District Councillor Report – Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, June/July 2026

Housing and Employment Development Plan

As many of you know one of the District Council's responsibilities is to draw up a development plan every five years for new housing and employment and where they should be sited in the district.

The council has completed a new development plan jointly with the Vale district (the Joint Local Plan or JLP) and this was scheduled to be adopted by the end of 2025.

Because of shilly-shallying from government ministers and the interpretation of the government inspectors, this has been severely delayed and we have just been informed this JLP is not expected to be adopted until mid-2027.

This is extremely disappointing because, as I have been said many times before, this plan is one of the most advanced in the country in terms of energy efficient homes and businesses, carbon savings, renewable energy and nature recovery in new developments, while not adding any more to the high numbers of houses already committed.

Furthermore, we have just been informed by the government that we must start ANOTHER new development plan, even as the draft one is going through a further inspection process.

This must start immediately and be completed in 30 months, a much faster timetable than previously.

It is not clear whether policies in the draft JLP waiting to be adopted will be transferred into any new plan, but it IS clear that the required housing numbers will increase substantially.

The upshot is that the delayed JLP with its exemplary policies will only be applied to new planning permissions for around two years.

Considering this plan took over five years to develop with a considerable financial investment, I feel that government policy and direction is a complete waste of resources in the pursuit of ever-increasing housing numbers that have not shown to solve the housing affordability crisis at all.

Because of this waste I didn't feel I was able to vote in favour of starting a new plan at the last council meeting and in fact abstained as the council has not been offered a real choice in this.

I just hope that the draft JLP can be adopted as soon as possible and some of the policies and there's in that plan can be transferred into any new policies.

Foundation Strategic Authority

Meanwhile, the council received a letter from the government proposing a Foundation Strategic Authority for the area covered by Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon.

This is a regional governance body that oversees things like strategic transport infrastructure, economic development and regeneration.

An FSA is overseen by representatives of all the constituent councils rather than by a mayor.

It is a new layer of local government, brought in alongside the proposed change to unitary councils replacing the current District/County set up.

The government has moved from a consultative approach, locally led, to a top-down instruction it seems.

What with a new development plan and housing numbers being forced upon us, the Oxford Growth Commission and now a Foundation Strategic Authority, at the moment it is very difficult to understand who will be doing what and what democratic oversight there will be.

Waste Collections Rounds will change

Small changes to waste and recycling rounds from **Monday 29th June 2026** will take place to improve service reliability.

While every household’s scheduled collection day will **remain the same,** the **time** that crews arrive on each street may change.

Vehicles may arrive earlier than usual, so residents should **put their bins out by 6am** on their scheduled collection day to avoid missing a collection.

If possible, people are encouraged to put their bins out the evening before after 6pm, provided they do not block pavements, footpaths or cycle ways.

Performing Arts Grant Open soon

Local arts organisations can apply for a share of £60,000 from South Oxfordshire District Council's Performing Arts Grant when applications open on **Monday 20th July.**

The funding supports arts and community projects that give residents across the district the chance to take part in the performing

arts, bringing communities together, improving wellbeing and helping grow South Oxfordshire's arts scene.

Voluntary and community organisations can apply for grants of between £500 and £5,000. Funding can be used for projects such as festivals, concerts, dance lessons, accessible music sessions and equipment purchases**.**

Didcot Festival of Cultures

On Saturday 11th July you're invited to celebrate culture and community at the first ever Didcot Festival of Cultures.

This free, family-friendly event takes place from 10am to 3pm at Cornerstone Arts Centre, featuring live music, dance, food, workshops and activities inspired by cultures from across Britain and around the world.

The event has been made possible by working in partnership with Didcot Town Council, Healthy Didcot, Cornerstone Arts Centre and Didcot Interfaith Group. For the full programme visit **Cornerstone's website**.

Please email me with any District-related issues that I might be able to help with: **sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk**