

Our new Council was formed following the elections in 2015, giving a very strong Conservative majority which has and will continue to help us deliver major positive initiatives. These have delivered more value for money and better services for the District.

Cabinet – we have had a full Schedule of Work ranging from Dealing with Homelessness, Refurbishment of facilities and equipment at our Leisure Centres and some of the District's Public Toilets, and Treasury Management and Investment Planning for the next few years. Cabinet has also worked hard with the other Councils involved in the development of the Corporate Services Project, extending the way we have worked with the Vale of the White Horse previously to deliver even greater efficiencies without degrading the services we offer.

Committees - As well as the full complement of committees, SODC is represented by members on a number of external boards. These include the Community Safety Partnership, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and The Chiltern Conservation Board. We are also represented on The River Thames Alliance, the Police And Crime Commissioners Panel and we are actively working on relaunching our commitment as a Council to the Armed Forces Covenant. A couple of the more unusual items to come before our Licencing Panels this year were an all-electric taxi For Didcot (we believe a first For Oxfordshire) and Licencing and amateur film for public performance.

Community Safety - Even with the major cuts of the austerity years, we have worked with our Police & Crime Commissioner in introducing initiatives, seeing Thames Valley Police Force's performance improve from one of the least effective forces to the group right at the top of the League. We have also maintained our support for additional PCSOs in our District.

Waste And Recycling - For the second year SODC has been awarded top place in the Recycling League Table in the country. During the last year, the kerb-side collection of fabrics and small electrical items for recycling has been introduced. We are occasionally asked if waste really is recycled, and we can confirm that that is the case. Councillors have visited the BIFFA recycling Centre at Edmonton, the Agrivert Food and Garden Waste Facilities at Benson & the Anaerobic Digestion Facility at Cassington and also the Incinerator Facility at Yarnton, where the heat produced is used to generate electricity.

Finances - South Oxfordshire remains a financially sound council. Despite increasing financial restrictions we have been able to decrease, and for the coming year freeze, our part of the council tax. Our sound and prudent approach to money has still allowed us to maintain our Capital & Revenue Grants scheme. Maintaining our long term Financial Plan is vital, given the continuing reduction in Central Government Support, which we expect to see removed in the next three years.

Development – Didcot Garden Town – We have secured funding to help us develop Didcot for the 21st Century, granting Garden Town Status. This will provide additional funding and enable us to deliver the infrastructure to support the new businesses and

housing needed. This also includes the development of the Didcot Gateway, which aims to make the centre of the town a more attractive place to live and work.

Development – Berinsfield – For a long time, this Community has been in need of support and improvement, and Council has agreed funding for the necessary work to develop a Plan to improve the community and social infrastructure. This is a major piece of work and will lead to significant investment in the future.

Development – Local Plan – Work has continued to develop the Local Plan, setting out how future housing is to be delivered. The District has its own requirement identified through to 2031 which amounts to some 15,000 homes, but this is likely to be higher as we will probably have to accept some of those required by Oxford City Council, which has been unable to identify sufficient land to meet its needs. The Council also continues with strong support for Neighbourhood Planning, with more plans in the various stages of completion.

Development – Communities – Council has approved the new Corporate Plan, which looks at new and innovative initiatives to improve many aspects of life in the District, including air quality, social housing and transport, to name just a few. We have also provided the means for Town and Parish Councils and Voluntary Organisations to improve many facilities by way of our Grants Schemes.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need any further information on any of these items, or indeed any issues not addressed here.

Kind regards

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