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| **Title** | District Councillor’s Report |
| **Author** | Cllrs Andrea Powell & Sue Cooper |
| **Parish** | Warborough Parish Council |
| **Date** | 6th December 2023 |

**PLANNING**

**Joint Local Plan 2041**

All of the documents relating to the forthcoming consultation on the new Joint Local Plan are now in the public domain as they were reviewed by Cabinet on 30th November and approved for launch. The public consultation itself will be launched in January and all Parish Councils are strongly advised to submit feedback using the very user-friendly new online platform.

A preview of the Joint Local Plan consultation materials is available on the [South Oxfordshire District Council website](https://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=341&MId=3240).

**Developer contributions**

In October, SODC transferred and released over one million pounds in infrastructure funding to provide a boost to our communities.

We transferred £908,127 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions to town and parish councils to help support new development in the area. Since April, a further £115,557 of Section 106 funding has been released to relevant council departments, town or parish councils or local organisations towards improving community facilities for the benefit of current and future residents of the district.

You can see a breakdown of S106 funds approved and paid out and CIL monies transferred online here: [**South Oxfordshire**](https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/01-April-to-30-September-2023-Infrastructure-Funding-Transfers_South.xlsx) (documents will download automatically).

**GRANTS**

**Local green spaces grants available**

Do you know a local volunteer group or community organisation focused on nature recovery and biodiversity? They could be eligible for funding from SODC. We’ve teamed up with the Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment (TOE) to manage the applications. The next deadline for applications is 8 January 2024. For more information please contact Rachel at TOE on admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk.

**Grant scheme for people without gas boilers**

Do you know of residents in properties without gas boilers? The good news is that they may be eligible for energy efficiency upgrades for their home, such as insulation, solar panels and heat pumps, all funded by the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2). These upgrades can help to reduce energy bills and make homes easier to keep warm. **The grants are available to homeowners and landlords whose properties are not heated by gas boilers, with a household income of less than £39,000 and with a low energy rating (D-G)**. Spread the word and ask people to visit [welcomethewarmth.org.uk](file:///\\SAVVPSPFIL04.capitacouncilspartnership.co.uk\home$\PowellA\Documents\Parish%20Councils\Ewelme\welcomethewarmth.org.uk) to find out more.

**Solar power in Wallingford**

Last month, Wallingford Sports Trust officially opened its new solar panels and batteries installation thanks in part to more than £40,000 of our grant funding.

Following a huge increase in electricity costs which threatened the future of the Sport Park, they took urgent action. This has resulted in the installation of 130 solar panels and eight batteries, which have delivered an enormous reduction in energy consumption, expected to save them between £25,000 to £50,000 per year in the future. The energy created by the solar panels is enough to power five houses every day and is expected to make carbon savings of 28 tonnes per year!

We were very pleased to be able to contribute to this major energy-saving project to help keep the sports park going for years to come. You can find out more about this fantastic project, and other case studies, on the [**South Oxfordshire improving energy efficiency webpage**](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/what-you-can-do-as-a-community/improving-the-energy-efficiency-of-community-buildings/improving-energy-efficiency-in-community-buildings-case-studies/).

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

**Over £440,000 awarded to support swimming pools in South and Vale**

Swimming pools across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse have been awarded a total of £441,542.  The award will help ensure residents continue to have access to good swimming facilities across the two districts.

Recent research has shown swimming positively contributes to physical and mental wellbeing, to individual and community development, and helps to reduce the burden to the health and social care system.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils successfully secured this funding through Sport England to help finance the running of six of its Better UK swimming facilities. The funding is part of the government’s Phase 1: Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF).

Day to day the centres are managed by the council’s leisure contractor GLL. There has been huge increase in costs to manage the pools over the last few years due to the rising energy costs and other financial pressures because of the Covid-19 pandemic and GLL will use this additional revenue to help finance the maintenance of the indoor swimming pools at leisure centres in South Oxfordshire and the Vale.

A total of £20 million was available for organisations to apply for in Phase 1 of the Swimming Pool Support Fund from Sport England and nearly 200 leisure centres have been supported by the fund.  Applicants were required to provide evidence of increased cost pressures, leaving them most vulnerable to closure or significant service reduction.

South Oxfordshire Better UK swimming pools in Berinsfield, Henley, Didcot and Thame have been awarded £285,465.  In the meantime, the Riverside pool and splashpad in Wallingford was announced as a finalist in the Red Kite Day Oxfordshire award for Best Outdoor Play.

