District Council Report: December 2019

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We have been told that there will be no news from or discussions with the government and South Oxfordshire regarding the Local Plan situation until after the General Election.

However, there are many other things that we are getting on with at the Council. Apart from making a decision to properly finance the new building at Crowmarsh, we have given the go ahead for a raft of repairs, updates and renewals in leisure centres, public toilets, computer systems and other areas that are long overdue.

Voter registration – from the Elections Team:

To vote on 12 December, residents need to be registered by 26 November (tomorrow, as I write this!). Anyone who isn't registered at their current address should visit **gov.uk/register-to-vote** or call our Elections team on 01235 422528 to ensure they are eligible to vote.

Anyone who has moved house since they last registered will need to register again.

Anybody who registers to vote between 4 November and the cut-off date of 26 November should receive their poll card by 6 December.

Postal and proxy voting
Postal vote applications need to reach our Elections team by 5pm on 26 November – application forms are available at **southoxon.gov.uk/votebypost** or **whitehorsedc.gov.uk/votebypost**.

Anyone who applies for a postal vote between 8 and 26 November will not be sent their postal ballot pack until around 3 December (Those who registered earlier will receive a pack earlier than this).

Important information
Everybody who applies for a postal vote should receive their ballot pack by 6 December – if it doesn't arrive by this date people should contact Elections on 01235 422528 to request a replacement. This is the earliest point at which we can issue replacements.

With postal votes we are reliant on the mail being delivered on time. Therefore, if anyone is likely to be away after 6 December, they should consider applying for a proxy vote instead to guarantee their vote.

The deadline to apply for a proxy vote is 5pm on 4 December. To find out more residents should visit **southoxon.gov.uk/votebyproxy** or **whitehorsedc.gov.uk/votebyproxy**.

More information on the general election can be found at **southoxon.gov.uk/elections** or **whitehorsedc.gov.uk/elections**

Free parking in the run up to Christmas

People in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse can benefit from free parking in district council car parks on certain days in December.

The annual free parking tradition is provided by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils to encourage people to shop locally for their Christmas presents. The free parking days allocated to each area are agreed with the individual town councils depending on which day would best suit local traders.

Free Christmas parking days also means people don't have to pay to park if they wish to catch up with friends and family in the pubs, cafés and restaurants during the festive period.

People will be able to park their car without paying for a ticket in South and Vale car parks on the following days next month:

South Oxfordshire

- Didcot – Mondays (9, 16, 23 Dec)
- Goring – Saturdays (7, 14, 21 Dec)
- Henley – Tuesdays (3, 10, 17 Dec)
- Thame – Saturdays (7, 14, 21 Dec)
- Wallingford -Thursdays (5, 12,19 Dec)

Vale of White Horse

- Abingdon – Saturdays (7, 14, 21 Dec)
- Faringdon – Saturdays (7, 14, 21 Dec)
- Wantage – Saturdays (7, 14, 21 Dec)

On the above days there's no need to display a ticket.

Parking is also free on a Sunday in many of the council-owned town centre car parks in South and Vale - please check the tariff boards in car parks for further details.

Capital Grants

South Oxfordshire District Council has £320,000 of funding available for local groups, including town and parish councils, undertaking building work and other community and energy saving projects in the coming year.

The council's capital grants scheme opened in at the end of October. Similar awards have gone towards a new playground and outdoor gym, restoration of church bells and energy efficient improvements to a village hall.

Local organisations in South Oxfordshire have until midday on **2 December 2019** to apply to the council for money towards improving, creating or replacing community facilities.

Grants range from £1,000, which could cover the replacement of a village noticeboard, to £75,000 towards a project like a new recreation ground, but the improvements must benefit local residents. The maximum we are able to fund is 50 per cent of the total project cost. Groups are encouraged to refer to the guidance notes available on the council's website before making an application.

For more information and advice please visit the council's website www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants, email the grants team at grants@southandvale.gov.uk or give them a call on 01235 422405.

Volunteers needed to help set councillor's allowances

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are looking for volunteers to join a joint panel to help set councillors' allowances. The Independent Remuneration Panel for councillors' allowances consists of up to five members of the public who help determine how much money councillors from both councils receive for their time, while also giving value for money. Previous panellists have included members of the police, business community, also a theatre manager, pilot and vet. Successful candidates need to attend two or three meetings before the end of 2019 and would expect to be part of the panel until September 2023, although after the initial review of allowances in 2019, there is very little extra work. The role is voluntary however travelling expenses can be paid. The closing date for applications is **29 November 2019**.

Download an application pack here

For more information, email paul.bateman@southandvale.gov.uk or call 01235 422523.

'Don't Disappear' – Recognising relationship abuse

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)have launched a video 'Don't Disappear' to help people recognise relationship abuse.   This is following their 'Know this isn't Love' coercive control campaign from earlier in the year. It will be launched under the branding of Victims First, an

organisation that supports victims and witnesses of crime across the Thames Valley and is managed by the OPCC.

'Don't Disappear' tells the story of Jamie and Emma; from the seemingly loving early stages of their relationship, to the development of coercive and controlling behaviours such as jealousy and possessiveness, control, love bombing and isolation. We hope the video will help people who may be in controlling relationships to identify with it and potentially seek help. Please share on social media if you use it.

The video can be found at https://youtu.be/d6rt8w5HBWw

Anyone who is concerned they may be experiencing this can contact Victims First **for support on 0300 1234 148** You can find further information about coercive control at www.victims-first.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigns/

Civil Parking Enforcement

The District Council is exploring the options on taking on parking enforcement. It appears that in the whole of England, out of 326 local authorities, 21 do not handle civil parking enforcement, including three of the four Oxfordshire Districts. Unfortunately, I could not attend the information evening for councillors about this, but I will keep you updated as I hear more.

New life-saving app

A new potentially life-saving app can tell emergency services the precise location they need to go to when someone needs assistance and Thames Valley Police is recommending everybody installs it on their smartphone.

What3words divides the entire globe into 57 trillion 3m x 3m squares – if someone needs assistance it will then provide a specific three-word code for where they are, making it a lot easier for the emergency services to find someone in a rural area or unfamiliar location.

The app, which is used by emergency services across the country, is free and doesn't require an internet connection to use – for more information please see the **what3words website**.

And I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas,