

SODC A Conservative District Councillor's View

(Or What The Council Is Doing)

April 2018.

Planning and Housing:

My last newsletter explained that the Local Plan (which sets out the overall level and distribution of development required for South Oxfordshire) has continued to be the focus of much attention at SODC. And at a Full Council meeting at the end of March, Councillors voted by a majority not to progress the draft Local Plan in its current form to independent examination.

As I outlined last month, councillors' concerns centred around evolving information about the deliverability of the Plan, and particularly (though not exclusively) of the proposed development at Chalgrove Airfield.

Over the coming month, councillors will decide whether to redraft the Plan to include additional development sites as well as or instead of Chalgrove. It may be that some consideration can also be given to reducing the number of houses the District needs to see built in the next 15 years in the light of a new independent assessment of housing need.

Neighbourhood Plans:

Here's a quick update on the neighbourhood plans currently underway.

Watlington – a public hearing on the Neighbourhood Plan was held on 5 March
Pyrton - submission consultation launched week commencing 12 March
Chalgrove and Warborough & Shillingford submission consultations concluded on 14 March
Benson – examination is expected to conclude in mid-March
Sydenham has also now been designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area.
Just over half the residents of Dorchester-on-Thames took part in their referendum on 15 March resulting in almost 96 per cent of those that participated voted in favour of adopting their neighbourhood plan.
The Baldons submission consultation closed 26 March.
Pryton's neighbourhood plan has been submitted with the consultation currently running until 25 April.

Grants application dates confirmed:

SODC has confirmed the dates that groups can apply for community grants during 2018:

Capital grants - £811,000 available:

15 March to 26 April (round one)

20 June to 30 July (round two - budget permitting)

15 October to 30 November (potential round three - budget permitting)

Councillor grants - £5,000 available per councillor: 30 May (estimated) to 3 January 2019

Environment improvements and over a million for community projects in the 2018/19 budget:

South Oxfordshire District Council's 2018/19 budget is including more than £600,000 over three years to create a new team to tackle local environmental issues to make public areas in South Oxfordshire look more attractive.

More than £1.4 million is being made available in grants to support community projects, such as improvements to village halls and to charities who provide services to vulnerable people.

The district council will invest a further £100,000 to help address air quality issues and to identify new green travel initiatives, and more than £290,000 will be made available per year to help meet the increased demands on the council's planning service.

Enforcement action:

South Oxfordshire District Council successfully prosecuted Marenglen Dulaj of Magnolia Court, Swindon, on 27 March. He was ordered to pay a fine and other costs at Oxford Magistrates' Court after pleading guilty to the charge of using a motor vehicle to fly-tip having allowed his van to be used to dump rubbish sacks on land off Exlade Street between Woodcote and Checkendon on 21 April 2017. The court ordered him to pay a fine of £850, a victim surcharge of £85 and £500 costs and £201.42 compensation. The sum totalled £1,636.42.

£35,000 fine for restaurant over poor food hygiene:

A restaurant that broke an emergency hygiene notice by continuing to prepare food in prohibited areas has been fined £35,000 – the largest ever sum in a prosecution of its kind brought by South Oxfordshire District Council.

The Star and Garter Limited, which operates The Star and Garter in Thame, pleaded guilty to nine offences under food hygiene regulations at Oxford Magistrates' Court on Tuesday (27 February).

The court fined the company £35,000 and ordered it to pay costs to South Oxfordshire District Council of £2,071 and a victim surcharge of £170.

Social housing fraudster deprived those in genuine need:

A woman from Great Milton has been ordered to pay £1,530 after pleading guilty to making a fraudulent application for social housing - the first time that someone has been convicted for housing fraud in South Oxfordshire.

Gillian Norris, 46, of Green Hitchings, Great Milton, appeared at Oxford Magistrates' Court on Tuesday 30 January. Magistrates heard that Ms Norris had been living in the three-bedroom SOHA Housing home in Great Milton for more than four years, having applied for the property via the housing register. However, when she submitted her application she failed to disclose that she already owned a three-bedroom home in Holyhead, Wales, which she was renting out to a family member.

