

SODC Newsletter – January 2022

Firstly, Happy New Year to you all. We hope that you had a great Christmas.

Planning

We continue to work with residents who have concerns regarding Planning Applications, and we are working on responses to a number of appeals. These include an Appeal for Non-determination in respect of an application to build on the Crowell Road Site in Chinnor that was refused at appeal 2 years ago by Planning Inspector Barton. We must bear in mind that the refusal was made whilst the Administration were undecided as to whether they should support the Local Plan 2034/5 and before Chinnor's NDP had been formally updated.

5 Year Land Supply

The High Court has refused to hear our case in the matter of the Little Sparrows, Sonning Common Appeal, on the basis that it would only consider procedural issues and not those which might be defined as being a matter of opinion. This again serves to underline the fact that the Planning Inspectorate is in effect a law unto itself and answerable to no one.

As previously advised, as Chair of Scrutiny, Ian has requested a full and thorough review into the Council's preparation for Appeals and the approach taken to review the 5 Year Land Supply. This work is proceeding according to plan and the report should come to Scrutiny early in the Spring.

Sewage Discharge and Pollution.

As previously Advised, Ian as Chair of Scrutiny is in the process of setting up a Task and Finish Group to see what can be done to help alleviate this issue by the District Council. Since our last report, it has become clear that this issue, initially thought to be relatively local, does also impact our sister Council, Vale of White Horse, and Ian has decided to make it a joint Scrutiny initiative. The Task force will be made up of three Councillors from each Authority plus a Chair. For South, we will be represented by Cllrs Lynn Lloyd, Sue Cooper, and Jo Robb. The initiation meeting will take place late January/early February.

Please note that this initiative will be operating at a high level across the two districts and will not be looking at or taking forward individual cases, although they will be included in the body of evidence.

Motions Before Full council

Following on from our report on the changes to Enforcement last month, Lynn and Ian decided to put forward a motion to Full Council that would ask the Secretary of State to consider giving councils stronger enforcement powers. We decided that Ian would put forward this Motion in his role as Chair of Scrutiny.

Council asks the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities asking that he give focus to Planning Enforcement in his review of the Planning White Paper, including a review of the current powers and consideration to the introduction of additional powers available elsewhere in the UK, such as the requirement for developers to give notice of commencement and completion.

We are pleased to report that Council supported our Motion unanimously.

'Spiking'

Last month we wrote about spiking and we understand that there were a number of instances in the county over the Christmas and New Year festivities. Whilst the party season is ending, the risk is still there and being spiked with alcohol or drugs can make you and yours seriously vulnerable.

For that reason we repeat that if you have any concerns, please take a look at [the Talk to Frank website](https://www.talktofrank.com/) which has some great tips on staying safe and what to do if you think you or a friend has been spiked. <https://www.talktofrank.com/> We believe that everyone deserves to feel safe while out enjoying time with friends.

Safer Streets

We've just launched an online survey aimed at helping to make areas of Abingdon and Didcot safer at night and want to hear from anyone who has felt unsafe in either town on a night out, or when returning there after an evening out elsewhere.

Our Community Safety officers are working with Oxford City Council who have been awarded £426,000 from the Government's Safer Streets scheme to introduce measures to help prevent violence against women and girls travelling in and out of Oxford at night. Didcot and Abingdon have been included in this project as they are two of the main areas revellers return to after nights out in Oxford.

Any feedback provided will help to identify where measures could be introduced to help keep people safe.

To have their say, residents can complete our online survey at southandvale.gov.uk/saferstreets. Responses are open until midnight on Friday 14 January.

CoVID 19 and Omicron - Reminder

CoVID has changed the way in which we work with more virtual meetings and a reduced office footprint needed due to council officers working from home. Just as we thought that things were easing the Omicron variant has reared its head and alongside our county council colleagues and health partners we are urging residents to take all the precautions they can to reach the Christmas period free of Covid-19. Getting vaccinated and boosted remain the best ways for residents to reduce the chance of becoming severely ill with Covid, and boosters should now be available to everyone over 18 years. Please do stay safe.

Community Hub supports residents with calls and supermarket vouchers - reminder

We've seen an increase in requests for support from our Community Hub team. For the month of November, we've handled 217 enquires resulting in 11 food parcels and 56 referrals for further support. We've also called 242 residents to offer help and made 163 follow up calls to those who had received a test and trace payment as a result of needing to self-isolate. A total of £17,500 in supermarket vouchers has also been given to support residents self-isolating.

What to do if you're made aware of someone who is homeless - Reminder

Over the Christmas and New Year period due to the very cold weather SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) opened. This meant that emergency accommodation was made available for everyone who was homeless and/or rough sleeping. This is a situation that we expect to occur again over the next few months.

On that note, if you see or are made aware of someone sleeping rough, please follow this guide about what to do:

[South](#)

Latest CCTV reports

We've just published our latest CCTV reports which detail how we have used our CCTV cameras to help keep people safe and support the police in our town centres.

Between 1 April and 30 September 2021, our CCTV operators supported 821 incidents in the Vale. They produced 62 evidence packs to help with possible court proceedings, reviewed footage on request on 40 occasions and supported 51 arrests.

For South Oxfordshire, they supported 554 incidents, produced 59 evidence packs for possible court proceedings, reviewed footage 21 times and supported 54 arrests.

For more information see our [South](#) CCTV reports.

Reminder - Parking Enforcement

As Councillors will be aware, the County Council has now taken over enforcement from the Police, effective from the 1st November 2021. We understand that this is now active, although for the first few months, people parking will be given reminders that in future they will receive fines.

Grants

The second round of our Councillor Capital Grants Scheme for 2021 drew to a close and we are pleased to be able to report that we have been able to support Chinnor Village Centre with the refurbishment of the conservatory, the Community Church with the Garden of Contemplation, Sydenham Parish Council with the relaunch of their newsletter and with a Speed Detection Device and we have also agreed at grant for a bench on the corner of Church Road and Church Lane to mark the Queen's Jubilee.

Council Tax Base 2022-2023

One of the most important things that we have to do at the end of the calendar year is agree the Council Tax base which is used in determining how much revenue can be raised for the next financial year through Council tax. It is a largely technical matter, but we thought that you may be interested to see the figures for the communities in our Ward as they give tangible evidence of the way that we have grown over the last 12 months. If you are interested in a more in-depth explanation of the way the figures are derived, then if you download the Public Reports Pack for the Full Council of the 9th December 2021.

Parish	Dwellings 2022-23	Dwellings 2021-22	Parish Tax Base 2022-23	Parish Tax Base 2021-22	% Change on Year
Aston Rowant	351	351	438.8	434.4	1%
Chinnor	3158	3088	2936.2	2848.5	3.1%
Crowell	47	47	58.1	58.2	-0.2%
Sydenham	141	141	155.3	156.9	-1.0%
Towersey	185	183	193.5	189.5	2.1%

As ever, there is much more that we could cover, but we will close here.

Lynn Lloyd and Ian White – South Oxfordshire District Council