

## **District Councillor Report – Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, October 2024**

### **Joint Local Plan update**

Following on from last month's special Cabinet and Council meetings, where approval was given for the districts' draft Joint Local Plan to be published for comment, it is now at the next stage.

Starting from Tuesday 1 October, we have made the plan available for comment – this will be a six-week opportunity for stakeholders to let us know if they think our Joint Local Plan meets all the relevant requirements.

We're aiming to submit it along with the comments we've received on to the Planning Inspectorate for formal examination in December.

This is a more technical part of the process as we carried out two highly successful public consultations during the development of the plan, which were recognised and commended at national awards ceremonies.

### **National Planning Policy changes consultation**

The councils have submitted a formal response to the consultation. You can view the councils' response here: [Council Responses to Consultations about Planning - South Oxfordshire District Council \(southoxon.gov.uk\)](https://southoxon.gov.uk)

Our consultation submissions are particularly important and timely given the work we are currently undertaking to progress our Joint Local Plan. Proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, when published by government, could have a long-lasting impact on the future of our district.

### **Flooding**

Please keep an eye on the [Environment Agency's flood warning map](#) to track any issues in your area. Please also be aware that this monitors the main rivers, and smaller watercourses which have also been affected and caused localised flooding last month.

While Oxfordshire County Council has primary responsibility for co-ordinating the local flood response, officers from across our councils are providing an important supporting role too.

Please look at the [Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit](#) (on the county council's website), which contains useful advice on what to do if you're at risk of flooding, or indeed if you're currently experiencing a flood.

The District Council does not supply sandbags as they are relatively ineffective when compared to purpose designed flood protection products.

If residents feel they would still benefit from sandbags, they can buy unfilled sacks and a supply of sand from most DIY stores and Builders Merchants.

**Of course, if anybody is in an emergency situation where people are at risk, they should dial 999 immediately.**

We also advise all residents to investigate if their property is at risk of flooding ahead of bad weather and to take proactive action to protect their property. Information on flood risk in the area can be found here: [www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk](http://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk)

If their property is at risk they can sign up to the warnings in their area via the Environment Agency Website: [www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings](http://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings) or by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

**Recycling and waste collections have also been disrupted with the recent flooding** – we are posting regular updates on social media and on the councils' websites.

Our crews are continuing to catch up on the waste and recycling collections which have been delayed due to the flooding.

Our advice to residents is to leave your bins out and our crews will aim to return to as soon as possible, where it is safe to do so. If bins haven't been emptied after three days, residents can contact 0300 0610 610.

### **Homes for Ukraine Grant Scheme**

Community organisations are now able to apply for The Homes for Ukraine Grant Scheme with grants ranging from £250 to £2,000.

This grant scheme is designed to help fund projects or services that support the successful integration and settlement of Homes for Ukraine guests into their new communities across the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire.

The scheme opened for applications on 16th September. The grant scheme is being administered in partnership with Cherwell District Council. You can download the application form [from the SODC website](#) alongside this [guidance document](#).

### **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Every responsible authority (in our case the County Council) is required by law now to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

SODC is a member of the Local Nature Partnership, to which this responsibility has been delegated, and there have been a number of workshops involving large numbers of stakeholders over the past 18 months or so.

The final draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be available for public consultation for six weeks from 15th October, so I will send out links when it is launched.

### **Didcot Eco-Fair**

Everyone is invited to the Didcot Eco Fair at **Cornerstone** on Saturday 2nd November from 11am to 3pm when we will be celebrating all things green and showcasing our districts' fantastic sustainable businesses, with a clothing swap, great ideas on how to avoid food waste and advice on how to save energy.

Didcot Garden Town, in partnership with South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and Sustainable Didcot, is hosting the free family-friendly event.

Centre stage will be the Eco Marketplace with a variety of eco-friendly stalls specialising in handmade products, clothing, food and drink.

### **Parking charge notice scam**

We are aware of a scam circulating locally and that some people in our districts are continuing to receive text messages about having to pay a parking fine.

These are scams – we would not send these messages. If you receive one of these texts ignore the message and please spread the word to warn others.

### **Half term fun and more**

October half-term is just around the corner, so consider entertaining children with a treat at the Cornerstone with the latest family ballet from Let's All Dance.

Whacky costumes, impressive dance moves, and larger-than-life characters balance out an important message about difference and acceptance in **The Ugly Duckling**.

Full of hilarity and heart, this show is great for the whole family, especially children aged 2-12, and will be opening at Cornerstone on Sunday 27th October.

If you're looking for something a little spookier this half term, join Cornerstone's in-house art tutor for a **[Make Your Own Halloween Mask workshop](#)**.

Your little monsters can create their very own spooky (or silly) Halloween mask using a range of fun and colourful art supplies. Perfect for children in school years 1-6.

For full details of these activities and more, visit the **[Cornerstone website](#)**.

### **Lobbying for better infrastructure for clean water and sewage**

Our Thames Champion, Cllr Jo Robb, is in Parliament meeting ministers again this week, continuing her sustained work to push for change so that our sewage and clean water supply fit for the future.

Jo met with national campaigner for clean water Feargal Sharkey and other campaigners in the summer at Westminster to lobby the new government for a sustainable plan for this infrastructure and continues to work hard on this for the benefit of all residents and nature in South Oxfordshire.

As ever, if you have any questions or issues you would like to contact me about:

**[sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk](mailto:sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk)**.

Or call me & leave a message: 01235 635566.