

District Councillor Update – October 2025

Cllr Jo Robb, Cllr James Norman

[Jo.robbs@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:Jo.robbs@southandvale.gov.uk)

[James.norman@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:James.norman@southandvale.gov.uk)

### **Joint Local Plan Rejected by Inspectors**

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils have been advised to withdraw their Joint Local Plan from examination after two planning inspectors found the plan failed to meet the statutory duty to co-operate in relation to addressing Oxford City's unmet housing need.

The City Council was itself forced to withdraw its local plan from examination because its housing calculations were unjustified and it had failed in the duty to cooperate, inspectors ruled.

In a letter sent to South and Vale councils last week, the inspectors found the councils had failed to engage “constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis” on the issue of Oxford's unmet need.

After years of hard work, and the creation of an innovative, forward looking plan that was well supported by local residents, it is bitterly disappointing to learn that the Plan has been rejected. The councils are planning a response.

An all-councillor briefing this week (Wednesday 9 November) will give members a chance to ask questions about the impact of this decision on our five-year housing land supply, our ability to defend against speculative planning applications, and the likely future for the Joint Local Plan in the context of local government reorganisation. We will keep you updated.

### **Chalgrove Airfield**

The Chalgrove Airfield site, a strategic development site allocated under the Local Plan 2035, was removed as a strategic site from the Joint Local Plan because it was deemed unsustainable. Homes England, the developer and landowner, has announced it will submit a formal planning application for 3400 houses on the site by the end of the year. What it will do about ejector seat maker Martin Baker, which has a long lease on the site, is anyone's guess.

A public exhibition on Homes England's proposal will take place on 22 October at John Hampden Hall in Chalgrove. Residents of this ward are welcome to attend – the addition of 3400 new homes in Chalgrove, with very limited public transport, will undoubtedly impact our villages, especially Nettlebed.

You can find out more here:

<https://chalgroveairfield.commonplace.is/>

### **Chief Executive Departs**

Mark Stone, the chief executive of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, has left. He led the councils since 2017 and, working with multiple different administrations, oversaw the success of both councils. Under his leadership, SODC is the top recycling district in the country.

### **Food and Warmth Grant Scheme - now open!**

The Food and Warmth Grant Scheme provides funding to local organisations that support residents struggling with the cost of living as we enter the colder months. Town and Parish Councils, as well as voluntary and community organisations, can apply for funding to help people most in need this winter.

Eligible organisations can apply for funds to:

- purchase food and essentials for distribution to residents,
- acquire equipment to store and supply food, or equipment for heating (hot water bottles, electric blankets etc).

The grant can also be used to pay energy bills for organisations set to be registered as Warm Welcome Spaces or to pay for staff and venue costs associated with their organisation or to print and distribute information on the services they provide.

Organisations can apply for up to £2,000 if un-constituted, £2,000–£5,000 if constituted, and up to £10,000 for collaborations between three or more not-for-profit organisations led by a constituted group.

### **The application window is open for six weeks and closes at midday on 6 November 2025.**

Please do let your local groups know about this important grant that can keep the lights on and the heating going for essential local organisations!

For more information including how to apply, please visit the website or contact Jo and James directly.

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/food-and-warmth-grant-scheme-2025-2026-now-open/>

### **Can our Community Grant support a project near you?**

There's still time to apply for the latest round of the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.

Jo and James each have £7,500 to award to projects and activities that offer community benefits in their ward area. The grant is open to community and non-for-profit organisations including town and parish councils.

If there's a project near you that could do with some extra funding, please get in touch! You can find more details, including contact information for your councillor, on our website: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/councillor-community-grants/>

### **Extra garden waste collections**

Residents who have purchased a permit for the brown bin garden waste collection service can have extra garden waste collected, on their **normal scheduled collection day only, between 27 October and 7 November.**

Permit holders can put out a maximum of up to four additional sacks of garden waste, per brown bin subscription, next to their brown bin.

Here's the guidance for residents – PLEASE FOLLOW this to make sure your waste is collected:

- Only present natural garden waste, such as cut grass, plants or small branches.
- Please use standard sized (60L) black refuse-style sacks or boxes / containers which combined total no more than a standard bin full.
- Please DO NOT use bags larger than 60l (including one tonne builders' type waste bags) – our crews will not collect any garden waste from these, as they are too heavy to lift and empty into the vehicle.
- Bags and containers must be left open so crews can easily empty them into the rear of the vehicle and be able to check there are no contaminants.

All the garden waste collected will be taken to a facility near Wallingford where it is hot composted. The compost will then be sold on to local farmers for use on their farmland as a soil conditioner.

More information on garden waste collections, including how you can purchase an annual permit, can be found on the South Oxfordshire garden waste page.

### **Street cleansing survey**

Town and Parish Councils are invited to complete this survey to tell us how street cleansing happens locally and how the council can improve litter picking and cleanliness in your area.

The information you provide will help the council understand how street cleansing undertaken at local level fits with district council responsibilities.

<https://theconversation.southandvale.gov.uk/housing-and-environment/dddf6ac8/>

### **Our Work**

- A number of residents have had difficulties “speaking with a human being” in relation to council tax queries. Jo and James have liaised directly with officers on behalf of residents, to help get action on council tax rebates and council tax related concerns. If you have difficulty speaking to a person, please let us know and we can help. We are keen to understand more about residents’ experience in resolving problems with council tax. Please get in touch if you’d like to share your experience or make any suggestions, please do get in touch. We want the process to be clear and simple and are keen to push for improvements.
- The ward of Woodcote & Rotherfield has a number of ongoing planning enforcement cases. Jo and James have been working to get updates and action on outstanding enforcement matters. We are in direct touch with enforcement officers, complainants and parish councils – please get in touch if you’d like to find out more about enforcement in your local area.
- Several residents have been in touch on behalf of neighbours living in sub-standard rental accommodation (both private rental accommodation and SOHA owned accommodation). Jo has liaised with the SODC team responsible, and officers have undertaken home visits and sought to get action. If you know of a neighbour (or if you yourself) are living in substandard rental accommodation do get in touch.
- James, already a board member with the Chilterns Conservation Board, is now on the Planning Committee for the CCB and is looking forward to bringing his experience and passion for the protecting the Chilterns to the CCB planning committee.