

Title	District Councillor's Report
Author	Cllrs Pieter-Paul Barker, David Bretherton & Kate Gregory
Parish	Thame Town Council
Date	25 th April 2021

A new joint Local Plan

The two Councils, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse, have now agreed to develop a joint Local Plan, which would take the Councils through to about 2040/41 rather than producing new individual plans. There would be significant cost savings from taking this route, in the gathering of evidence, the development of common policies and the inspection process. There is also strong logic in working together on issues such as the development of Didcot, affordable housing and on environmental policies and practices. A joint committee would oversee the process, but the final decision-making would still lie with the individual Councils in order to ensure local accountability. The importance of Neighbourhood Plans is unaffected, and indeed they take on an even greater role as the process of spatial planning moves ever "up-stream" to programmes such as Oxfordshire 2050 and the Ox-Cam Arc.

Local Elections, 6th May 2021

SODC is still looking for people to work at the elections as polling clerks at polling stations. Anyone interesting in applying for work should contact electionstaff@southandvale.gov.uk; all work is Covid-safe and the daily rate is £165-£175.

Recent Full Council Motions

The Council meeting of 25th March had a packed agenda, and lasted a full four hours! Amongst other matters, there were 8 motions on the table, all of which related directly to two of the themes within our Corporate Plan (Theme One: protect and restore our natural environment and Theme Four: improve economic and community well-being.)

All 8 motions were passed, including ones to take action to reduce light pollution and the undergrounding of high voltage power lines, one to work closely with Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure adequate provision of health facilities in our growing communities, one (proposed by Councillor Gregory) to support a pilot project for a Universal Basic Income in South Oxfordshire, one to establish the principle of community wealth-building in major new developments like Berinsfield and Didcot, one to ensure that developers provide adequate leisure facilities, one to extend the existing policies on diversity and inclusion to cover neurodiversity and finally one to provide as much support as possible for rural pubs as community assets.

Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy

SODC has joined the other 5 Councils in Oxfordshire in adopting a new strategy to provide consistent and extended infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles, particularly for those who do not have this facility at home, or who are visiting the area as tourists or on business. This is an important step along the way towards decarbonisation of transport, and will hopefully make it easier for people to choose an electric car next time they are buying, knowing that they will be able to charge it when they are out and about. Of course, electric cars are great for reducing air pollution and our reliance on fossil fuels, but it would be even better if we had fewer cars altogether on our congested roads. So the strategy will also explore infrastructure for electric buses and other commercial vehicles. Having a joined-up approach across the county means that we can aim to tap into government grants and other sources of funding to support the transition to EVs more efficiently.

Reminder – COMF Transportation Fund is open

The COMF Transportation Fund is now open for applications. Government funding is available for voluntary and community organisations to help with the costs of arranging and providing Covid-safe transportation for residents. Groups can receive funding of between £1,000 - £15,000 and it can go on revenue costs like paying for petrol as well as capital costs like PPE supplies or wear and tear on vehicles.

The deadline to apply is Friday 14 May. For more information, please contact grants@southandvale.gov.uk

Assets of Community Value – Q&A session

There will be an Assets of Community Value question and answer session on Microsoft Teams Live on Wednesday 12 May from midday until 1pm. More information will be sent to Parish Clerks in due course, but please mark this date in your diary and in the meantime if you have any queries, please email communityenablement@southandvale.gov.uk.