

Chinnor Ward District Councillors Communique September 2023

Cllr Ali Gordon-Creed (Green) and Cllr Ed Sadler (Lib Dem)

Dear Chinnor residents; We are hopeful that you have enjoyed the summer so far – August has been a very busy month with the District Council, with three Planning Committee meetings and an Extraordinary Council meeting to debate a key aspect of the HIF1 project (Housing and Infrastructure fund) with the controversial proposal to build a new highway north of Didcot; [Didcot and surrounding area infrastructure improvements | Oxfordshire County Council](#). We have also been involved in the consultation around the new proposed scheme [Welcome - Land North of Bayswater Brook, Oxford \(bayswateroxford.co.uk\)](#) for housing around the edge of Oxford. The planning consultants are engaging with us to produce a sustainable neighbourhood, their key deliverables focusing on; renewable and low carbon technologies, protecting ecology and biodiversity, creating suitable homes for all, cultivating a thriving community, designing for greener travel, long term stewardship and embodying excellent design and local heritage.

Electric Vehicles and World EV day 09th September 2023: [World EV Day](#) 09th September 2023, is an annual event aiming to highlight the progress in e-mobility and promote the shift to electrified transport. This year, to celebrate World EV Day, the electric vehicle charging point companies will be offering deals – including free charging – for drivers across Oxfordshire. There's also the chance to join the county-wide EV car club scheme, with significant deals during World EV Day saving you money on membership and hire fees. Since last year's World EV Day, global electric vehicles sales have increased 39%: [Canalys: Global Electric Vehicle Sales up 39% in 2020 as Overall Car Market Collapses | Business Wire](#), in July 2023, 48% of newly registered vehicles in Oxfordshire were purely electric: [Electric Car Count — New AutoMotive](#). Drivers can find their local charging point on: [Map of electric charging points for electric cars UK: Zapmap \(zap-map.com\)](#).

Find out more about electric vehicles: Oxfordshire County, District and City Councils and the Oxford Local Enterprise Partnership (OXLEP) have created the Climate Action Oxfordshire website. The website contains lots of information about [choosing an electric vehicle](#) as well as information about other ways Oxfordshire residents can help tackle the climate emergency. **Councillor Freddie van Mierlo, South Oxfordshire District Council Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Nature Recovery** said: "World EV Day (09th September 2023) is a good opportunity to highlight the benefits of EVs, such as reduced carbon and lower running costs. With new petrol and diesel vehicles banned from 2030 and EVs increasingly popular, we want to make it as easy as possible to make the shift. The EV chargers that we installed in some of our council-run car parks last year are already being well used."

New application for a new SODC Office Building in Didcot: South Oxfordshire District Council has submitted a planning application for new offices, and the plans are available to view online. [Planning Application P23/S2621/FUL \(southoxon.gov.uk\)](#) We have drafted a Q&A of the typical questions raised about the proposed plan which we would like to share with you; **So why a new office?** The original SODC offices were destroyed by fire in 2015. The then Administration moved the council into very costly temporary offices (£100k/year). The subsequent Administration activated the break clause in the lease and moved the council to their current location at Abbey House in Abingdon, where they share the costs and premises with Vale Council. **Why not stay at Abbey House?** The building is not fit for purpose. In its current layout, the building is unable to host council meetings. **Why Didcot?** The proposed site is already owned by SODC. **Doesn't everyone work from home now?** Many people still need to be in the office and essential activities still take place – the proposed council office is however significantly smaller than the former at Crowmarsh. The ground floor will have public space, a square, a café, meeting spaces, and accommodate the public-facing areas of the council. Above will be the more private offices, and above that commercial office space to generate income for the council, which will save money for the council in the longer term. **Is it a "gamble with public money"?** The plans have been carefully assessed by finance officers and will be continually checked as the project progresses. Opponents often quote the outline cost but omit the insurance money (about £6m), which will be used for this purpose, as well as any capital gained from the old Crowmarsh site. The saving in rent and energy costs (about £1m p/a), and the future income generated from renting out part of the building. Regeneration of this site into the SODC council offices will be a much-needed boost for Didcot and a much called for plan to redevelop a part of Didcot that has become a local embarrassment, because it is the place passengers see upon arrival at Didcot by train. The alternative is to leave the site derelict or sell it to a developer for yet more housing.

Kindest Regards

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