

Title	District Councillor's Report
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Planning Applications and call-in triggers

There has been a big increase in planning applications, from householders as well as bigger ones, in the last few months. In May 2021 SODC received 390 applications, which is a 48% increase on May 2020. As a result, the planning department is a few days behind on registering new applications.

Cllrs Barker & Bretherton have also passed a motion at Full Council to change the call-in arrangements back for Minor planning applications. Officers had introduced emergency arrangements at the start of the pandemic and wanted to make them permanent. However, council agreed to re-instate the previous approach from 15 July, so it is effective immediately, which means that where a town or parish council object to a planning application that is classified as a 'Minor' application and the planning officer is minded to approve it, then the planning application will be automatically referred to the planning committee to determine.

This does have the potential to increase the workload for planning officers & the planning committee so please object only when there are strong planning reasons supported by evidence of policies in Neighbourhood Plans or the Local Plan being contravened. To help with this do ask the planning officer involved for further explanations if you need them.

The planning department are also producing a simple list to make it easier to reference the LP2035 policies without all the explanatory text (the explanatory text is still important but can be gone into in greater detail when needed.) Please also note that for "Major" applications, the trigger arrangements have remained unchanged throughout the emergency arrangements and will continue to remain unchanged.

Covid Grants and Support for Self-Isolation

Total Covid19 Grant Payments processed through SODC since April 2020 were £42.8m. The Council carries out pre- and post- grant award checks to detect any fraud regarding any grant including the £500 isolation grant - an important part of what the finance team have been doing this last year. With Covid case numbers increasing, more people are finding themselves having to self-isolate as a result of a positive diagnosis or close contact with someone who has tested positive. The community hub is also continuing to help link residents up to food support, either by signposting to help organising shopping, arranging for a click and collect shopping order to be collected or getting an emergency food parcel out.

Councillor Grant Scheme Opens

This year's scheme, which once again allocates £5k to each District Councillor for use on community projects in their ward, has launched this week. Organisations which are 'not-for-profit' can now apply for grants from £250 up to a maximum of £5,000 per councillor in their ward for projects that will bring positive outcomes for local residents. Applicants are

asked to consider how their project will align with SODC's key strategic objectives, such as protecting and restoring nature, and improving community well-being. All details of how to apply can be found on the SODC website, but applicants are encouraged to discuss their application with their Ward councillor in the first instance. This year the fund will be allocated in two tranches so that projects emerging later in the year don't miss out.

SODC grounds maintenance, litter picking and waste collections

The number of grass cuts has been reduced this year, but this is being kept under review. There are also more staff allocated for litter picking for the summer. As you are probably aware, Biffa is continuing to experience issues with staffing which has led to serious disruptions in the waste collections service in our district.

The disruptions are caused by the national shortage of HGV drivers. The limited numbers of staff still able to work have been working weekends to try and catch up, but in order to prioritise the collection of food waste, recycling and normal household rubbish, SODC have suspended garden waste collections during August.

SODC do not have any recourse against Biffa at this stage and subscribers to this service are still expected to receive at least the contractual minimum number of collections (20 per year).

Our advice to residents for other bins is as follows:

If any of your waste was not collected last week, or if your bins are missed in the next couple of weeks, firstly leave the bins out for 3 days after your usual bin day and if still not collected please bring your bins back in and put it out next time it is due to be collected.

While we normally do not collect extra black bin rubbish, if we are unable to collect yours as a result of this disruption, you can leave up to three black sacks' worth out the next time it is due. Please remember you can always put out additional recycling and food waste on your next scheduled collection.

New air quality website for the county – feedback invited

We've been working with Oxford City Council, the county council and the other districts on a countywide air quality community website to help raise awareness of air pollution. The city council received £162,500 of funding for the website and is leading the project. Once developed, the website should provide air quality evidence, information and advice in a simple and accessible manner to all Oxfordshire visitors and residents.

Oxfordshire 2050 and the OxCam Arc

A reminder that the public consultations on both the Oxfordshire 2050 plan and the Ox-Cam Arc spatial framework are now open:

<https://www.oxfordshireopenthought.org/> (closes Friday 8th October)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-vision-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc> (closes Tuesday 12th October)