

## **Unitary local government**

District Council leaders across the County are proposing a new form of local government, comprising the existing multi-layered County/District structure PLUS a fourth level above this called a Combined Authority with an elected Mayor. This seems to be to be a retrograde step that convolutes the already cumbersome structure and is at odds with the sensible single unitary model proposed by County Council. The only upside to this is that it would attract central government funding, but in my opinion there must be a better way.

## **Didcot Garden Town**

Didcot Garden Town is a major part of our plan for development in the District, offering a significant number of jobs and home. Following the consultation, all comments from the website, events and conversations with community groups are being used to help prepare a draft masterplan for the Garden Town. This masterplan and vision for the area, supported by a Garden Town delivery plan setting out how this vision will become a reality, will be published in spring / summer 2017, at which point the community will have another opportunity to comment.

## **Neighbourhood Planning Up-date.**

During December, Minister For Housing Gavin Barwell MP, announced new ways Neighbourhood Plans will affect development. Our MP, John Howell summarised the new approach in his blog:

‘The new rules mean that Neighbourhood Plans should not be considered ‘out-of-date’ where:

- The Neighbourhood Plan is less than 2 years old or has been part of the local development plan for 2 years or less;
- The Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for housing; and,
- The Local Planning Authority can demonstrate a 3 year supply of deliverable housing sites’

John’s full statement can be found at:

<http://www.johnhowellmp.com/news/neighbourhood-plan-update/917>

This has significant implications for existing and up and coming Neighbourhood Plans and emphasises the importance of keeping them up to date. Naturally, the developers are none too keen on this provision, which puts planning back in the hands of democratically elected representatives rather than their barristers and they are challenging the minister’s decision with a Judicial Review.

## **South Local Plan 2033**

The Preferred Options Part II consultation is scheduled to commence in 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 is anticipated that this will now take the form of a full Draft Local Plan. Some of the evidence studies and their progress include:

- Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA): Updated draft expected mid-January
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP): Useful stakeholder workshop held 14/12/2016. Draft ‘baseline’ report expected mid-January
- Evaluation of Transport Impacts (ETI): Next interim report expected late January
- Green Infrastructure Strategy: Received first detailed ‘pilot’ (for Abingdon) and expecting similar settlement level assessments for all towns and larger villages through the first half of 2017.
- Sustainable transport study: Consultants (Steer Davies Gleave) appointed.

- Leisure Strategy: Brief published for tender
- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment: Consultants (ORS) to be appointed before Christmas.

We have appointed Cundall to undertake a critical appraisal of the HELAA which has been produced by Oxford City Council. Draft report expected mid January 2017.

## **Appeals**

We have four upcoming public inquiries:

- East Hagbourne, land east of New Road, - opens on Tuesday 10 January 2017. Kim Langford has been working closely with the local action group Mind the Green Gap, the Parish Council and the Didcot Garden Town team.
- Tetsworth - this is for a traveller site of 12 pitches outside of the Green Belt and is scheduled for the second week of June. We've been working closely with the Parish.
- Thames Farm, Shiplake - this does not have a date yet but Kim and Paula have already met the Parish and we will be working closely with them.
- CABI, Crowmarsh – appeal recently lodged in respect of the scheme for new offices and residential development which was refused by Planning Committee in June. May be an inquiry or hearing.

## **Five year housing land supply (5YHLS) update**

Our position remains that we have 3.8 years housing land supply (target 5YHLS). We have updated the district-wide completions data which is being verified before we recalculate our 5YHLS.

- Site B Wallingford (550) (Core Strategy strategic site) was approved subject to a S106 at Planning Committee on 19/10. We are expecting an application on Wallingford Site
- E (Winterbrook area) imminently and pre application advice is currently being sought on Site A (north of the Wantage Road) Wallingford.

We have a current application for 245 homes at Emmer Green on the edge of Reading and applications on smaller sites around Benson, Sonning Common, Shiplake, Cholsey and Crowmarsh (all for circa 80 dwellings).

## **A competition for new businesses**

Together with our partner Council, Vale of the White horse, we are sponsors of a new competition for businesses which are less than two years old.

Southern Oxfordshire New Business Competition 2017 (SONBC '17) is accepting applications from 1 January to 28 February. Judges are looking for the brightest rising stars in local business, whatever their trade or industry.

The winner will receive a serviced office rent-free for a year, plus a host of other great prizes to help boost their business including: expert branding and website advice, social media coaching, IT consultancy and support, accountancy services and a full programme of business mentoring. For more information and to download an application form go to [www.sonbc.co.uk](http://www.sonbc.co.uk)

## **Grants available to help get residents active**

New funding from Sport England will be available to councils, community groups and sports clubs from January 2017. The funding is aimed at projects which reduce inactivity, increase volunteering and improve facilities. Please tell residents about the following funds:

- Community Asset Fund for capital projects to provide new or enhanced facilities, or new facilities in fields or unused buildings. Types of projects that could be eligible include renovating a sports pavillion, installing floodlighting or creating a new sports pitch. £5,000 - £150,000 is available.

- Inactivity Fund for revenue projects that increase activity levels in people aged 55 and over such as Walking Football or care home activities. Funding is anticipated to be between £250,000-£500,000.
- Volunteer Funding which targets under-represented groups and young people aged 10-20 years. Projects could include charities and organisations working with groups to promote volunteering opportunities for example matching volunteers to sports club volunteering roles.

For more information please contact Cath Dale, Participation Officer on 07801 203 551 or 01235 422222 or by email [cath.dale@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:cath.dale@southandvale.gov.uk).

### **Thame And The Great British High Street Final**

Thame has been named as one of the country's best high streets by being shortlisted in the Great British High Street competition. It was one of the top 3 in the Small Market Town category and whilst it didn't win the ultimate accolade, it is a fantastic achievement to reach the last three! Well done Thame.

### **Councils' meet Food Standards Agency targets**

The Food Standards Agency has recently published its report on local authority food law enforcement for the period 2015-16. Out of the 323 English authorities that provided data, only 18 met the target to complete 100% of inspections scheduled for the year. Both South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are included within these 18, and are the only Oxfordshire authorities to have met this target. Both councils also achieved the national average of 93% for food premises that are 'broadly compliant' with food law:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=08c4b424a5&e=eda6ce4f57>

### **Adverse weather plan**

During the winter months waste collections might be disrupted by adverse weather conditions. Our Adverse Weather Plan sets out how the councils and Biffa will address the operational issues caused by snow and ice and flooding: <http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=2a8495f1e1&e=eda6ce4f57>

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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