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| **Title** | District Councillors’ Report |
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| **Parish** | Warborough Parish Council |
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**Council Chief stands down**

After long and careful consideration Mark Stone has decided to leave South and Vale as of 30 September 2025.  Mark has ably led the councils since July 2017 as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service working with multiple administrations.

Mark played a central role in recruiting and leading the councils’ current senior management team and helped steer the councils through the challenges of the pandemic and the constantly evolving local government landscape over the past decade.  The councils, during Mark’s stewardship, have been high performing and low cost across all key service areas, including, housing, waste collection and revenues and benefits, whilst staff development and retention have been exceptional.

Under Mark’s leadership the councils have been able to not only stabilise their financial position but were able to increase investment in the key political priorities of the councils including homelessness prevention, delivery of the authorities own housing stock for the first time in over 25 years and a strong focus was achieved on climate adaption and nature recovery.

Mark has left the councils in a strong position with new council plans in place in both councils with them well positioned to respond to the wider local government environment and in particular the devolution and reorganisation agendas of the present government.

Reflecting on his departure from the councils Mark said: “It is with great sadness that I leave South and Vale. I have really enjoyed my time leading the two councils, working with so many different elected members and an amazing staff group. There have been numerous challenges over my time at the councils, but I am very proud that we have worked together so effectively, providing first class services for the residents of the districts. As I move on, I would like to wish all councillors and staff, all the very best for the future and I am sure whatever faces local government over the coming months and years you will rise to the challenge.”

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “Mark is an enthusiastic expert in local government and has an innate ability to see challenges coming and understanding how to navigate them and we will certainly miss his experienced support. He is also a very passionate advocate of the officers he led – with good reason.”

**Financial Outturn 2024/25**

At its meeting on 25th September the SODC Scrutiny Committee reviewed the report from the Finance Director on the 2024/25 financial year. All papers are available on the SODC website in the section on Council meetings but the bottom line is that despite some small variations in departmental expenditure, these were more than compensated for by increased investment income. The Council’s net operating budget was £24.5m for the financial year and actual expenditure was £24.7m. £15m of underspend in the capital budget will be carried forward into 2025/26; delays are mainly being seen in the acquisition and delivery of social housing and in some of the council’s decarbonisation projects. We are pressing to ensure that such projects are delivered in good time before the completion of the Local Government Reorganisation programme. Frustratingly, we still seem to be holding £2m of CIL funding for Healthcare projects, which SODC is unable to spend directly and must depend on a request from the health agencies.

**New guides to nature in our meadow areas**

We have produced new guides highlighting nature on some of the many community walks organised by the Active Communities team. Working with the Nature Recovery officer, the short guides are tailored to community walks near the councils’ meadow areas, giving examples of birds and insects and berries that can be spotted at the meadow areas. The leaflets are available (for anyone to download) on the community walks pages ([South](https://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=1699ddac6c&e=695539377e)) although there isn’t a leaflet available yet for the Benson walks.

Please help spread the word by sharing these leaflets ([South](https://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=8728c7149e&e=695539377e)) with people in your communities.

**New phone number for Waste and Recycling services – 01235 422 123**

The main point of contact for all queries related our household waste, recycling, garden waste and street cleaning services is now the **new number**:

**01235 422 123**

This new number is for all district council household waste, recycling, food, garden waste collections, bulky waste (collections only\*), clinical waste collections and street cleaning services.  It is also the number to call to report fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles if someone cannot do so online.  For queries about garden waste permits, residents should continue to call 01235 422 422.

**Food and Warmth Grant Scheme now open**

To help residents who are finding the everyday reality of cost-of-living pressures a real struggle, SODC has launched the Food and Warmth Grant, previously known as the Household Support Fund.  Voluntary and community organisations and town and parish councils can apply for a food and warmth grant, to support those who need the most help this winter.

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.

More information including how to apply, please see our website ([South](https://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=27adab4304&e=695539377e)).  Please help to spread the word to organisations in your community.

**Licensing consultation**

SODC is planning to make a few changes to its policy which determines how it makes licensing decisions and how licensed premises can operate in our districts. The proposed updated Licensing Act Policy includes new references to: Martyn’s Law, the Ask for Angela scheme and promoting initiatives for women and girls' safety; and updated guidance on staff training about safeguarding and evacuation and emergency procedures.  You can find out more and have your say via [our consultation page](https://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=15d18b3b4b&e=695539377e). Comments are open until 16 October 2025.