District Councillor Report – Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, August/September 2026

Local Government Reorganisation – new councils for Oxfordshire

The Minister of State's decision is that from May 2028 the new Oxfordshire and West Berkshire unitary councils will consist of three separate councils.

These will be North Oxfordshire, incorporating parts of the current Cherwell, and parts of West Oxfordshire; Greater Oxford which incorporates Oxford city and most of the Green Belt area around Oxford; and Ridgeway council which incorporates some of South Oxfordshire and most of Vale of the White Horse and all of West Berkshire.

All the current councils, including the County Council, will be abolished and three new councils will be 'vested' (i.e. created) on 1st May 2028.

Most of this current ward will be within the Greater Oxford council area, except for Long and Little Wittenham, which will be in Ridgeway.

New wards will be created for the new councils, where needed, and the shape and size of these is being proposed to the Minister at the moment.

This enormous change will take some time to adapt to, as well as a massive amount of administration.

It is the biggest change since 1974. And it is not the choice I supported with the risk of being 'swallowed up' by Oxford City something I will be working hard to prevent, as well as working to maintain the rural character of this area.

I will be working as hard as I can, along with the council officials, to ensure services remain effective. But there is no doubt there will be bumps along the way.

Changes to Planning Rules – Town & Parish Briefing

An invitation has been sent out to town and parish councils inviting them to an online briefing session on **Thursday 10th September 5.30pm – 7.30pm**.

This will cover the major changes under the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions which comes into force from 31st October 2026.

These changes are quite widespread and it's important that parish councillors understand them. For those attending, the session will be

recorded and shared afterwards. Please register their interest by emailing – **planning.admin@southandvale.gov.uk**

Cash for community groups with councillor grant scheme

A total of £270,000 is available to support community projects with this year's round of the Councillor Community Grant Scheme. Each councillor is allocated £7,500 for their ward.

The grant scheme launched on Monday 17th August and is open to non-profit organisations including community and voluntary groups and town and parish councils.

Previous projects that have been supported with this grant have ranged from mental health support groups for children, play and sporting equipment, memorial benches and solar panels for community buildings.

If any groups or parish councils wish to apply, get in touch with me or go to the Grants page for more details: **Councillor Community Grant Scheme 2026/27 – now open – South Oxfordshire District Council**

With the councils changing across Oxfordshire, we don't know if these grants will continue, so if your group has been thinking of applying, get on with it!

Cool spaces

With the recent heatwaves and their impact still vivid in our memories, the Council website has been updated with advice and guidance for community groups and managers of community buildings who want to set up Cool Spaces, as was recently discussed in full Council meetings.

The advice includes what is needed and how to sign up to national map of cool (and warm) spaces.

More information is on the website: **Community groups can help in a heatwave - South Oxfordshire District Council**

More grants! – the Performing Arts Grant is now open

Applications are now open for the latest round of the Performing Arts Grant scheme.

The scheme offers grants of £500 to £5,000 to town/parish councils, voluntary and community organisations to support performing arts projects that bring people together and benefit local communities.

If you know a group that could benefit, please encourage them to apply. Full details are available on our website.

For any questions, the Community Arts team can be contacted at **performingartsgrants@southandvale.gov.uk**.

Please help share this opportunity with local organisations and community groups.

For any support or queries please email me: **sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk.**