District Councillor Update

November 2026

Cllr Jo Robb, Cllr James Norman

Grants closing soon!

Climate and Nature Grant

Deadline: 20 November. Be quick!

A total of £100,000 is available for projects that help with climate adaptation, resilience or nature restoration. These might include, for example, water butts outside a village hall, solar panels on a community building or a new fenced wildlife pond in a local park.

Councillor Community Grants

Deadline: 4 December. At the time of writing, our grants are very undersubscribed. Please let your community groups know that we have funds to support their projects and we are keen to ensure this money goes into our communities.

Please get in touch if you'd like further information or a call with our Grants team who can advise you.

https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/councillor-community-grants/

Other funding and support

The District Council has a range of other grants available including:

- Disabled facilities grant – funding for home adaptations
- Business rates relief
- Energy saving grants to help make your home more energy efficient
- Home improvement loans

Help and contact details

Please contact the community enablement team if you need any help with one of the above schemes or your application grants@southandvale.gov.uk or call **01235 422405**

Take a look at the grants page on the SODC website for more information: https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/

Planning Changes

Under the new scheme of delegation, in force since 31 October, planning officers alone will consider the vast majority of applications. These cannot be "called in" for consideration by Planning Committees.

For a planning application to be eligible for consideration by Committee, it must meet at least one of the referral tests set out in the government's regulations. These tests are:

1. It must raise an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.
2. The application must raise a significant planning matter having regard to the Development Plan and any other material considerations.

Members who believe either criterion is met must complete a Gateway Referral Request. Officers then undertake an Assessment of Significance against the two referral tests, reviewed by a team leader and development manager.

If officers conclude that at least one test is met, the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member consider the application at a Gateway Referral Meeting and decide whether to refer it to Planning Committee.

If both agree that referral is justified, the application goes to Planning Committee at the earliest opportunity. Otherwise, it continues to be determined under delegated powers.

The minutes and outcomes of Gateway Referral Meetings will be published on the councils' websites.

It will be interesting to see what matters are referred to Committee under the Gateway test.

Devolution – Mayoral Strategic Authority for Thames Valley

Following a meeting with local leaders on 21 October, the government announced plans to proceed with a Mayoral Strategic Authority covering Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon.

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, wrote to the responsible minister to raise concerns about the proposed geography.

She argued that a grouping of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire reflects established economic and public service links.

Replacing Buckinghamshire with Swindon raises concerns about policing, fire and rescue, health and other strategic partnerships. Realigning the boundaries for these services with the proposed mayoral area is likely to be complex and time-consuming.

Local Government Reorganisation

Perhaps we are taking tips from James Blunt in Traitors – just as we predicted that the government would not be pursuing Local Government Reorganisation in this parliamentary period, it announces that it is “minded to” replace the seven existing councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire with three new unitary councils.

- **Greater Oxford Council** – covering Oxford and its immediate surroundings.
- **North Oxfordshire Council** – covering most of the existing Cherwell and West Oxfordshire districts.
- **Ridgeway Council** – covering most of the existing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts, combined with West Berkshire.

The new councils are due to go live on 1 April 2029, with elections to the new shadow authorities taking place in May 2028. District Council elections will go ahead as normal in May 2027.

Fly-Tipping

Please report fly-tipping through the SODC website: search for "flytip" and "SODC". You can use the Reporting Form and include a what3words reference to help Biffa locate the waste.

Alternatively, contact Biffa directly: call **01235 422123** or email **admin.southoxford@biffa.co.uk**.

Deer carcasses are also classed as waste. Please report them through the same channels.

As ever, please feel free to get in touch with us if you have any questions.

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