SODC Monthly Report - Cllr Caroline Newton

January 2021

COVID-19

COVID infections in Oxfordshire (and South Oxfordshire) have multiplied over Christmas. Compliance with the COVID rules here is generally very good indeed, but it is more critical then ever that people follow the lock-down rules to the letter. The guidance now is that people should aim to keep at least 2m apart outside as well as inside.

Many SODC officers have been redeployed to support the vaccination programme - particularly in prioritising recipients and organising vaccination appointments etc. They have also been helping ensure vulnerable children and children of key-workers are able to get in to schools. It may be that responses on non-COVID issues will take longer than normal. But please get in touch with me if you need help getting help.

SODC continues to offer support for residents and businesses. The South and Vale Community Hub is available to help people access support and essentials.

The Community Hub team is currently available from:

·        8.30am-5pm Monday to Thursday

·        8.30am-4.30pm on Fridays

It sometimes takes a day or two for support to reach people, so anybody who thinks they’ll be in need should not wait until they’ve run out of supplies before getting in touch.

The councils’ Housing Needs team are available to help people who are at risk of being made homeless or who are sleeping rough – for more details visit [southoxon.gov.uk/housing](http://southoxon.gov.uk/housing) / [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/housing).

Support is also available to those experiencing financial difficulties – to find out more please visit [southoxon.gov.uk/benefits](http://southoxon.gov.uk/benefits) /  [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/benefits) to check whether you are eligible to apply for benefits.

If you are having difficulty paying your council tax please visit [southoxon.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/counciltax) / [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/counciltax) or call 0345 302 2313

Call 01235 422600 or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

The councils provide a local support service for businesses that are worried about the impact the lockdown will have on their operations, providing helpful guidance and pointing them in the direction of the support that is available.

Financial support for business affected by the restrictions continues to become available from the government and is administered locally by the district councils.

To find out more about the various support and grants available, and to sign up to receive notifications about new grant funding, businesses should visit [svbs.co.uk](http://www.svbs.co.uk/)

Planning

Local Plan 2035

At Full Council in December, councillors from all parties voted to adopt the Local Plan 2034. The Plan, which identifies the strategy for development in South Oxfordshire, covers the period 2012-35. It allocates locations for a maximum of 29,000 homes - partly in the ‘strategic sites’ of Chalgrove Airfield, Berinsfield, Culham and around Oxford City. Of those 29,000, 15,500 have already been built since 2012.

Many people have asked “But who is going to buy all these houses?” The fact is, it’s unlikely they will all be built: the 29,000 includes a large amount (20%) of so-called ‘head room’ to allow for a buffer for those sites are not, in the end, delivered at the scale allocated in the Plan and, of course, developers will only build at a pace that matches the demand.

Council’s adoption of the SODC Local Plan secures £500 million of Government funding for infrastructure for Oxfordshire, much of it in South Oxfordshire, including the Watlington and Stadhampton/Chiselhampton bypasses; and transport/road improvements around the Golden Balls roundabout (near Nottcutts on the A4074), Culham and Didcot.

Planning Decisions - reminder

Just a reminder that under the Covid-19 Emergency Powers, the Administration had suspended the Automatic referral of Planning Applications to Planning Committee if Parish Councils disagreed with the Planning Officer differed. This was subject to review after 6 months and at Full Council, the Administration has put forward its proposal to extend this provision until the 31st July 2021. This has been put in place as we expected.

Brown Bins

Garden waste bin collections have been suspended because of the pressure of COVID infections and isolations on the refuse collecting teams at Biffa. SODC has decided to prioritise collecting black and green bins for now. The decision will be reviewed on 23 January. A number of people have contacted me about getting a refund for missed collections: it’s not something that has been offered so far, but I shall certainly pursue once there is capacity in SODC to consider it.

In the meantime, regrettably, there is no service for collecting Christmas trees. It’s small comfort, but if you have space in your black bin you can cut up your Christmas tree and put it (possibly over a period of weeks) in there. Otherwise, please hold onto your tree and it will be collected as soon as Biffa can get back to collecting brown bins.

Latest update on Car Park Fees

The SODC Cabinet has been looking at car park fees for the SODC owned carparks, as these have not been reviewed for some years.

Full details of the Cabinet discussion can be found at:

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=10361>

At December’s Full Council, these proposals were approved.

Councillor Grants - reminder

With Covid-19 infection rates continuing to impact life the emergency councillor grants that I have been able to make will continue for a while longer although my pot is small now.

To date I have been able to support a number of areas, which include a grant to the Invicta Academy online school to help them with their work supporting school children in this Ward who have missed schooling because of lockdown, and also specific parish schemes from COVID guidance for a playground, to food parcels for needy residents, and support for village newsletters.

My normal, annual grant pot of £5,000 for local causes is now also available. It will close at noon on Friday 5 February 2021.

The scheme is open to bids from Parish Councils and other non-profit community organisations. I’m especially keen to fund projects that will contribute to SODC’s priorities, to protect and restore our natural world; action on the climate emergency and improved economic and community well-being. The funding is ideal for projects which are relatively low in costs and can be completed within a year.

To make an application, firstly have a chat with me, and then submit an application via our [website](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/councillor-community-grants/).

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If you have any further queries, please contact the community enablement team. mailto:communityenablement@southandvale.gov.uk

What should I do if I see a person rough sleeping in our districts? - Reminder

During office hours, please call the housing needs team on 01235 422 452. This is a direct line to a Housing Needs Officer. To contact the Out of Hours Officer, please call 01235 422 420.

If the person is in immediate danger, call an ambulance or the police on 999.  Don't put yourself in danger or approach someone acting strangely, even to help.

Outside office hours, please report to the non-profit homelessness organisation Streetlink which is funded by the Government.  You can report someone rough sleeping via its website [www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk) or by calling 0300 5000 914.

What support do residents receive during their time in temporary accommodation?

Some of the residents have complex support needs and we therefore provide a comprehensive support package:

* A Housing Needs Officer assesses residents’ support needs and helps them to secure longer term accommodation quickly
* A Temporary Accommodation Officer, who is the point of contact for residents during their stay, attends a sign up with all new residents.  The sign up includes a welcome pack with key information on the local area; a contact number if residents need any assistance; emergency household items if necessary, during their stay (bedding, kitchen utensils etc) and referrals to other support agencies including the Community Hub
* A Floating Support Officer visits residents at least weekly to provide practical and emotional support. The support includes helping with benefits, arranging care support, financial assistance and help with moving into longer term accommodation