

SODC Newsletter – January 2023

Firstly, Lynn and I hope that you all had a very happy Christmas and New Year and give you our best wishes for 2023.

As most matters that you need to know about are now being covered by the District Council's Parish News Letter there has been very little for us to write about that would be of interest to our Parishes, but this month we feel that there are a number of matters that we would like to highlight.

Planning

We continue to work with residents who have concerns regarding Planning Applications, and we are continuing to work on responses to a number of appeals.

5 Year Land Supply

Our position remains that we have a 5 year Land Supply of 5.58 years, which has not been challenged by Planning Inspectors at Appeal.

Enforcement

This is a hot topic and we are getting results in many areas. It is at best a slow process and we are bedevilled with issues around some Planning Conditions that are in law unenforceable and which are included with the developers' agreement to establish a form of terms of reference. This applies in particular where site traffic is concerned. For example, parking of contractors' vehicles, where a condition has been agreed that contractors shall not park on the highway in front of people's homes; if there are no parking restrictions then anyone can park there and this applies to contractors too. They cannot be moved on in law and our officers have to rely on the good will of the developer to co-operate.

Neighbourhood Plan Reviews (NDP)

Chinnor has now started its review of its Neighbourhood Development Plan as the present iteration will be outside the two year target period by the end of May. This review will be a review of a few small areas to clarify a number of aspects that need to be up-dated and once complete, the Team will move on to completing a fuller review for a planned delivery by May 2025.

Sydenham have set in motion a similar smaller review of their NDP with a view to ensure that they maintain their three year Land Supply Coverage.

'Spiking'

A year or so ago we highlighted the issue of 'Spiking' and sadly instances of alleged drink and needle spiking continue to be a significant issue. Being spiked with alcohol or drugs can make you and yours seriously vulnerable. As we said previously if you have any concerns, please take a look at [the Talk to Frank website](#) 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.

Photo ID at the Local Elections

The government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station at some elections.

This will apply for the first time in England at the local elections on Thursday 4 May 2023, so **please help spread the word in your local area.**

Accepted forms of photo ID will include, but are not limited to, passport, driving licence (including provisional license), disabled parking blue badge, certain concessionary travel cards and identity cards with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme).

From next week, anyone who doesn't have accepted photo ID can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate. The deadline to apply for ID for the local elections is 25 April.

For more information, including details on how to apply, people should visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID or call the Electoral Commission helpline on 0800 328 0280.

The Electoral Commission will be running a national awareness campaign throughout the coming months and we will highlight the new requirements across our communications campaign in the run up to the local elections.

For more information, please see [the Electoral Commission's FAQ document](#).

Household Support Fund 3 opens

We're opening a third round of the Household Support Fund next week to support households who can't afford essentials over the winter months. Support will be tailored to individual needs but will focus on food and fuel vouchers. Details of eligibility will be published on our Cost-of-Living website pages. Please direct people to our [SODC](#) websites for details, email [our Community Hub](#) or call them on 01235 422600.

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

Last weekend 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.

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

[South](#)

Health and care proposals need public feedback

We hope that you are already aware of this but just in case, people in Oxfordshire are being asked for their views on a set of proposed priorities to support improved health and wellbeing across the county.

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire (BOB) Integrated Care Partnership's (ICP) has developed a draft strategy which proposes a common set of priorities that partners will work on together to support people across the area.

The survey is open until 29 January 2023. Residents can respond online by visiting [the consultation website](#), or by requesting a printed copy by calling 0300 123 4465 or emailing bobics.engagement@nhs.net

Great British Spring Clean

This year we'll again be supporting the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean by loaning litter pickers, high-viz jackets and bags to community litter picking groups and individuals.

The event runs from Monday 17 March to Sunday 2 April. Equipment can be booked by

completing and returning the booking form and declaration document to waste.team@southandvale.gov.uk. The forms are available on our [South](#) and [Vale](#) litter picking pages.

Equipment is limited so to avoid disappointment bookings should be made as soon as possible.

Bookings for litter picking equipment can be made at any point during the year, not just during The Great British Spring Clean!

Car parking fees to change this Spring

Parking fees will increase in South Oxfordshire from 1 April this year.

