

Title	District Councillor's Report
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SODC Budget for 2023/24

The budget approved by SODC for 2023/4 shows a financial position in a healthier state than previously forecast thanks to the careful budgeting work in recent years. It also means the council needs to draw over a million pounds less from its reserves to balance the budget than it had prepared for a year ago. £643,673 will be drawn from reserves this year, compared to a budgeted draw on reserves in 2022/23 of £2.108 million, and to the estimated draw of £1.752 million for 2023/24 when the 2022/23 budget was set.

£1m will be invested over the next two years to drive the council's corporate plan priorities, including 'Everyone Active', an active communities grant scheme, and continuation of the Community Hub to support the district's most vulnerable residents. The Community Hub provides wide-ranging support and advice for residents and also delivers cost-of-living help for those in most financial need, such as the Household Support Fund.

The budget also recognises the housing pressures within the district and allocates ongoing support for the council's dedicated homelessness prevention work across the district. The budget identifies £4.6 million of capital growth linked to the government's Local Authority Housing Fund, responding to the UK's humanitarian duties to assist those fleeing war. The £4.6 million represents the council's share of the cost towards providing a supply of settled accommodation initially for refugees. This all complements £2 million of funding to secure homes for people in need that was formally agreed in December.

The capital budget will be used to improve South Oxfordshire's infrastructure, including flood prevention, leisure centre improvements and resurfacing and lighting replacement at the council's car parks. Decarbonisation funding, including some Government support, will contribute to retrofitting energy saving measures at Cornerstone Arts Centre.

Retaining its investment in climate action, the budget includes funds to progress some significant outcomes from priority projects already begun, including tree planting and meadow creation, an evolution of last year's No Mow May called 'Let it Bee' and supporting water quality work including an application for Bathing Water Status for a stretch of River Thames.

This year the council proposes to increase its share of the council tax by £5 a year for an average Band D property, so for 2023/24 residents will pay a Band D rate of £141.24 per household for the vital services provided by the district council. This represents a below inflation increase of 3.6 per cent. In 2022/23 the Band D rate was the ninth lowest in the country for a shire district council.

Whilst the short-term position is positive, there is no certainty around future local government funding. Financial pressures predicted to affect all councils are cost increases due to inflation and the lack of information on future local authority funding.

Great British Spring Clean

This year SODC will again be supporting the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean by loaning litter pickers, high-viz jackets and bags to community litter picking groups and individuals. The event runs from Monday 17 March to Sunday 2 April. Equipment can be booked by completing and returning the booking form and declaration document to waste.team@southandvale.gov.uk. The forms are available on the [South](#) litter picking pages.

Joint Local Plan - Issues Consultation Results

You may have already seen the launch of our Consultation Results document and updated interactive website which summarises the findings from last year's Joint Local Plan Issues consultation. The feedback process, including the new interactive website, was very well received – when asked about the feedback process, about 70 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied. When asked, 85 per cent of people supported the emerging vision for our districts in the Joint Local Plan.

The results help the plan development team to focus on what matters to our residents and will help guide the next stage of the process, when SODC launch a consultation on the preferred options for the Plan in summer 2023.

You can view the Joint Local Plan Issues Consultation Results document and updated interactive website on the [South Oxfordshire](#) website. Keep an eye on the SODC social media channels where video summaries of the results are posted, you can view and share the first video from [South](#) social media channel.

Leisure Needs Survey

The Council will shortly be undertaking two studies to support the work on the joint local plan, namely the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and the Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy (LFAS). The two studies will help provide updated guidance and evidence of leisure needs and will be important in helping to determine the capital investment priorities.

As part of this work, **Stuart Todd Associates** and the **National Governing Bodies** are writing to sports clubs, parish councils and local organisations to find out more about the leisure provision in the districts, so do please respond to them if approached.

Housing Support Fund Now Open To All

On Monday 13 Feb SODC opened the Household Support Fund so anyone who hasn't received support since May last year and can't afford life's essentials such as paying for food and energy bills, can now apply.

We expect funds to go very quickly so we're asking people to make sure they attach all the evidence requested on their application form so that their application can be processed, or they might miss out receiving support. If a resident, who has previously received Household Support Fund, has already applied to this round of funding they do need to submit their application again as we're not holding waiting lists of applications.

Thank you for sharing the information and our social media messages with people and please continue to direct people to the SODC website for details on how to apply, email our Community Hub (communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk) or call them on 01235 422600 (select option 1).