

Title	District Councillor's Report
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Grant funding for Thame and District Housing Association

The council meeting in July considered and agreed Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 23 June 2023, to provide grant funding using commuted sums held by the council towards affordable housing delivery in Thame by the Thame & District Housing Association.

SODC Office Move

The rented and expensive offices at Milton Park have been vacated and a core team from the Council has moved to Abbey House in Abingdon; the official address is Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE. Cabinet and Planning Committee Meetings are held there and the meeting room has been fully equipped for hybrid meetings so that, although Committee members have to attend in person, others making representations on a Planning Application can join virtually using MS Teams as usual. All meetings will continue to be live-streamed. Full Council meetings are now being held at Didcot Civic Hall.

This move will save the Council considerable sums in office rental payments over the next couple of years while SODC progress with plans to build new offices at the Didcot Gateway site opposite the railway station.

The Queen's Canopy

Following the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth, and in accordance with the wishes of the King, the [Queen's Green Canopy](#) initiative will be extended to the end of March 2023 to give people the opportunity to plant trees to honour Her Majesty. SODC is creating a record of all the trees planted across the district for The Queen's Green Canopy and we are asking residents to send pictures of their planted trees to us at communications@southandvale.gov.uk.

More information can be found at: southoxon.gov.uk/greencanopy

Councillor Grants Scheme

The second round of the Councillor Grant scheme is now open and between us we have £13k in grants available to be awarded by February 2023. Applications must be made via the SODC website, not directly to us. We were very pleased to be able to support the Thame Green Living application for £2000 towards the hedge planting at Queen Elizabeth Circle.

Climate Action Plan (CAP) Performance Report

SODC's first CAP quarterly performance report covering April-June 2022 has been published and is publicly available at www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/ This report provides a detailed review of activities and outcomes in the first quarter of this financial year and is "RAG rated" (Red/Amber/Green) to indicate where projects are on track, need attention or are at risk. This CAP performance report accompanies the usual quarterly report on the Corporate Plan priorities, which is also available [online](#).

“Call for Sites” for new Joint Local Plan – the results are in

SODC has published the results of the “Call for Land and Buildings Available for Change”, part of the process in creating the new Joint Local Plan. This process is usually called a Call for Sites, but we changed the name as we wanted sites that could have community and environmental uses, such as public open spaces or renewable energy.

The Comms team has created a very nice short video to explain what the Call for Land and Buildings Available for Change is and what happens next. [You can find the video on our Youtube channel.](#)

It’s important to note these are **not** proposals the Council is making for development. The Call for Land and Buildings Available for Change does not grant planning permission to any site submitted or confirm that the site will be suitable for development. You can view the full results on [our interactive Call for Land and Buildings Available for Change website.](#)

Residents do not need to contact anyone to say whether they support or object to these sites. SODC will assess the submissions on a range of environmental, heritage and physical constraints to determine their potential ‘suitability’, ‘availability’ and ‘achievability’. Public consultation takes place once any sites that may be considered suitable for further consideration have been assessed.

You can find out more about the Joint Local Plan on the [SODC](#) website.

Maximum Taxi Tariffs agreed for Hackney cabs in the District

Hackney carriages operating in South Oxfordshire will, for the first time, have a maximum fare they can charge passengers. Cabinet approved the measure to help ensure passengers, especially those who rely on taxis to travel around such as those on low income or with disabilities, were not priced out of using taxis as the cost of living continues to rise. At the same time, it is hoped the fares agreed will allow taxi drivers to continue to run viable businesses, recognising their overheads are also rising and the tariff will be the 16th highest in the country.

We were previously one of only six councils in the country who didn’t set a tariff so introducing them now brings us in line with other authorities. The fares only apply to hackney carriages as passengers are able to shop around with private hire vehicles to get the best deal, which is harder to do when at a taxi rank or hailing a cab. The fares only apply for journeys that start and finish in South Oxfordshire.

The new maximum fare for a two-mile journey on Tariff 1 will be £8.10, rising to £11.25 for Tariff 3 (applicable from 2am to 5.59am on weekdays and all day Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day). Among the changes was also introducing a new £1.50 charge for additional passengers in vehicles which can carry more than four persons.

“Park and Charge” scheme wins an award!

We are pleased to report that the Park and Charge scheme that put 124 electric vehicle chargers in 10 of the council-run car parks across both districts has won an excellence award, called an “Evie”. Evidence is showing that the charging bays are being used more and more; our foresight in installing infrastructure *before* demand outstrips supply has been widely praised.