Residents using car parks, run by South Oxfordshire District Council, in Didcot, Goring, Henley, Thame and Wallingford will see between 20p and 60p added to charges for users parking their vehicle depending on how long they park for.

The rise to parking fees and permits was agreed in line with inflation by Cabinet members at a meeting last month. Members also agreed to continue to offer free parking for up to one hour in the district.

The increase was part of an annual review, which looks at costs of the parking service and considers the impact of increased charges on residents and local businesses.

The extra revenue, which is estimated to bring in about £70,000, will be used to help maintain the district's car parks and pay for ongoing costs for the service.

Of, we were disappointed that the Administration decided not to allow the Free Parking provision in the run up to Christmas that has been allowed in previous years.

For more information on the council's car parks and fees visit www.southoxon.gov.uk/carparks

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.

Housing developers pay their way to improve community facilities

Developers in South Oxfordshire will now be required to contribute more to the local community, thanks to an update to the charge known as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that was adopted by South Oxfordshire District Council in December.

Under the new CIL Charging Schedule, developers building new homes, supermarkets and retail warehouses in the district must contribute more funds which can then be used by local town and parish councils, as well as the district and county council, to improve local community facilities across transport, education, health, leisure and more.

Over the last two years, CIL money has been used to fund projects including a £45,000 refurbishment of the Greys Road Car Park public toilets in Henley, a £40,000 update to the Oak Tree Health Centre in Didcot for a new consultation room to support clinicians and a £90,000 play park redevelopment for Benson Parish Council.

The updated charges increase the amount of CIL funding developers are required to pay and introduces CIL fees for developers of student housing, 'build to rent' housing and elderly person's accommodation.

The updated Charging Schedule have come into effect from 3 January 2023. An updated Supplementary Planning Document is also now available to provide developers with further details on their planning obligations.

To view the updated CIL Charging Schedule and Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document, visit [the South Oxfordshire District Council website](#).

Two Taxi drivers convicted and fined for offering rides illegally

A Buckinghamshire hackney carriage driver has been convicted of illegally plying for hire at Henley Regatta.

On Friday 13 January, Oxford Magistrates' Court heard how during last year's Regatta, officers from South Oxfordshire District Council spotted the driver's vehicle parked on double yellow lines on Thameside in Henley.

Officers identified his vehicle as a hackney carriage licensed by Buckinghamshire Council. Hackney carriage vehicles licensed outside the district are not permitted to pick customers up off the street without a booking through a licensed private hire operator.

Having witnessed the vehicle parked in a prominent location, one officer approached and asked the driver if he could take them to High Wycombe Railway Station. He replied saying he was available and could do the journey immediately for £40 or £50.

He pleaded guilty to illegally plying for hire. The magistrates imposed a fine of £183 and awarded costs to the district council of £1,374 with an additional £73 victim surcharge.

In a separate instance a private hire driver has been convicted of illegally plying for hire and driving without the right insurance at Henley Regatta.

On Friday 16 December, Oxford Magistrates' Court heard how during the regatta, officers from South Oxfordshire District Council and neighbouring councils spotted the driver's vehicle parked on double yellow lines on Friday Street in Henley.

Officers were able to identify the driver's vehicle as a private hire vehicle licensed by Transport for London. Private hire vehicles are not permitted to pick customers up off the street without a booking through a licensed private hire operator.

Having witnessed the vehicle parked illegally in a prominent location, one officer approached and asked the driver if he could take them to Reading Railway Station. The driver replied saying he was available and could do the journey immediately for £50.

Further investigation revealed that the driver was only insured to carry out pre-booked work through a licensed private hire operator.

In court, magistrates found the driver, of Feltham in Middlesex, guilty in his absence of illegally picking up passengers outside of the district where his vehicle was licensed. He was also found guilty of driving without the required insurance.

The magistrates imposed fines totalling £880 for the two offences, imposed six points on the driver's DVLA licence for the offence of having no insurance and awarded costs to the district council of £900 with an additional £352 victim surcharge.

Grants

We are at the end of the Grants cycle for us in the Community so we will provide you with detailed break-down of how we have allocated our funds in recent times next month.

Lynn Lloyd and Ian White – South Oxfordshire District Council