to pay a fine of £850, a victim surcharge of £85 and £500 costs and £201.42 compensation. The sum totalled £1,636.42.

Councillor Elizabeth Gillespie South Oxfordshire District Council cabinet member responsible for Environmental Protection said: "Fly-tipping is an extremely selfish act which scars the countryside and has an aesthetic and financial cost for residents. We will always prosecute offenders whenever possible."

**£35,000 fine for restaurant over poor food hygiene**

A restaurant that broke an emergency hygiene notice by continuing to prepare food in prohibited areas has been fined £35,000 – the largest ever sum in a prosecution of its kind brought by South Oxfordshire District Council.

The Star and Garter Limited, which operates The Star and Garter in Thame, pleaded guilty to nine offences under food hygiene regulations at Oxford Magistrates' Court on Tuesday (27 February).

The court fined the company £35,000 and ordered it to pay costs to South Oxfordshire District Council of £2,071 and a victim surcharge of £170.

During a routine food hygiene inspection of the premises on 9 March 2017, council officers found that some of the rooms used for food preparation and storage were infested by rats. These rooms were also unclean, food was not protected from contamination and food safety procedures were not being implemented, despite records stating that checks had been done and no problems found. There were no signs of rats in the kitchen, however that room also required cleaning. A hygiene emergency prohibition notice was served prohibiting the use of some of the rooms, with printed copies of the notice put in place at all entrances to the building.

When they revisited the restaurant the following day, officers found that these rooms were still being used for food preparation and copies of the prohibition notices were concealed – breaching terms of the notice. During a second revisit on 11 March 2017, officers found that displayed copies of the notices had again been concealed.

In fining the company, the court said it had shown flagrant disregard to the prohibition process and criticised the premises' poor record of compliance, with offences potentially putting customers at risk.

Cllr Elizabeth Gillespie, the council's cabinet member for Housing and Environment, said "The vast majority of food establishments across the district have good levels of compliance, however on occasion when standards aren't being met the council will take action to safeguard against any dangers to health.

"It is very rare that food business operators will ignore and even breach these safeguards. This case demonstrates that should this happen the council will not hesitate to take robust action and this fine - the largest in a prosecution brought by us under food safety laws - reflects the seriousness of such breaches."

At the time of the contraventions, the restaurant was awarded a zero out of five-rating meaning "Urgent Improvement Necessary" under the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The company requested an inspection for re-rating in August 2017 and was awarded a two, meaning "Improvement Necessary". The company requested another inspection for re-rating in January this year and was awarded a three meaning "Generally Satisfactory".

### **Neighbourhood Plans**

Here's a quick update on the neighbourhood plans currently underway.

Watlington – a public hearing on the Neighbourhood Plan was held on 5 March  
Pyrton - submission consultation launched week commencing 12 March  
Chalgrove and Warborough & Shillingford submission consultations concluded on 14 March  
Benson – examination is expected to conclude in mid-March  
Sydenham has also now been designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area.  
Just over half the residents of Dorchester-on-Thames took part in their referendum on 15 March resulting in almost 96 per cent of those that participated voted in favour of adopting their neighbourhood plan.  
The Baldons submission consultation closed 26 March.  
Pryton's neighbourhood plan has been submitted with the consultation currently running until 25 April.

### **Social housing fraudster deprived those in genuine need**

A woman from Great Milton has been ordered to pay £1,530 after pleading guilty to making a fraudulent application for social housing - the first time that someone has been convicted for housing fraud in South Oxfordshire.

Gillian Norris, 46, of Green Hitchings, Great Milton, appeared at Oxford Magistrates' Court on Tuesday 30 January, who heard how Ms Norris had been living in the three-bedroom SOHA Housing home in Great Milton for more than four years, having applied for the property via the housing register. However, when she submitted her application she failed to disclose that she already owned a three-bedroom home in Holyhead, Wales, which she was renting out to a family member.

Ms Norris was caught following an anonymous tip-off and subsequent enquiries by SOHA Housing, South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxford City Council's Investigation Team, which specialises in housing fraud.

Following her guilty plea Gillian Norris was fined £250 and ordered to pay £1,250 and a £30 victim surcharge.

