District Councillor Report - February 2024

Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye

The next Joint Local Plan – consultation and low carbon housing

Planning is a key statutory responsibility for the district council and one of the main ways we can deliver on our priorities on climate change, nature and biodiversity, truly affordable housing and provision of new infrastructure.

The Government's climate change adviser, the Committee on Climate Change, has assessed that all new buildings must be "zero carbon" by 2025 if the UK is to meet its legally binding decarbonisation targets.

In 2015, as part of "cutting the green crap," the government scrapped the zero-carbon homes standard which was due to come into force the following year. As a result, more than a million new homes have been built with poor energy efficiency standards and resulting higher bills.

We managed to ensure South Oxfordshire's existing Local Plan 2035, which passed inspection in 2020, imposes energy efficiency standards that are higher than those required by building regulations.

But in December, the government announced its new Future Homes Standard which disappointed many with its lack of ambition. The announcement included a condition that any local planning policy on energy efficiency that **goes beyond current or planned building regulations "should be rejected" by planning inspectors** unless it is supported by "well-reasoned and robustly costed rationale."

In our Council's draft Joint Local Plan 2041 we have some new policy proposals which include ambitious zero carbon standards for new developments, that go beyond the Future Homes Standard. It will be vital that the Council backs up these policies with robust evidence if they are to pass inspection.

Government are suggesting higher standards will limit the number of new homes built. But both can be achieved. Having high national building standards that align with the climate emergency can provide the homes people need *and* tackle the climate and cost of living crises. After all, sustainable homes are cheaper to run and less costly for our planet.

The consultation on the preferred options for the Joint Local Plan will run until **11.59pm on 26th February 2024.**

Please visit www.southandvale.gov.uk/JLP to find out more and have your say on these proposals which will have a lasting impact on our district.

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Spring Clean

We are once again supporting the Keep Britain Tidy 'Great British Spring Clean' with litter pickers, high-viz jackets and bags available for loan to community litter picking groups and individuals, from Friday 15 March to Sunday 31 March.

Equipment is limited and it's first-come-first-served, so bookings should be made as soon as possible by completing and returning the booking form and declaration document available on South's litter picking webpage. We must receive completed forms at least two weeks before a litter pick takes place.

'Greening' your business

We're urging local businesses and organisations to take part in a survey to find how best to help them find new markets, make potential cost savings as well as becoming more environmentally-friendly.

If you can, please help us spread the word. The survey, created in partnership between the councils and Oxford Brookes Business School, takes just 15 minutes to complete. **Businesses, local groups, charities, town and parish councils, public sector, social enterprises and other organisations in South Oxfordshire are invited to** have their say here.

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