Red Kite Days is an organisation that shares information about days out, activities and fun things to do for children and families on its website and social media accounts. This is a great way for us to raise awareness of our fantastic local facilities.

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| |  | | --- | | **Getting better use out of the outdoor gym equipment in Warborough**  The Active Communities team offers outdoor fitness sessions to help residents get the most from equipment installed in public spaces.  The team can provide a video of exercises tailored for the equipment in your area.  To find out more, please email[**active.communities@southandvale.gov.uk**](mailto:active.communities@southandvale.gov.uk)with ‘Outdoor gym’ as the subject. | |

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| |  | | --- | | **Could Community Payback help in Warborough?**  If your local area has public spaces or community buildings that need work, there may be help through the Community Payback scheme.  Community Payback is where offenders work on coordinated projects to pay back the community for their crimes, for example by removing graffiti, clearing wasteland, weeds or overgrowing bushes, or decorating a community centre.  To find out how your community could benefit and how to refer local projects, please visit the [**South Community Payback page**](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-help-and-safety/south-and-vale-community-safety-partnership/community-payback-unpaid-work-scheme/)**.** | |
| |  | | --- | | **NATURE RECOVERY**  **Oxfordshire’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)**  This summer, the government named Oxfordshire County Council as a ‘responsible authority’ to drive nature recovery in the county through a [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-nature-recovery-strategies-areas-and-responsible-authorities). Both of our councils are ‘supporting authorities’ along with Natural England and the other Oxfordshire councils. The county council has a new webpage introducing [Oxfordshire’s LNRS](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy) where they explain how they are preparing the strategy through engagement and consultations with a wide range of audiences to agree on species and habitats and how they can be supported. | |

**National landscapes**

Last week, all designated “Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty” (AONBs) in England and Wales have been renamed as ‘National Landscapes’. The new name reflects their national importance and the vital contribution they make to protect the nation from the threats of climate change, nature depletion and the wellbeing crisis.

This means our local AONBs will now be known as the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and The Chilterns National Landscape. You can find out more about the name change and the National Landscapes’ vision on the [**National Landscapes website**](https://national-landscapes.org.uk/news/welcome-to-national-landscapes).

**COUNCIL BUSINESS**

**Recent decisions made by SODC Cabinet**

Changes to the car parking fees and charges for the financial year 2024/25 were agreed, along with a simplification of the charging system. The Council Tax base was discussed and it was agreed to recommend its approval by the Full Council meeting on 14th December, in good time to inform Parish Councils and the Police & Crime Commissioner.

**Changes to postal and proxy voting**

A series of national changes were introduced on 31 October for postal and proxy voting, and our officers have prepared [this briefing note](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.southandvale.gov.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F11%2FTranche-2-Template-briefing-note-for-candidates-and-elected-members-V2.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) for councillors to explain them in a bit more detail. The changes include new identity checking requirements, online applications, restrictions on the number of people a person can act as a proxy for and maximum periods for absent voter applications. (Let me know if you cannot access this link).

**Proposed County Council Boundary Changes**

The Local Government Boundary Commission is currently consulting on proposed changes to some of the Oxfordshire County Council Divisions. The proposals would see a new Benson and Crowmarsh Division, which would include Benson, Crowmarsh, Dorchester, Warborough and Ewelme. Should the proposals be accepted by Government they would apply from the next County Council elections in 2025.

**Christmas Office Hours**

As usual, the council offices will be closed to the public from Christmas Day until New Year.

The last working day will be Friday 22 December. Our Customer Contact Centre and front desk reception will close at the usual closing time of 4.30pm on that day. The office will re-open as normal on Tuesday 2 January 2024. Our emergency out of hours services to report a homeless issue, a dangerous structure, flooding or a dead animal on the highway will continue to run over the Christmas break – details on our website here - [**south**](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/about-the-council/get-in-touch/contact-us/).

**And finally….Bad weather and waste collections**

If bad weather affects our waste collections this winter, here’s what we’ll do:

If we don’t manage to empty somebody’s bins on their scheduled collection day, they should leave them out for two more days and we’ll do our best to come back and catch up.

If, after three days, we haven’t managed to empty them, residents should bring their bins back in and we’ll empty them next time they’re due – if this happens, they’ll be able to leave extra waste out beside their bin in a suitable container.

We’ll keep people up to date with the disruptions on our websites, social media, and through the local press and media. You should divert any questions you get from residents during the disruptions to the Biffa call centre on 03000 610 610.