

Title	District Councillors' Report
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Parish	Warborough Parish Council
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Plough Field Appeal Withdrawal

We were as pleased as anyone to hear, late in the day on Friday 24th Jan, that the appeal against the decision to refuse planning permission for up to 90 homes on the Plough Field had been withdrawn. The issue has been well discussed in the community now, but we would like to record our appreciation for the extremely long hours, research and hard work put in by the team representing the Parish as a Rule 6 participant in the appeal. The fund-raising efforts by the community were equally impressive, and there is a strong case to claim for costs against the appellant. Particular recognition must go to Laurie Kosobucki and Dominic Carter for their work on behalf of the whole community; the appellant clearly realised that they were unlikely to win in the face of such a strong evidence base.

Latest News on Local Government Reorganisation

As you will no doubt be aware, the White Paper issued by the Government in December covered both "English Devolution" (i.e. the establishment of new Mayoral Strategic Authorities covering approximately 1.5 million people) and Local Government reorganisation (i.e. the creation of Unitary Authorities to replace the current two-tier system).

Both of these matters are being hotly debated by the Leaders of all the local authorities and the Government is also likely to want to influence what happens in this part of the world, given its recent announcements about the Oxford-Cambridge "Growth Corridor". Even Swindon Borough Council has been involved in these discussions; their Leader has made it clear he prefers to "look East" towards Reading and Oxford than west towards the rest of Wiltshire as part of a "Wessex" strategic authority.

Given the lack of agreement (at the time of writing) on the boundaries of the new Mayoral Strategic Authority, it is almost certain that the OCC elections scheduled for 1st May, based on the new electoral boundaries, will go ahead as planned. This means Warborough will form part of the new Benson & Crowmarsh Division, along with Dorchester and Ewelme.

There are still many unknowns surrounding this whole process, including how a new Mayor would be elected and how many Councillors will represent residents at the new Unitaries, but we will aim to keep you informed as plans evolve! The Leader of SODC spoke at the OCC Cabinet meeting on 9th January and recent press releases can be found here:

- [Councils should seek to influence Local Government Reorganisation for the benefit of communities](#)
- [Oxfordshire should be working with Berkshire and Buckinghamshire](#)

SODC 2025/26 Budget

On Thursday 13th February SODC will (hopefully) approve its capital expenditure and revenue budget for 2025/26 and the Medium Term Financial Plan for the next 5 years. While we are confident that nothing is going to change substantially over the next year in terms of service delivery, the later years are still something of a mystery so our MTFP is necessarily cautious. However, it is worth noting, and celebrating, that 2025/26 will be the first year since the current LibDem/Green Administration came to power at SODC that we will not need to use our reserves to cover an annual operating deficit. Much more detail on the budget will be provided next month, following the Council meeting in February, although the full papers are already in the public domain on the SODC Cabinet webpage. There are no proposals to reduce any of our services.

5 Year Housing Land Supply

In January SODC has updated its latest 5 Year Housing Land Supply Statement – see <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/our-development-plan/five-year-land-supply/>

The headline figure is **4.5 years**, which now incorporates the 5% buffer required by Government policy. This compares to the figure published in September 2023, which was 4.2 years. It is worth noting that SODC has won a number of major appeals over the past 18 months, indicating that the 5 YR HLS is not the only factor taken into account by Inspectors. Neighbourhood Plans continue to be very important to protect communities from unwelcome applications, but paragraph 14 of the new NPPF makes it clear that NPs without any site allocations for new housing will be less well protected. The Neighbourhood Planning team at SODC is always happy to provide advice and guidance on such matters.

Performing Arts Grant now open for applications

At the end of 2024, a new Performing Arts Grant Scheme (total value of £60,000) was approved by the Cabinet, which will enable community and voluntary organisations to apply for up to £5,000 to support projects that enhance the cultural landscape and improve the quality of life for local residents and communities. The scheme will open for applications on 5th February; applicants must show how their projects meet the community values and priorities of fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable performing arts scene in South Oxfordshire. More details can be found at www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants.

Garden Waste Changes – starting in April!

As you may recall from last year's communications, we are introducing a new permit scheme for garden waste collections this year. This permit scheme is like the one successfully operated in West Oxon (and many other parts of the country), and a key benefit of the new system is that it prevents people who have not paid for the service from having their garden waste collected.

To receive garden waste collections from 1 April 2025, residents must purchase an annual permit. This will replace direct debits, which are surprisingly troublesome to collect each year.

What residents need to do:

- From late February, visit www.southandvale.gov.uk/GardenWastePermit to make a one-off, annual payment for garden waste collections.
- When customers get the permit in the post, they need to stick it to the lid of their brown bin.

Garden waste customers can also sign up for an online account on our website to make things easier when they purchase the next permit in 2026. Anyone who cannot easily sign up for a permit online can call us on 01235 422422 for support. Visit the New [Garden Waste FAQ](#) page for more information.

Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

More than 2,100 Oxfordshire residents, landowners and organisations took part in last year's public consultation on the county's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Using an interactive map, people sent in comments on the nature areas already mapped and lots of suggestions for additional areas to be included.

The LNRS team (a partnership of organisations including South and Vale) now has the mammoth task of compiling the responses into a public report and the final version of the strategy is due to be published in autumn this year. For more information about the LNRS

and the nature groups involved see the [LNRS webpage](#).

GLL Sport foundation

Our partners at Better Leisure who run our leisure centres are launching this year's Sports Foundation scheme and applications for this fund are now open. GLL Sports Foundation provides support to athletes across all ages, disciplines and backgrounds. Providing access to free gym memberships, monetary funding and other athletes services including mental health support and physiotherapy.

More information including how to apply and eligibility can be found on the [GLL Sports Foundation application page](#) and applications must be submitted by **20 February 2025** - please help us spread the word!

New season on sale at Cornerstone!

Have you checked out Cornerstone's Spring Season yet? Take your pick from rib-tickling comedy, thrilling live theatre, iconic tribute acts and more, with a range of shows to be enjoyed by all ages. Here are some highlights:

- Anti-Valentines Cabaret (Thursday 13 February): Oxford's iconic cabaret is back in a glittering array of lip syncing, striptease, and comedy!
- James Phelan: The Dreamer (Saturday 15 February): James Phelan's brand-new magic show, sure to leave you dizzy with disbelief.
- The Magic of the Bee Gees (Saturday 22 February): Whether you're a brother or whether you're a mother, put on your dancing shoes for this iconic tribute act.
- Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act! (Thursday 27 February): Holmes returns to Baker Street to resolve 'the last act' of his epic career in this theatrical extravaganza.
- Fleetwood Shack (Friday 28 February): A band of highly skilled musicians paying homage to one of the most iconic bands in music history.

Visit the [Cornerstone website](#) to see the full list of shows and to book your tickets.