### **Extra garden waste week**

Garden waste customers will be able to leave an extra bin's worth of garden waste on their normal collection day on week commencing:

9 April for South

16 April for Vale

They can leave the extra garden waste out in a box or bag next to their brown bin, although Biffa are unable to collect waste left out in trade sacks.

### **Play highlights hidden harm**

To support Thames Valley Police's 'Hidden Harm' campaign about online child abuse, our community safety team has arranged for year nine pupils in schools across our districts to take part in 'Chelsea's Choice' - a hard-hitting play exploring the issue of child sexual exploitation.

If you are concerned about a child contact the police on 101, or 999 if you believe they are at immediate risk from harm.

### **The new Changing Places toilet in the Orchard Centre, Didcot**

Didcot's second Changing Places disabled toilet has opened at the brand-new extension of the Orchard Centre – making the newly improved town centre even more accessible.

Changing Places facilities go beyond statutory requirements in helping the those that can not use standard accessible toilets. South Oxfordshire District Council has paid £20,000 to install the new facility, which includes a height adjustable changing bench, hoist and space for up to two carers to help support people that require assistance.

The council worked in partnership with the Orchard Centre developers, Hammerson, to change the original construction design of the toilet area to accommodate the facility and Hammerson will provide ongoing maintenance of the room.

The district council installed a changing places toilet inside its own Cornerstone Arts Centre when it opened ten years ago, which is only available while the centre is open. The new

Orchard Centre toilet and facility will be open during shopping hours for people with a special access key.

Tony Harbour, cabinet member for Didcot Garden Town said, “Didcot continues to be an exciting place to live and work and we are pleased an additional changing places facility will help provide a fully accessible shopping experience for everyone coming into town.”

### **SO Charitable Lottery launches**

Almost 50 charities and voluntary groups have so far applied to benefit from an exciting new community lottery launched in South Oxfordshire (27 March). SO Charitable Lottery has been set up by South Oxfordshire District Council to raise funds for local good causes.

Tickets for the online lottery on sale via [www.socharitable.co.uk](http://www.socharitable.co.uk) and the first draw will take place on 28 April. It will then run weekly, with a one in 50 chance of winning a prize including a jackpot of £25,000.

From each ticket bought, 60p will go to good causes and the local community. Players can choose which local good cause they support when they purchase tickets.

The rest of the money will go to the prize fund and running costs – the council will not receive any of the proceeds.

Cllr Lynn Lloyd, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the lottery, said: “We’ve had a really positive response from charities and voluntary groups, and we’re delighted to see so many already on board.

“The lottery creates the opportunity to raise money within the community, for the community. We hope residents will get behind it and enjoy seeing how their money is helping local good causes – while having some fun.”

### **A quarter of a million pounds awarded to sports club in Thame**

A new sports clubhouse in Thame is a step closer after South Oxfordshire District Council awarded a grant of £250,000 to Thame Sports Club, which will help to provide a new building for the whole community to use. Thame Sports Club is home to the town’s tennis and bowls club, but the clubhouse doubles up as a community building where many other groups meet to take part in a variety of activities including whist, art, wine appreciation and toddler groups.

The South Oxfordshire District Council Capital grant will make up over 45 per cent of the estimated total project cost of £554,000. The sports club has now raised around 70 per cent of the total cost and the sizeable funding from the council will make it much easier for the club to attract the final 30 per cent. The grant was agreed by the capital grants panel and has now been given the final stamp of approval by South Oxfordshire District Council cabinet member for community services, Cllr Lynn Lloyd.

Cllr Lloyd said: “I am absolutely delighted that we were able to make such a substantial contribution towards the rebuilding of the clubhouse, which has been a part of Thame for almost a century.

“However, all those years of use have taken their toll and a full rebuild will make it a wonderful community hub for generations to come.

"I hope that our contribution will encourage other funding organisations and local residents to support them. I also hope the new building means that people in Thame will continue to have great place to meet for decades."

The original part of the clubhouse was built in the 1920's and is in poor condition, especially the roof and much of the woodwork. Also, because it has little insulation it is expensive to heat during the winter months. The club has, in their own words, "an ambitious project to demolish it and to replace it with a modern pavilion".

