

Title	District Councillors' Report to Thame Town Council
Authors	Clrs Pieter-Paul Barker, David Bretherton & Kate Gregory
Date	1 st August 2023

Councillor Community Grants Funding

A new round of funding from the Councillor Community Grant scheme has launched in South Oxfordshire, to help local charities and organisations across the district.

As part of the scheme, every ward in South Oxfordshire has funding to support local projects that directly benefit local residents. Organisations can now apply for grants from £250 up to a maximum of £5,000 from each ward councillor, so £15,000 is available in total for Thame.

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to review the eligibility criteria on the SODC website. Applications are made online and are open until midday on Friday 20 October 2023.

You can find out more about the Councillor Community Grant scheme on the website at www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants or by contacting the Community Enablement team at grants@southandvale.gov.uk.

Rural England Prosperity Fund

More than £1.2m is being made available to help improve the rural economy across our districts. SODC have secured funding from the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund, which can be used to provide a boost to projects such as creating rural business hubs, setting up community energy schemes and diversifying farm businesses beyond agriculture.

This applies to Thame as well, as despite the name of the fund it is not just for the countryside, but anywhere in South Oxfordshire.

Any organisation with legal status will be able to apply for the funding when it opens in the Autumn this year. This will include:

- Public sector organisations;
- Higher and further education institutions;
- Private sector companies;
- Voluntary organisations;
- Registered charities.

Before the application process begins, the Economic Development team wants to understand which organisations might apply and for what type of project, and so is asking anyone interested to send an Expression of Interest in the run up to the funding scheme opening later this year.

There are more details on the scheme on the SODC Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) page.

Refurbishment of Thame Market House toilets

SODC has successfully applied for grant funding from the Changing Places fund, to part-fund the installation of 3 Changing Places facilities, one of which is Thame. In addition, £100k will be allocated from SODC CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), ie money from development.

The objective of the scheme is to provide appropriate well equipped, and much-needed facilities to assist our disabled communities. At present, it is estimated that some 300,000 people across the UK require the use of the specialist equipment and amenities provided within a Changing Places facility, due to regular disabled or ambulant accessible toilets not being supportive of their additional needs.

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Changing Places facilities are larger spaces, which allow for dignified adult/child changing stations, hoists, and adjustable sanitary equipment for ease of use.

There is a UK wide requirement for more of these types of facilities to be installed within public spaces. Our facilities will be added to a national register of Changing Places toilet facilities, which advertises where these amenities are located, across the country. Carers / end users can search the register and feel confident that their needs are catered for, when visiting our local public areas. This is an opportunity for South Oxfordshire District Council to contribute towards a greater public shortage of these valuable amenities.

Make a Splash at Riverside

Although this is on the Thames, it will still be of interest to families in Thame looking for a day out with children. The newly refurbished splash pad at Riverside Park and Pools in Wallingford, but on this side of the river, is now open. Opening times are 9am to 6pm, and it is free to use with no bookings required.

The refurbishment work, which started in May, has introduced lots of new and exciting features including:

- Water arches
- Raised features
- Tap Tap activators children can use to trigger water sequences
- Play zones for children of different ages and abilities
- A whoosh shower
- Sky drenchers... and more!

As well as the bright and colourful new features, the council has focused on the health and safety of children and families in the design of the splash pad. Uneven paving slabs have been removed, repairs have been carried out on the promenade and perimeter area of the site and a new disabled access pathway has been installed from the splash pad to the car park to make access easier for those in wheelchairs and those using buggies and pushchairs.

The new surface of the splash pad is made of a rubber crumb with UV protection to prevent algae forming which will reduce the chances of slips and falls when children are running around. The splash pads, which will use water from the river and rainfall, will also minimise water and power use, which will also mean it reduces its carbon emissions.

South Oxfordshire District Council, which owns the site, used £296,450 of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money, which comes from developer contributions, to finance the project.