

Title:	District Cllrs Report	
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## **Council services over the Christmas period**

[Council Services Over Christmas and New Year 2024/25 - South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

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## **Find out what's going on in your area**

[Home - Southern Oxfordshire](#)

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## **Waste Collections over the Christmas period**

[Christmas Waste - South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

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## **Christmas community help and volunteering**

[Christmas Community Help Advent Calendar 2024 - Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action](#)

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## **Council provides 48 affordable new homes in Thame and Wheatley**

The first of three new projects to provide 48 new, genuinely affordable and energy efficient homes in Thame and Wheatley to meet local needs\* is now finished and has welcomed new tenants. The homes are a combination of new builds and conversions and will include one-bed houses and flats at affordable rent or under a shared ownership scheme, as well as independent living accommodation for over 55 and 60-year-olds. Brought to life through South Oxfordshire District Council's partnership work with Soha Housing, Thame Community Land Trust and Thame & District Housing Association, the homes are largely funded by Section 106 affordable housing grants from developer contributions. In Thame, the first residents have moved into their new homes and are enjoying energy saving solar roof panels and ground source heat pumps which will help keep energy bills low, as well as access to EV charging points. The eco features mean the building will achieve zero carbon emissions when in use. In addition, work is due to start on a third project of 31 affordable rent or shared ownership new-build houses and flats in Thame in 2025. The mix of new, affordable homes was established through a housing needs survey specific to Thame and will be available for people with a local connection to Thame.

**Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers**, Cabinet Member for Housing, South Oxfordshire District Council said: "Our partnership work with housing providers is one of the ways we're meeting the housing needs of our residents now and in the future. "Providing these affordable homes built with high environmental standards and eco features to help keep bills low too will help ensure people on lower incomes can live and thrive here."

The 48 properties will support the councils to provide access to suitable, affordable homes for local people. This will help the council address a long-term issue of the availability of

affordable housing for people in South Oxfordshire – which is an expensive place to rent or buy on the open market. \*A housing needs survey was conducted by the council in 2020 in Thame and is publicly available on our website as part of the project’s planning application and planning permission.

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## **Poor Bathing Water**

Joint statement from South Oxfordshire District Council leader **Cllr David Rouane** and South Oxfordshire District Council’s River Thames Champion, **Cllr Jo Robb**: “We are obviously disappointed at the news that the water at Wallingford Beach has received a ‘poor’ rating for this year by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in its recent report on Bathing Water sites which was released this week. “Wallingford was only made a designated bathing water site in May. Its rating for the 2024 bathing season (May to September) has been given due to spikes of bacteria in two of the 19 water samples taken. “The River Thames at Wallingford has been a popular swimming spot for generations and this was one of the drivers for the council to join with environmental charity, Thames21, and Wallingford Town Council to seek Bathing Water status for the site. “We wanted to ensure the river water here was regularly tested\*, which would allow swimmers and other river users to make informed choices about the risks to their health when they use the River Thames at Wallingford. “Designation also puts pressure on the Environment Agency to investigate and address poor water quality to ensure the site meets bathing water standards. This would benefit not only to the many people who use the river, but also to the overall health of the river ecosystem. “Rivers and streams are struggling to cope due to water pollution, including in the Thames. While we knew bathing water status would not immediately solve that issue, it should mean Thames Water would be legally required to treat waste outflows to a much higher standard. “Attaining bathing water status is not a guarantee that there would never be pollution in the river however, it has been an important first step towards that goal, which is our ultimate ambition.’

A statement from **Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury**, Deputy Leader of Oxfordshire County Council with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations (and county councillor for Wallingford). “It is completely unacceptable that the standard of bathing water at Wallingford Beach has been classified as poor. All those parties that are contributing to pollution levels at this popular spot must clean up their acts with immediate effect.”

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## **Food businesses join the fight against litter:**

Food businesses in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse are being asked to play a key role in reducing litter by supporting the district councils’ ‘ your area’ campaign. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are looking to local traders as well as national names to display anti-litter stickers on takeaway food packaging and posters at their premises. By doing so, businesses can help to create cleaner, more welcoming streets for everyone. The councils’ ‘ your area’ initiative aims to tackle the rising issue of litter in public spaces. During the summer banners and posters were displayed in prominent areas to remind people enjoying food and drink outdoors to bin their litter or take it home. With the weather getting colder, the councils are now focussing on encouraging takeaways and other food businesses to help spread the message. The first business to sign up to the campaign is McDonald’s whose local franchisee has agreed to add the councils’ sticker to packaging handed to their drive-thru customers at Abingdon and Milton Heights and to

walk-in customers at Botley and Didcot. A banner opposite the front door of the Abingdon premises has also been reminding people leaving the restaurant to bin their litter.

**If you run a food business and would like to get involved, please email [waste.team@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:waste.team@southandvale.gov.uk)**

**Cllr Sam James-Lawrie**, Cabinet Member for Environment at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “Food businesses have a huge influence on our public spaces, especially when it comes to tackling litter. By displaying our ‘❤️ your area’ anti-litter messaging on packing and in their premises, they can show their support for the campaign and help to encourage their customers to keep our towns and villages tidy for everyone.”



