

Unitary local government

The discussions with Oxfordshire CC on the question of a Unitary Authority have continued and this resulted on the publication of the 'Better Oxfordshire Proposal' last Friday. This is now subject to a Scrutiny Committee Review this Thursday (9th March) and will go before Full Council at an Emergency Meeting on the 10th. If approved by the three councils involved, South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse and Oxfordshire CC, then we expect the proposal to be submitted to the Secretary of State for his consideration. You can read the full proposal, A new council for a Better Oxfordshire at: www.betteroxfordshire.org There will be much more information in coming months and we will be passing this on to you through the various communications channels available.

Neighbourhood Planning Up-date.

This month at Planning Committee we had the first opportunity to put Minister for Housing Gavin Barwell MP's announced new rules concerning Neighbourhood Plans to the test. An application for homes at Sonning Common was refused for several reasons, but one of the most significant was that the application differed significantly from the policies of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan. This was not the only reason and I have no doubt that the developer will appeal, but it will be one of the earliest tests of the Minister's directive.

5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) update

Our public position remains that we have 3.8 years housing land supply. We have updated the district-wide completions data, which is being verified before we recalculate our 5YHLS. In addition to all the major applications in and around our larger villages we are starting to receive housing proposals in our smaller villages such as Brightwell cum Sotwell (3) and Warborough (2).

Appeals Public Inquiries

Tetsworth – travellers' site of 12 pitches outside of the Green Belt is scheduled for the second week of June.

South Local Plan 2033

The Second Preferred Options consultation is scheduled to commence at the end of March 2017. The slight delay from the last update is to ensure we have the most robust evidence available to support the consultation, particularly for infrastructure. It will take the form of a full Draft Local Plan to include development management.

Design Guide shortlisted for award

South and Vale urban design officers together with collaboration from other specialist officers have had the South Oxfordshire Design Guide shortlisted for the Public Sector entry in the Francis Tibbalds Urban Design Awards 2017. Being shortlisted for the award is a good step towards raising the profile of the Council and the need to secure high quality design in South Oxfordshire. Awarded by the Urban Design Group, the awards give more recognition to urban design work, particularly at project stage. Voting is now underway and the results will be announced in March 2017.

46 Young Achievers awarded in South Oxfordshire

Dozens of young people from South Oxfordshire have been recognised for their achievements in sport, art or citizenship at a celebration event. South Oxfordshire District Council's Young Achiever Award Ceremony took place on Wednesday 22 February at Didcot Civic Hall with district council Chairman Paul Harrison and Vice Chairman Jeanette Matelot presenting certificates to 46 young people. Each young achiever also received £250.

Communications

Another quick reminder that we are keen to improve communications with residents and South News, the newsletter which includes information of interest to residents, is one of our initiatives. Please do encourage local residents to sign up for the newsletters which will be published every two months. South News keeps residents in touch with news from the council, including the latest on planning and housing in South Oxfordshire, news on recycling collections and events at our leisure centres and Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot. To receive South News visit www.southoxon.gov.uk/southnews

Thames Valley Police

The Government has now allowed Police and Crime Commissioners the opportunity to bring the Fire Service within their portfolio, although the County Council is strongly opposed to this. Commissioner Anthony Stansfeld is minded to take up this option as there are significant benefits to be gained, but as with any new legislation, there are bound to be wrinkles that need to be ironed out. Several other PCCs have already started the process and because of this, our PCC is going to wait to see how these applications pan out.

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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