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| **Title** | District Councillors’ Report |
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| **Parish** | Warborough Parish Council |
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## **Local Government reorganisation update**

Last week South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Cabinets and the West Berkshire Executive Committee agreed to support the Ridgeway Council interim proposal being submitted to government. The proposal outlines the initial case for a new unitary council that would see South and Vale combined with West Berkshire.

The proposal forms one half of a two-unitary council proposal for Oxfordshire, with the other half made up from the district council areas of West Oxfordshire, Oxford City and Cherwell.  West Oxfordshire District Council and Cherwell District Council have [**confirmed they will be developing the North Oxfordshire Council**](https://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=685667c0cb&e=b961a0238f) half of the proposal, strongly complementing the Ridgeway Council work we’re carrying out.

As required by government, Oxfordshire County Council submitted the interim proposal on our behalf. The County Council’s submission to the government also included its own initial proposal for a single unitary council for Oxfordshire, and a third option from Oxford City Council proposing the county area is divided up into three small unitary councils based around an expansion of the city’s borders that hasn’t as yet been defined.

The government has set a deadline for final submissions for unitary council proposals of no later than 28 November 2025. In the meantime, we will continue to develop the proposals. This will be supported by a programme of communication and engagement to ensure local voices and community needs are reflected in the proposal. South and Vale have committed to continue working positively with the other authorities in Oxfordshire. We will keep you updated as our plans for engagement develop.

To find out more, here is the link to the [new website](https://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=6baf77a11f&e=b961a0238f) that will act as the home base for the development of our Ridgeway Council proposal. It will be developed and added to as time goes by.

**Community Revenue Grants – over £650k awarded**

On 20th Feb we both participated in an all-day Community Grants Panel meeting, at which we were faced with the difficult task of deciding how to award the £668k of funding available from applications totalling £1.85m! These revenue grants are designed to cover up to one third of an organisation’s operational running costs and are awarded to cover a two-year period in order to provide more stability. There were 29 applications, all of which were scored according to a matrix by experienced Grant Officers. The final decisions, however, are made by the Panel of elected Members. We were able to make a full award to the Citizens’ Advice Bureau and Reducing the Risk (an organisation that provides support to the victims of domestic violence); a further group of applicants were awarded 40% of their “ask” while the remaining applicants were deemed not to have scored highly enough to receive an award. We agreed that it was preferable to award meaningful sums to a smaller number of organisations rather than to spread the funds too thinly to make a significant difference.

It was a very humbling and rewarding day’s work for us, witnessing the dedication and commitment of so many volunteers and charity workers, all focusing on helping the most vulnerable in our communities as well as protecting our natural environment. SODC is fortunate to be in a position to make these awards, and we are concerned that the restructuring of Local Government will put such discretionary programmes at risk.

**Everyone Active Grant Scheme**

A new round of the SODC Everyone Active grant scheme will launch on Tuesday 1st April. There is £50k available in total and each application can request up to £5k. Grants can be awarded not just for sports projects but for anything promoting physical activity and well-being, such as community gardening or play equipment.

The next Capital Grant scheme opens on 2nd June (£320k available), the Councillor Grant scheme on 18th August (£15k between us), the Performing Arts Grant Fund (£60k) on 28th July and the CIL Grant fund (£750k) in January 2026.

The recent Grants Advice session held at Cornerstone was over subscribed so another is being considered. I have suggested that it should be further east next time.

**North Wessex Downs Consultation**

The NWD National Landscape has just launched a review of its Management Plan for 2025-30. The draft chapters are available to view here: <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/our-work/management-plan/management-plan-review-2025/>.

SODC will be sending a consolidated response so if you would like to channel any comments through us, please do so by Friday 11th April.

**Oxfordshire County Council Elections – key dates**

Elections for Oxfordshire County Council take place on Thursday 1st May. The last date to register to vote is Friday 11th April, while the last date to apply for a postal or postal proxy vote is 5pm Monday 14th April. The deadline for applying for an in-person proxy vote is 5pm Wednesday 23rd April and for a Voter Authority Certificate (if you don’t have an accepted form of voter ID) is also 5pm Wednesday 23rd April. To register to vote, visit gov.uk/register-to-vote. The pre-election period starts on Tuesday 25th March, although this should have no effect on day-to-day business and decision-making.

**80th Anniversary of VE Day**

SODC will be maintaining a list of celebrations planned to commemorate the end of hostilities in Europe in 1945, so if you are planning anything for this it would be good to see the event added to the [Southern Oxfordshire What’s On](https://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=15682d9f79&e=695539377e) website.

Events can also be added to the official website VE/VJ Day website (<https://ve-vjday80.gov.uk/events/>) . This site also includes information about how to set up an event and other useful resources, so could come in handy.

**Tougher Fines to Tackle Fly-Tipping**

From 1 April 2025, those who fail to meet their legal responsibilities for waste disposal will face significantly higher fines as part of a national crackdown on anti-social behaviour.

Environmental crimes like fly-tipping harm wildlife, damage public spaces and cost taxpayers millions in clean-up efforts. The tougher fines, introduced by the government, aim to deter offenders and ensure those who disregard the law face serious consequences.

Key changes include:

* **Householder duty of care breaches**: on-the-spot fines will rise from £300 to £600.
* **Fly-tipping**: maximum fixed penalty notices will increase from £400 to £1,000.
* **Littering and graffiti**: fines will rise from £80 to £500.

Failure to pay these fines may lead to prosecution in court, which could result in an unlimited fine or even imprisonment for large-scale fly-tipping offences.

As a reminder, fly-tipping can be reported to SODC’s Enviro-crime team via the website – <https://southoxon.gov.uk/EnviroCrime> or by phone to Biffa on 03000 610610.