The ‘❤️ your area’ campaign is designed to complement the work of the councils’ Environmental Services teams, which focus on both litter reduction and enforcement. By getting involved, food businesses can show they care about their community while helping reduce the environmental impact of litter, particularly plastic waste and food containers. It is also part of the councils’ new [Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy](#) which promotes the responsible disposal of litter. Where items do need to be thrown away, the strategy highlights the importance of using one of the councils’ comprehensive recycling collection services, before resorting to disposal.

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### **EV for Waste Collection:**

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have taken delivery of their first electric food waste collection vehicle – part of the councils’ ambitions to decarbonise the waste vehicle fleet and move towards net zero. The vehicle, a Terberg EV ORUS, was delivered to the councils at the Culham depot of their waste contractor, Biffa, earlier this autumn. It is being used throughout both district council areas as part of the fleet of 12 food waste collection trucks. The diesel food waste trucks each cover approximately, 26,000 miles per year, which with an average load would produce 30.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon dioxide equivalent). By changing to an electric food waste vehicle the councils expect to save more than 20 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent a year. In addition to the reduction in carbon emissions, the EV will also save time and energy as it has a compressor function which

means that despite being the same overall size as the other food waste trucks, it can take more food waste before it fills up. This means fewer trips to the food waste reprocessing facility in Wallingford to empty the truck before it can continue its collection round. The new vehicle also has a lift to allow the bins to be mechanically lifted and emptied into the waste compartment, which will be quicker for the collection crew as the current food trucks are loaded by hand. The vehicle like most EVs, is also quieter than diesel and petrol vehicles.

**Cllr Sam James-Lawrie**, Cabinet Member for the Environment at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We are delighted to reduce greenhouse gases both for our councils and for the districts, with the purchase of this new EV, following a very successful trial in the districts of a similar vehicle a year ago.

“When considered over its whole life cycle, taking into account the lower cost of electricity compared with diesel and the reduction in mileage in not having to empty as often, it is anticipated that the vehicle could provide savings on costs as well as carbon emissions.”

Food waste collected by the waste service is taken to an anaerobic Digestion Facility’ in Wallingford where it is broken down and converted into energy. As the food waste breaks down, it releases gases which are captured and converted into biogas. This process **provides enough energy to power up to 4,800 homes**, and nutrient-rich bio-fertiliser which is sold to local farmers to use on their land.

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### **Investment at Berinsfield, Thame and Wheatley Leisure Centres**

There is great news for gym users across South Oxfordshire, with a major investment by the council of £210,000 in new, state-of-the-art gym equipment. Park Sports Centre in Wheatley, Abbey Sports Centre in Berinsfield and Thame Leisure Centre will all benefit from new equipment, including treadmills, bikes, weights and resistance machines. Working in partnership with leisure providers, GLL, has enabled the council to secure the best possible equipment at the best available price from Technogym. Users will start to see the new equipment from late November and during December. Where possible the equipment purchased is using the latest technology along with self-powered kit ensuring residents continue to receive the latest cutting-edge equipment on the market. Much of the current gym equipment at all the centres is over 10 years old and the gyms will benefit from a boost with new, modern equipment. The Technogym equipment works off a ‘Wellness Cloud’ allowing residents to use Wi-Fi programmes across any leisure centre they are at for this system. All equipment is compatible with the Better Mobile App used by members to support their fitness programmes. Old equipment will go back to Technogym and as much of the old equipment will be recycled as possible.

**Cllr Georgina Heritage**, South Oxfordshire District Council’s Cabinet Member for Communities, said: “Alongside all our other ongoing work to improve our leisure centres, this is fantastic news. Gym members can look forward to using the latest state-of-the-art equipment available across three of our centres. Supporting the wellbeing of our residents is a priority for us – so anything we can do to enhance our leisure offer and encourage more active lifestyles is wonderful.”

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### **Licence conditions clampdown**

More than half of the taxi drivers stopped during a day’s enforcement operation were not compliant with their licence conditions. The enforcement operation took place on Saturday 28 September across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse in partnership with

Thames Valley Police. Licensed vehicles were stopped and inspected to see if they complied with the licence conditions set out by the local authority, along with checks on the vehicle's roadworthiness. During the four-hour operation, 34 vehicles were stopped (18 registered with South Oxfordshire District Council, 13 with Vale of White Horse District Council and 3 with Oxford City Council) and of those 19 were non-compliant with issues such as drivers not wearing their badge, roof signs not connected, and fare charts not displayed.

A total of 156 penalty points were issued to drivers on their council-issued licences as a result. Some of the licences will now be reviewed due to an excessive number of points accumulated. Police also took action against five vehicles and issued fixed penalty notices.

**Councillor Georgina Heritage**, South Oxfordshire District Council Cabinet Member for Communities, said: "Taxis are a vital part of our transport system, particularly for those where public transport is difficult to access or those with disabilities. Passengers deserve to be able to ride in safe, comfortable and properly insured vehicles. "These enforcement operations allow us to ensure licensed vehicles in our district do not put passengers at risk."

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