Ms Norris was caught following an anonymous tip-off and subsequent enquiries by SOHA Housing, South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxford City Council's Investigation Team, which specialises in housing fraud. Following her guilty plea Gillian Norris was fined £250 and ordered to pay £1,250 and a £30 victim surcharge.

SO Charitable Lottery launches:

Almost 50 charities and voluntary groups have so far applied to benefit from the new community lottery launched in South Oxfordshire (27 March). SO Charitable Lottery has been set up by South Oxfordshire District Council to raise funds for local good causes.

Tickets for the online lottery on sale via www.socharitable.co.uk and the first draw will take place on 28 April. It will then run weekly, with a one in 50 chance of winning a prize including a jackpot of £25,000.

From each ticket bought, 60p will go to good causes and the local community. Players can choose which local good cause they support when they purchase tickets. The rest of the money will go to the prize fund and running costs – the council will not receive any of the proceeds.

A quarter of a million pounds awarded to sports club in Thame:

A new sports clubhouse in Thame is a step closer after South Oxfordshire District Council awarded a grant of £250,000 to Thame Sports Club, which will help to provide a new building for the whole community to use. Thame Sports Club is home to the town's tennis and bowls club, but the clubhouse doubles up as a community building where many other groups meet to take part in a variety of activities including whist, art, wine appreciation and toddler groups.

The South Oxfordshire District Council Capital grant will make up over 45 per cent of the estimated total project cost of £554,000. The sports club has now raised around 70 per cent of the total cost and the sizeable funding from the council will make it much easier for the club to attract the final 30 per cent. The grant was agreed by the capital grants panel and has now been given the final stamp of approval by South Oxfordshire District Council cabinet member for community services, Cllr Lynn Lloyd.

The new designs could mean that the clubhouse could accommodate indoor bowling which means the Bowls Club could join the local winter leagues, increasing participation numbers during winter months.

Annual compost giveaway:

The council is inviting people to come to collect locally produced compost for free on Saturday 14 April between 9am and 11am at Benson Parish Hall car park, Sunnyside, Benson, OX10 6LZ.

Don't forget to bring a shovel and container (bag, box or bucket; up to 4 per person).

All the compost given away is made from the garden waste collected from residents. Every year the council composts around 20,000 tonnes of garden waste.

Anyone who wants to sign up to the council's garden waste collection service, go to the website www.south.oxon.gov.uk/gardenwaste

Extra garden waste week:

Garden waste customers will be able to leave an extra bin's worth of garden waste on their normal collection day on week commencing:

9 April for South

16 April for Vale

They can leave the extra garden waste out in a box or bag next to their brown bin, although Biffa are unable to collect waste left out in trade sacks.

Highways England Strategic Road Network:

SODC has responded to Highways England's consultation on the Strategic Road Network Report.

This mainly relates to improving the capacity and reliability of major routes, such as A34 and M40, to accommodate expected growth in our area as well as future investment in expressways.

You can read our full response here.

<http://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=20&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fis5fcs0wv3i20so%2FShaping%2520the%2520Future%2520of%2520England%2527s%2520Strategic%2520Roads-SV%2520consultation%2520response-%2520Final%2520070218.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&a=0>

New powers to tackle anti-social behaviour in Thame:

Police in Thame will have new powers to tackle group related anti-social behaviour from Tuesday 1 May.

The new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) allows police to prohibit groups of three or more from congregating in public areas of the town if they are behaving anti-socially, or likely to cause alarm, distress or a nuisance to those nearby. Anyone causing a problem could be fined if they fail to disperse when requested.

South Oxfordshire District Council is introducing the PSPO in Thame following concerns raised by the local community. The Order received strong support during a public consultation last year and was approved by Cabinet on Thursday 5 April. It will only target anti-social behaviour and will not prevent groups from gathering together peacefully.