

SODC Newsletter – October 2022

New Premises

The issue of where SODC should have its headquarters has been a matter of discussion for nearly eight years now and a considerable sum has been spent leasing the offices at Milton Park. In the interests of reducing this financial burden the Administration has decided for the medium term, whilst final decisions are made, the Council will move to Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE. For the foreseeable future, this will be the Council's home for staff and for the majority of Committee Meetings. CoVID caused officers to have to come up with innovative ways of working and the resulting home working means that we are now able to work in smaller premises.

Holding Committee Meetings at Abbey Gardens will mean that a much more effective environment will be set up and we will be able to do away with the system where we meet using our laptops and members of the public will be able to address committees directly.

Full Council Meetings for South Oxfordshire District Council will be held at Didcot Civic Hall which until CoVID changed the way we work, has been used for Planning Committee.

Planning

We continue to work with residents who have concerns regarding Planning Applications, and the impact on their properties. We have been in dialogue with our Planning Officers in respect of a number of applications where acceptability might be considered marginal in our Parishes, and we continue to work with both Chinnor PC and residents in preparing our case for refusal of the Planning Application for 32 new homes in Oakley Lane and we monitor the situation in respect of other, unplanned approaches and applications that do not fall within the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Queen's Canopy

Following 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.

We're creating a record of all the trees planted across the districts for The Queen's Green Canopy and are asking residents (and council members) to send pictures of their planted trees to us at communications@southandvale.gov.uk.

More information can be found at:

southoxon.gov.uk/greencanopy

Fly-tipper caught thanks to litter-pickers' social media appeal

A man has been ordered to pay more than £1,300 after admitting responsibility for garden renovation waste which was fly-tipped near Thame. He was caught after local litter pickers posted an appeal for information about the incident on social media.

Henry Quilter-Wood, 31, of Main Road, Lacey Green, Princes Risborough, appeared at Oxford Magistrates' Court on Friday 12 August when he pleaded guilty to four duty of care charges under Section 34 of the Act of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Magistrates heard how, in September 2021, South Oxfordshire District Council had received a complaint from local litter picking group Thame Wombles about a fly-tip next to the A418 ring road, including a significant amount of soil and rubble.

The group had appealed for information about the fly-tip on their social media page and a local resident had come forward to say that she recognised the waste as coming from her property. The resident confirmed that she had employed Mr Quilter-Wood to carry out renovation work in her garden, including removing any waste. At the time he ran a business called Absolutely All Sorts and held a licence allowing him to transport waste.

Following the tip-off, the council's Environment Officers interviewed Mr Quilter-Wood. He confirmed that he had carried out the work but throughout the course of the investigation he maintained that the two people who were working with him had told him they'd taken the waste to the local recycling centre as instructed. However, he did not have the required documents showing where the waste had gone and refused to give the names of the two individuals. He therefore agreed to take responsibility for the fly-tipped waste.

To report a fly-tip or someone who maybe responsible, please visit southoxon.gov.uk/flytipping or call 03000 610610.

If you are having work carried out to your property, to find out how to stay legal if you pay someone to get rid of the rubbish, please visit southoxon.gov.uk/removingwaste.

Homes urged to respond to voter registration reminder

Households across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are being urged to respond as soon as possible if they receive a reminder to update their voter registration details.

Over the summer, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils sent a 'Canvass Communication Form' to all homes asking the occupants to check their voter registration details.

Households whose occupants over the age of 16 are believed to have changed since the last election should have received a yellow letter requiring them to confirm or update their details online.

The two councils are now sending reminders to the 13,460 households who failed to respond to the yellow letter.

The reminder explains exactly what occupants need to do – it is very important to read it and follow the instructions carefully to confirm any changes. The easiest way to do this is by visiting householdresponse.com/southandvale – you will need the two-part code found on the letter.

By law, councils must ensure the electoral register is up to date and so may need to visit households that fail to respond to the reminder in order to confirm the details. Homes that received a green letter earlier in the summer are only required to update their information if the details on the form were incorrect. They will not receive a reminder.

Grant to help improve the quality of life for people and communities

Voluntary and community organisations in South Oxfordshire can now apply for up to £75,000 of Capital funding for projects that help improve people's quality of life.

The funding comes from the latest round of the South Oxfordshire District Council Capital Grant Scheme. The council has a total budget of £320,000. Projects can receive a minimum of £1,000 and up to 50 per cent of their total costs.

The grant gives organisations a financial boost towards capital expenditure such as making improvements to buildings or play areas.

Applicants must show how their projects will support the council's Corporate Plan priorities including 'protect and restore our natural world', 'action on the climate emergency' and 'improved economic and community well-being'.

Organisations eligible to apply are:

Town and Parish Councils

Non-profit businesses and Community Interest Companies

Community based organisations

Previous projects that were awarded funding include Watlington Parish Council who want to create a multi-use games area (MUGA), Wallingford Methodist Church used their grant to replace boilers and upgraded their heating system and Henley RFC upgraded their community training facility.

The Capital Grant Scheme is now open for applications until midday on Friday 21 October. There's more information on the council's website southoxon.gov.uk/grants.

As ever, there is much more that we could cover, but we will close here as much of what we have been doing is internal planning for matters running through until the election in 2023.

Lynn Lloyd and Ian White – South Oxfordshire District Council