

SODC Newsletter – June 2022

As you will be aware, due to illness, Ian has not been able to provide the level of support he would have liked and, in addition to looking out for him, Lynn has taken up most of the routine council work in the Ward allowing him to concentrate on his specialised work on Scrutiny and planning. Ian's operation, whilst not 100% successful has greatly improved things and Ian thanks Lynn for all of her support.

Planning

We continue to work with residents who have concerns regarding Planning Applications, and we are waiting for the result of the appeal in respect of the land at Crowell Road. We have been in dialogue with our Planning Officers in respect of a number of applications where acceptability might be considered marginal.

Joint Local Plan

As you will hopefully have seen by now, we've launched our consultation for a new Joint Local Plan, which focuses on the issues facing both districts and how we might tackle them.

The plan also gives us an opportunity to set out ways we can address the climate emergency and enhance our natural environment, which both councils have committed to.

We're really keen to increase how many people get the opportunity to take part in the Local Plan, especially those who have never previously engaged with the process, and so we're trialling [an innovative new, digital approach to this consultation](#). This allows users to explore some engaging interactive online content related to the Local Plan and answer quick and easy questions about what they think the key issues are that we should tackle.

For those who prefer a more traditional approach, there's a single survey on the Joint Local Plan webpage. **We ask all our town and parish councils to use this approach.**

You can find out more on our [South Oxfordshire Joint Local Plan page](#)

Enforcement

A number of matters have recently been raised regarding cases in the process of going through Enforcement and we are following these up. These include the Fence along the Railway Line at Old Kiln Lakes, more Breaches of Conditions at the Persimmon Site and also at the Manor Farm Site at Crowell.

Members will be aware that Enforcement is something of a contentious issue as the regulations give the Council very few powers when it comes to enforcement and that many Councils do not maintain an enforcement Team because of this. As action on breaches can take a considerable time to bring into play, developers have often finished the piece of work they were using the breach to complete before real action can be taken, (for example, before a Court Case can be brought to Court.) We have been asked why we bother with conditions and Enforcement, and to put it simply, often a good developer will regard an 'unenforceable Condition' as a guide about how to proceed with a part of the work being done. Less scrupulous ones just ride through conditions with a coach and horses if they can.

Members will recall that at the end of 2021 (November) the Administration introduced a new process for enforcement and that the Conservative Group on the Council had some reservations about the provisions. At the time, when the process was discussed at Scrutiny, Ian as Chair, asked for an interim review to be carried out after 6 months, which the Administration and Enforcement Team were happy

to carry out. This will be brought to our Scrutiny Meeting on the 26th July and we will let you have a copy of the report once it has been signed off.

Ukraine situation

Like everyone, the councils are concerned about the continuing situation in Ukraine and want to support in any way that they can. As with the Afghan crisis we are doing everything possible within our gift and available resources to respond quickly when asked for support and families are now being placed with hosts.

New Community Liaison Officers

We've just appointed two new Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who will work with Asylum Welcome and help community groups to support Ukrainian guests who are settling in households across our districts.

Our CLOs (Community Liaison Officers), Emily Knight and Sam Townley, will provide information, advice and guidance and liaise with local authority support teams across Oxfordshire, to build a support framework for refugees that need it.

Platinum Jubilee

The long weekend celebration may now be over but it has been a massive success and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. For us, it was particularly pleasing to see the Jubilee Bench near the church in Chinnor in place, and both Ian and Lynn have tested it for comfort! It is a shame that someone chose to vandalise it within a few hours of it being installed, but in a way, the fact that a resident cleaned the graffiti off so quickly tells us a great deal about the normal Chinnor resident. Thank you to that person!

Councillor Community Grant

Round one of the 2022/23 councillor community grant scheme is now open until midday on 2 September. Grants of up to £5,000 per councillor can be awarded to town and parish councils and 'not for profit' groups. Decisions may be made collectively in wards with multiple councillors.

[See southoxon.gov.uk/grants for more information.](https://southoxon.gov.uk/grants)

Any questions, please contact the community enablement team via grants@southandvale.gov.uk.

Energy Rebate update

In a recent press release ([South](#)), we shared the news that we had already paid out over £8 million in energy rebates to more than 54,000 households who pay their council tax by direct debit.

From Monday 16 May we began sending out letters to the remaining 22,000 eligible households (those not on direct debit, or whose bank account can't be matched to those liable for the council tax at the property). The letter will prompt them to complete an online form to confirm their bank account details so they can receive their rebate.

Households will have until Monday 13 June to do this. Once this window has closed, we will then make the payments to everyone who passes the eligibility checks. Please note, we will not be able to pay anyone before then.

Anyone who is not able to complete the form online will be able to call a special customer service team for assistance.

Any qualifying household that fails to complete the form by the deadline or pass the checks at this stage will have the £150 deducted off their bill at a later date.

To be able to carry out this work as quickly as possible, we're asking residents not to contact us to chase their 'rebate' payment – we're expecting everyone that's eligible to receive their money by 4 July.

If people need more information the scheme, please direct them to southoxon.gov.uk/counciltaxrebate

Changes proposed for parking enforcement

We are considering some changes to how we enforce our car park policies to ensure they reflect best practice and to match those used by the county council's on street enforcement team. For more information head to the websites [South](#)

Letter thanking us for our support

We received a thank you letter from the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation National Expert Steering Group in recognition of all our continued hard work to implement new duties to support victims of domestic abuse and their children. [You can read the full letter here](#)

Boiler Upgrade Scheme opens

The government has announced a new £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme to help improve the energy efficiency of homes, reduce energy bills and cut emissions in the long-term. The scheme is now open for people to apply for the following support when replacing their oil or gas boilers:

- £5,000 off the cost and installation of an air source heat pump
- £5,000 off the cost and installation of a biomass boiler
- £6,000 off the cost and installation of a ground source heat pump

You can find out more about the scheme via [the government's website](#)

People asked for their views on 101 and 999 services

Residents are being asked to tell police chiefs about their experiences of the 101 and 999 services, as well as their preferred methods of contacting the service. The survey, run by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, will help inform police forces and commissioners on challenges around reporting to the police and could help form their future plans. [The survey is open until 26 June and can be completed here.](#)

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

Lynn Lloyd and Ian White – South Oxfordshire District Council