

Title	District Councillors' Report
Authors	Cllrs Kate Gregory, Pieter-Paul Barker & David Bretherton
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Everyone Active – new grant scheme launched

The Everyone Active grant scheme has launched in South Oxfordshire to support local initiatives that improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the district.

SODC is providing £50,000 in funding for community organisations and individuals to apply for, with a maximum grant of £1,000. Applicants will need to show that their projects will help communities to become more active or sustain activity.

Projects should provide benefit to more than one person becoming active or support ongoing activity

- The maximum grant is £1,000
- Can be for revenue costs or capital items
- Can request 100 per cent of project costs
- The project must complete within 12 months of the award decision
- SODC will accept one application only from each individual or organisation

The grant is open for a wide range of groups and organisations in the district. Not-for-profit groups (including sports clubs), town and parish councils and parish meetings, not-for-profit preschools, Parent Teacher Association's and other local authority run schools or academies for non-statutory elements of the education programme. An individual can also apply who is supporting their community to become active or sustain activity.

The funding can be used in a variety of ways including:

- Buying new leisure or playground equipment
- Projects to introduce or improve physical activity
- Running training courses for volunteers or staff to help improve physical/mental wellbeing
- Setting up a community garden

Capital Grants 2022

In the Capital Grants funding round for 2022, the following awards have been made in Thame:

- Thame Shed – for the insulation of Thame Shed - £4,968
- Chinnor RFC – for the Thame Clubhouse Extension £48,066

Housing Land Supply

SODC has recently issued the annual statement of Housing Land Supply, which represents the housing land supply position as of the 1 April 2022, covering the period between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2027. The Statement provides a year by year, and site by site trajectory of the expected housing supply in the district between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2027.

The council can demonstrate a 5.58 years' supply of housing land, against a housing requirement over the next 5 years of 5,874 dwellings.

The full statement including a list of sites, is available on the SODC website.

SODC Annual Performance Report

The annual performance report for 2021-22 (year to May) is available on the SODC website. SODC have introduced a Performance Management Framework, which is fundamental to the achievement

of the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-24. It also allows residents to see how well SODC are doing and how the council intends to improve.

The Corporate Plan 2020-2024 contains six strategic themes and the council reports against these, with projects listed under each heading in the report:

- Theme 1: Protect and restore the natural world
- Theme 2: Openness and accountability
- Theme 3: Action on the climate emergency
- Theme 4: Improved economic and community wellbeing
- Theme 5: Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs
- Theme 6: Investments that rebuild our financial viability

Cost of Living

At the recent council meeting on 14th July, SODC declared a Cost of Living Emergency. The council fears for vital services such as homelessness prevention and community support during these difficult times. The cost of living increases have also impacted council services, from housing needs to the work of its community hub. Council finances are badly affected by rising inflation too.

Councillor David Rouane (LibDem), South Oxfordshire District Council Leader, put forward the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Robin Bennett (Green).

Cllr Rouane said: “We are no longer dealing with just a Cost of Living crisis – this is an emergency.

“Without urgent action from the Government, our services will be put under even greater pressure at a time when our budget is still impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and further hit by rising inflation.”

Following the agreed motion, the council is writing to ask the Government to:

- urgently review the energy cap regime
- immediately reduce VAT.
- increase benefits in line with inflation.
- reinstate the Universal Credit uplift.
- provide immediate financial support for public transport.
- recognise the pressures that high inflation is placing on local government finances and provide additional funding to councils.

Locally SODC is requesting a Cost of Living Emergency Summit with stakeholders, including Oxfordshire County Council, Citizens Advice, voluntary organisations and both local MPs, to work closely together on responding to the emergency.

MyVision (OAB) Oxfordshire (Revenue Grant)

The Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (AOB) is changing its name to MyVision Oxfordshire. SODC have approved a revenue grant application for £80k over 2 years to fund a dedicated Community Engagement Worker working in the South Oxfordshire district.

This person will provide advice, information and guidance specific to sight loss, within the community and in individuals homes. The service will include:

- Creating dedicated information days at local libraries and community centres once a month.

- Setting up and supporting social gatherings in local coffee shops and community centres, providing peer-to-peer support.
- Visiting clients within their home, for those who cannot attend a local information day.
- Setting up befriending partnerships locally with the support of the volunteer coordinator.
- Providing Visual Impairment Awareness Training to local community groups and organisations.
- Working with other organisations to ensure joined up support is provided.

Citizens Advice (Revenue Grant) - £238k over 2 years

In their grant application, Citizens Advice wrote as follows:

We will provide a full advice service for 5 days a week from the 3 main advice centres: Didcot, Henley and Thame and from our outreach projects in RAF Benson and Wallingford:

- deliver advice on benefits / tax credits, debt, employment, housing and family / relationship problems plus any other issues clients bring to us.
- access specialist Citizens Advice services on topics such as immigration.
- recruit more volunteer advisers. Post Pandemic, demand for our advice is increasing and client problems are more complex.
- deliver this advice by phone, webchat and face to face.
- give SODC access to a rich source of information about problems faced by communities in the district.

River Thame Conservation Trust (Revenue Grant) - £15k

SODC have approved a revenue grant for the River Thame Conservative Trust. Their project aims to empower a network of over 100 citizen scientists to help build a defensible characterisation of point and diffuse pollution on the River Thame network. Citizen scientists will be trained in sampling and flow measurement at 20 locations strategically located on each of the 20 Thame water bodies or sub catchments, on a monthly basis, plus additional sampling during rainfall events. Each water body would be sampled as far downstream in the water body as practicably possible.

This strategy will fit with the wider strategy applied by CEH (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology) and will provide data that represents each sub-catchment. These data will feed into their model and help estimate which sub-catchments are dominated by pollution for point sources (e.g. Sewage Treatment Works) or rain-related sources (e.g. agricultural pollution, road runoff and septic tank soakaways). Laboratory analysis of samples will be carried out by the accredited laboratory at CEH. The Load Apportionment Model will provide outputs allowing us to analyse how the water chemistry vary seasonally and geographically and in response to river flow, allowing estimates to be made of the relative loads coming from point and diffuse sources.

Thames Water (TW) and the Environment Agency (EA) are supportive of the programme. RTCT and CEH will work with the EA and TW and local stakeholders to identify how such point sources can be managed to minimise impact of water quality and biodiversity. Where diffuse sources are identified (e.g. agriculture / septic tank misconnections); we will work with farmers and householders to find mutually agreeable solutions to improving the water environment.

Alongside this water quality network, the Thame Riverfly network will be doubled across the Thame catchment, by targeted engagement and training. Coordinated by the River Thame Conservation Trust as part of the Riverfly Partnership, citizen scientist data can act as an early warning system for pollution events and is an important programme for public engagement and education.