The new designs could mean that the clubhouse could accommodate indoor bowling which means the Bowls Club could join the local winter leagues, increasing participation numbers during winter months.

### **Autonomous vehicle investment**

The government has awarded us £2.5 million for an industry-led research and development project to introduce connected and autonomous vehicles to the districts.

Working with MEPC and First Connect we will be providing a driverless shuttle bus service from Didcot to Milton Park for commuters.

The 30-month project is commercially viable and could be one of the first services of its kind for visitors and commuters in the UK.

### **Highways England Strategic Road Network**

We have sent our response to Highways England's consultation on the Strategic Road Network Report.

This mainly relates to improving the capacity and reliability of major routes, such as A34 and M40, to accommodate expected growth in our area as well as future investment in expressways.

You can read our full response here.

<http://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=20&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fis5fcs0wv3i20so%2FShaping%2520the%2520Future%2520of%2520England%2527s%2520Strategic%2520Roads-SV%2520consultation%2520response-%2520Final%2520070218.pdf%3Fd%3D0&a=0>

### **New powers to tackle anti-social behaviour in Thame**

We had a brilliant response to the Thame consultation on the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) consultation last year. The first of its kind in the area, we heavily promoted the consultation period, which saw 241 people providing their feedback.

Police in Thame will have new powers to tackle group related anti-social behaviour from Tuesday 1 May.

The new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) allows police to prohibit groups of three or more from congregating in public areas of the town if they are behaving anti-socially, or likely to cause alarm, distress or a nuisance to those nearby. Anyone causing a problem could be fined if they fail to disperse when requested.

South Oxfordshire District Council is introducing the PSPO in Thame following concerns raised by the local community. The Order received strong support during a public consultation last

year and was approved by Cabinet on Thursday 5 April. It will only target anti-social behaviour and will not prevent groups from gathering together peacefully.

Cllr Elizabeth Gillespie, Cabinet Member for Community Safety at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "The new Public Spaces Protection Order gives police in Thame greater powers to address anti-social behaviour caused by groups congregating in public areas. This could include those intimidating passers-by or anyone repeatedly causing a general nuisance.

"PSPOs can be tailored to the needs of a specific town. The measures we have included to tackle group related problems in Thame received significant support from the local community."

### **Grants application dates confirmed**

We've confirmed the dates that groups can apply for community grants during 2018:

Capital grants - £811,000 available:

15 March to 26 April (round one)

20 June to 30 July (round two - budget permitting)

15 October to 30 November (potential round three - budget permitting)

Councillor grants - £5,000 available per councillor: 30 May (estimated) to 3 January 2019

### **Environment improvements and over a million for community projects in the 2018/19 budget**

On Thursday 15 February South Oxfordshire District Council agreed its 2018/19 budget, including more than £600,000 over three years to create a new team to tackle local environmental issues to make public areas in South Oxfordshire look more attractive.

More than £1.4 million is being made available in grants to support community projects, such as improvements to village halls and to charities who provide services to vulnerable people.

The district council will invest a further £100,000 to help address air quality issues and to identify new green travel initiatives, and more than £290,000 will be made available per year to help meet the increased demands on the council's planning service.

Cllr Jane Murphy, then Cabinet Member for Finance at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "In this year's budget we've set aside significant funding to boost community projects across the district and launch a new team to allow us to better tackle key environment concerns such as fly-tipping, graffiti and grass cutting."

### **Reaching thousands on Facebook**

Keep up to date with the latest news from both councils by following our South and Vale Facebook pages.

During the recent snow a post telling people about disruption to bin collections reached over 24,000 people and details about the emergency support available for those sleeping rough reached over 37,000 people.

We've also had significant success for posts about fly-tipping, a food safety investigation (see South News), recycling advice, and announcements for major projects such as the Orchard Centre and Abbey Meadow pool.

Please help to spread the news by sharing our posts with your Facebook friends.

**Trashosaurus and Munching Molly**

Residents cast more than 2,000 votes to decide the names of our 12 new food waste trucks, with Trashosaurus and Munching Molly among the names selected.

All of the potential names were suggested by local primary school children. Those who put forward the chosen names each received a family swimming pass, courtesy of GLL, and £150 worth of book tokens for their school.

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