

SODC Newsletter – December 2021

Planning

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

5 Year Land Supply

We understand from our legal advisors that the High Court is expected to hear our case for a review of the recent Inspector's Planning Decision Little Sparrows, Sonning Common on the 6th of December. We will keep you informed of progress as soon as we can.

Enforcement

Members will be aware that the Enforcement Team at SODC have been struggling for some time due to the work load, and the Administration has put in place a strategy to address this. It has been discussed at the Council's Scrutiny Committee and Ian, chair of Scrutiny asked that the situation should be reviewed after 6 months instead of the year as proposed, which was accepted.

A copy of the Strategy is attached to the newsletter circulation email for the Parish Councils' information.

Neighbourhood Plan Reviews

As Chinnor has recently reviewed its Neighbourhood Development Plan, it benefits from the 3 Year Land for two years from the date of adoption. However, where a community has this protection, it needs to review the Plan every two year. We have had discussions with the SODC NDP Team, who have confirmed that, unless there is a radical change in the legal position, a review will still be required, but due to the extent of the recent Review, this should be a much less extensive piece of work, instead focusing more on specific policies, such as design, which may well mean that a further referendum will not be required.

We are still firming up the details and will provide you with a much more detailed report once that is clear.

Household Recycling Centre – Bledlow Ridge

Members may have seen premature reports on Social Media that that the Bledlow Ridge Household Recycling Centre is to be re-opened in the Spring of 2022 by Buckinghamshire Council. We have been told that this was after a confidential meeting held recently and it has resulted in a lot of premature speculation. Whether the facility reopens or not is something that the Cabinet at Buckinghamshire Council to decide and is outside the remit of our District Council. It may be that, as the authority responsible for providing and managing Oxfordshire Recycling Centres, our County Council may decide to help support such an initiative, but that is something that the County Councillors will need to decide.

Although it will be second or third hand, if we hear anything of interest on this matter we will let you know and in the mean time we will do what we can to encourage a dialogue.

Waste Collection over Christmas

Just a reminder that waste collections over Christmas change due to the Bank holidays. By now residents should all have received the council's leaflet about the arrangements delivered by the Post Office through their letter box but if not information is available on our SODC web site or alternatively if not already using it, by installing the BinZone App on their smart phones. It is

available for both Android and iPhone. You can keep up to date on waste matters all year round using this.

‘Spiking’

You may have seen reports in the media recently following an increase in instances of alleged drink and needle spiking which becomes even more of an issue as the Christmas and End Of Year Celebrations get under way. Being spiked with alcohol or drugs can make you and yours seriously vulnerable. 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.

Domestic Abuse

Stencils raising awareness of the support available for victims of Domestic Abuse have been appearing in public places across South Oxfordshire. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are working with local charity Reducing the Risk of Domestic Abuse to highlight the issue. They have stencilled messages in district council car parks as part of the ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence’, an annual international campaign which began on 25 November with White Ribbon Day – the International day for the elimination of violence against women, and ends on 10 December with Human Rights Day.

The stencils ask one of three questions:

- Do you feel like you are walking on eggshells?
- Are you afraid of your partner?
- Are you worried about someone you know being controlled?

and also include the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service’s Helpline number **0800 731 0055** (Mon-Fri 10-6 Sat 10-4) and Reducing the Risk’s website reducingtherisk.org.uk, where people can go to find help and advice.

The councils also have several other schemes and projects that helps residents’ safety and ensures they have access to support should they need it, including Ask for Angela, Safe Places and ‘Safe Journey, Safe Destination’.

CoVID 19 and Omicron

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

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

Last weekend due to the very cold weather SWEPEP (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](#)

Household Support Fund has opened

The government's Household Support Fund (HSF) is now open in South Oxfordshire, offering a very important lifeline for households who may struggle to afford life's essentials over winter. The money will primarily be used to help pay for food, energy, and water bills for residents, but other costs can also be covered.

The council is using the HSF to offer support to residents through a voucher scheme. The fund is open to any resident who is struggling and can't afford basic household essentials.

To find out about the scheme or seek help residents can call Citizens Advice on 0808 278 7907.

Motions Before Full council

One of the functions of Full Council is to consider Motions by Members. We thought that, as a Report is being given to Council on the Motions put before the Council since the start of the Administration's term in office, it might be of interest to our Parish Councils, and we have attached a copy of the Report to the Newsletter Circulation email.

Free parking days return for the run up to Christmas

Don't forget to spread the word – we're helping shoppers buy local this Christmas with the return of our popular free festive parking days.

Anybody who can't get to local businesses by walking, cycling or public transport can take advantage of free parking in district council car parks.

We provide the annual free parking days to encourage people to shop locally for Christmas presents and to catch up with friends and family in our great pubs, cafés and restaurants during the festive period. This year it's even more important to help to support local businesses following the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Free parking in South and Vale car parks is available on the following days:

- Abingdon – Saturdays 4, 11 and 18 December
- Didcot – Mondays – 6, 13 and 20 December
- Faringdon – Saturdays 27 November, and 4 and 11 December
- Goring – Saturdays 4, 11 and 18 December
- Henley – Fridays 10, 17 and 24 December
- Thame – Saturdays 4, 11 and 18 December
- Wallingford – Thursdays 9, 16 and 23 December
- Wantage – Saturdays 4, 11 and 18 December

On the above days there's no need to display a ticket, however maximum stay times will still apply in specific car parks – more details on this at southoxon.gov.uk/parking or whitehorsedc.gov.uk/parking.

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.

Sewage overflow and flooding

As we mentioned last month, we have been becoming more and more concerned about the issue of sewage and issues with it's safe disposal by Thames Water. As Chair of Scrutiny, Ian has now started the process to set up an All-Parties Task and Finish Group to review of the issue. As sponsor of this piece of work, it would be in appropriate for Ian to be a member of the group, but Lynn has volunteered to be a member.

During the initial process commissioning this Group, it has become apparent that this issue is also significant in the Vale of White Horse, and Ian has decided to expand the Group to include that Council in a joint piece of work.

As ever, there is much more that we could cover, but we now take the opportunity to wish you and yours a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Lynn Lloyd and Ian White – South Oxfordshire District Council