

Title	District Councillor's Report
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Parish	Thame Town Council
Date	18 th January 2021

Happy New Year!

We sincerely hope that you were all able to enjoy a healthy and happy Christmas and New Year break; no doubt most of us are rather glad to see the back of 2020, and we look forward to more positive and productive initiatives during the coming twelve months. We would once again like to thank all those on the Town Council and within the local community who have provided support, advice and often just a friendly chat to those who have felt more vulnerable over the past difficult year. The community support and spirit shown across the District has been remarkable, and gives us great confidence when planning future projects and programmes designed to sustain the well-being, prosperity and social cohesion of our towns and villages.

Local Plan 2035

Now that the controversial South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 has been adopted by Full Council it carries full weight in the Planning Policy framework. Some improvements were made to the Plan during the Inspection phase, including some on community involvement in master-planning, the introduction of the new DES10 zero-carbon housing policy (where there was no such policy at all before) and the prioritisation of cycling and walking.

We are now investigating the feasibility of a joint Local Plan with the Vale of the White Horse, since we share so many interests and issues and to save money.

SODC are also engaged in discussions across Oxfordshire and within the broader Ox-Cam Arc Government initiative around the long-term strategic vision for the region, including employment opportunities (particularly in the area of green technology and innovation), digital infrastructure & environmental enhancements.

District Councillor Grants

There is only one month left to apply for a Councillor Grant, and we have already allocated funds from our total pot of £5k each. Application forms and guidelines can be found here:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/councillor-community-grants/>

Covid Vaccination Programme

Although the nationwide programme is underway, it will take months for the whole population to be vaccinated, The key messages to all local residents are as follows:

- The vaccination programme is being phased in across the county following the national guidance on prioritising patients. Some people have already been vaccinated and others are waiting to be invited.
- Please do not contact your GP or another NHS service to seek a vaccine
- Please continue to follow all the public health guidance to control the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

Our SODC Communications Team remains an active part of this system-wide communication approach.

Civil Parking Enforcement

The Council approved a recommendation at a special meeting on 22nd December to move ahead with taking responsibility for managing on-street civil parking enforcement in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council. We now expect this to move forward without delay and for powers to be transferred during 2021. This will work alongside our existing off-street parking enforcement powers.

New CIL Spending Strategy

Cabinet also approved a new CIL and s106 spending strategy last month, which will take effect from April 2021. Most of the changes affect how SODC and OCC can spend their allocation of CIL funds; the Parish allocation will remain at 25%. This means that OCC will now be able to claim funds to spend on libraries and SEN provision as well as on education and transport, while SODC will be able to invest in improvements to cycle networks, provision of electric charging points and access to nature. The new, more flexible, rules should release funds more rapidly and enable larger projects to be commissioned across the District rather than being spent piecemeal on small initiatives.

South & Vale Business Services (SVBS) Newsletter

We would like all businesses to sign up to the SVBS newsletter to ensure they receive up to date information on financial support.