

District Council Report December 2023

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Joint Local Plan 2041

All of the documents relating to the forthcoming consultation on the new Joint Local Plan are now in the public domain as they were reviewed by Cabinet on 30th November and approved for launch. The public consultation itself will be launched in January and I would encourage all Parish Councils to submit feedback using the very user-friendly new online platform.

A preview of the Joint Local Plan consultation materials is available on the [South Oxfordshire District Council website](#).

Some of the gaps will be filled in for the full consultation – mainly pictures etc. There is an ‘In a Nutshell’ document to help people glean the main issues too.

Warm spaces

Residents needing a warm place this winter are welcome to come to our leisure centres, which are opening up as Warm Spaces again this year.

The following centres are available for people to come to charge their phones, have a warm drink and a friendly chat:

- **South Oxfordshire:** Abbey Sports Centre, Didcot Wave, Henley Leisure Centre, Parks Sports Center and Thame Leisure Centre.
- **Vale of White Horse:** Wantage Leisure Centre, Faringdon Leisure Centre and White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre.

The Warm Spaces scheme will run from **9am-2pm on weekdays** in the café and communal areas of the centres. All the centres have been registered on the official **Warm Spaces website**

Local green spaces grants available

A reminder in case you know a local volunteer group or community organisation focused on nature recovery and biodiversity. They could be eligible for funding from SODC. We've teamed up with the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) to manage the applications. The next deadline for applications is 8 January 2024. For more information please contact Rachel at TOE on admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk.

Developer contributions

In October, SODC transferred and released over one million pounds in infrastructure funding to provide a boost to our communities.

We transferred £908,127 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions to town and parish councils to help support new development in the area. Since April, a further £115,557 of Section 106 funding has been released to relevant council departments, town or parish councils or local organisations towards improving community facilities for the benefit of current and future residents of the district.

You can see a breakdown of S106 funds approved and paid out and CIL monies transferred online here: [South Oxfordshire](#) (documents will download automatically).

Grant scheme for people without gas boilers

For residents who live in homes without gas boilers - they may be eligible for energy efficiency upgrades for their home, such as insulation, solar panels and heat pumps, all funded by the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2). These upgrades can help to reduce energy bills and make homes easier to keep warm. **The grants are available to homeowners and**

landlords whose properties are not heated by gas boilers, with a household income of less than £39,000 and with a low energy rating (D-G). Please spread the word and ask people to visit welcomethewarmth.org.uk to find out more.

Solar power in Wallingford

Last month, Wallingford Sports Trust officially opened its new solar panels and batteries installation thanks in part to more than £40,000 of our grant funding.

Following a huge increase in electricity costs which threatened the future of the Sport Park, they took urgent action. This has resulted in the installation of 130 solar panels and eight batteries, which have delivered an enormous reduction in energy consumption, expected to save them between £25,000 to £50,000 per year in the future. The energy created by the solar panels is enough to power five houses every day and is expected to make carbon savings of 28 tonnes per year!

We were very pleased to be able to contribute to this major energy-saving project to help keep the sports park going for years to come. You can find out more about this fantastic project, and other case studies, on the [South Oxfordshire improving energy efficiency webpage](#).

Over £440,000 awarded to support swimming pools in South and Vale

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils successfully secured this funding through Sport England to help finance the running of six of its Better UK swimming facilities. The funding is part of the government's Phase 1: Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF). The award will help ensure residents continue to have access to good swimming facilities across the two districts

Day to day the centres are managed by the council's leisure contractor GLL. There has been huge increase in costs to manage the pools over the last few years due to the rising energy costs and other financial pressures because of the Covid-19 pandemic and GLL will use this additional revenue to help finance the maintenance of the indoor swimming pools at leisure centres in South Oxfordshire and the Vale.

South Oxfordshire pools in Berinsfield, Henley, Didcot and Thame have been awarded £285,465. In the meantime, the Riverside pool and splashpad in Wallingford was announced as a finalist in the Red Kite Day Oxfordshire award for Best Outdoor Play.

Red Kite Days is an organisation that shares information about days out, activities and fun things to do for children and families on its website and social media accounts. This is a great way for us to publicise our fantastic local facilities.

Getting better use out of the outdoor gym equipment

The Active Communities team offers outdoor fitness sessions to help residents get the most from equipment installed in public spaces. The team can provide a video of exercises tailored for the equipment in your area. To find out more, please email active.communities@southandvale.gov.uk with 'Outdoor gym' as the subject.

Could Community Payback help?

If your local area has public spaces or community buildings that need work, there may be help through the Community Payback scheme.

Community Payback is where offenders work on coordinated projects to pay back the community for their crimes, for example by removing graffiti, clearing wasteland, weeds or overgrowing bushes, or decorating a community centre.

To find out how your community could benefit and how to refer local projects, please visit the [South Community Payback page](#).

Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

This summer, the government named Oxfordshire County Council as a 'responsible authority' to lead on nature recovery in the county through a [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#). Both of our councils are 'supporting authorities' along with Natural England and the other Oxfordshire councils. The county council has a new webpage introducing [Oxfordshire's LNRS](#) where they explain how they are preparing the strategy through engagement and consultations with a wide range of audiences to agree on species and habitats and how they can be supported.

National landscapes

Last week, all designated "Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty" (AONBs) in England and Wales have been renamed as 'National Landscapes'. The new name reflects their national importance and the vital contribution they make to protect the nation from the threats of climate change, nature depletion and the wellbeing crisis.

This means our local AONBs will now be known as the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and The Chilterns National Landscape. You can find out more about the name change and the National Landscapes' vision on the [National Landscapes website](#).

Christmas Office Hours

As usual, the council offices will be closed to the public from Christmas Day until New Year.

The last working day will be Friday 22 December. Our Customer Contact Centre and front desk reception will close at the usual closing time of 4.30pm on that day. The office will reopen as normal on Tuesday 2 January 2024. Our emergency out of hours services to report a homeless issue, a dangerous structure, flooding or a dead animal on the highway will continue to run over the Christmas break – details on our website here - [south](#).

Shop local this Christmas

Many small businesses in our districts will struggle with the cost-of-living crisis this winter, and every sale makes a difference. This helps keep our local economy vibrant and is often better for the environment. We're running a campaign on this.

So this festive season, shop locally in our South and Vale towns – Abingdon, Botley, Didcot, Faringdon, Henley, Wallingford, Wantage and Thame – to help support our independent businesses and please share the word! Please look out for and share our social media messages supporting this campaign.

And finally....Bad weather and waste collections

If bad weather affects waste collections this winter, here's what will happen:

If we don't manage to empty somebody's bins on their scheduled collection day, they should leave them out for two more days and we'll do our best to come back and catch up.

If, after three days, we haven't managed to empty them, residents should bring their bins back in and we'll empty them next time they're due – if this happens, they'll be able to leave extra waste out beside their bin in a suitable container.

We'll keep people up to date with the disruptions on our websites, social media, and through the local press and media. Please call the Biffa call centre on 03000 610 610 if there are any queries.

Contact me here: sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk

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