

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Title | District Councillors' Report |
| Authors | Cllrs Andrea Powell & Sue Cooper |
| Parish | Warborough Parish Council |
| Date | 4 th March 2026 |

Council Budget 2026-27

Full Council on 12th Feb agreed a balanced budget for the 2026-27 year and a notional Medium Term Financial Plan taking SODC to the end of its existence. Some amendments were agreed, including additional funding to encourage nature-based flood-prevention solutions and a new grant scheme to cover start-up costs and legal fees for small-scale housing charities and CLTs, development of plans and capital bids– including to SODC's S106 affordable housing scheme - supporting the Housing Delivery Strategy and Action Plan. In summary, the following grant schemes and the provisional launch dates that were included in the approved budget are as follows:

- **Everyone Active Grant:** £50,000 launches 30 March – for projects that improve the health and wellbeing of residents
- **Capital Grant Scheme:** £320,000 launches 1 June – for projects such as play areas, community and sports facilities, and sustainability projects
- **Performing Arts Grant Scheme:** £60,000 launches 20 July - designed to enhance the cultural landscape and support local performing arts groups
- **Councillor Community Grant Scheme:** £270,000 launches 17 August – for projects and activities that offer community benefits including sports equipment, trees for community orchards, events for the elderly
- **Climate Action Fund:** £100,000 launches 28 September – aimed at projects that help to tackle climate change and nature recovery.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy Grant:** £750,000 launches 15 February 2027 – for organisations to deliver infrastructure for their community
- **New Community Asset scheme (see above)** – timescale yet to be determined.

There are a number of opportunities for organisations to find out more about the grants available and the criteria for applications, at events taking place across the district over the coming months. Grants officers from South Oxfordshire District Council will be on hand to answer questions and offer advice:

- **Connecting Local Action** - climate and sustainability event: 5 March Thame Barns – midday to 2.30pm
- **Didcot Garden Town Community Update Meeting:** 18 March 5-7.30pm
- **Partnership event with OCVA and Oxfordshire Community Foundation:** 15 April District Community Centre in Didcot 11am – 4pm and 6 May Holton Village Hall 12.15 until 6pm

Joint Local Plan

Following the procedural meeting with the examiners on 11th February, we now await a timetable for the resumption of the Local Plan examination.

On a related matter, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse have joined a host of other local authorities, businesses and non-government organisations in signing an open letter from the Town and County Planning Association (TCPA). The letter has been sent to The Rt Hon Steve Reed MP Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Named signatories include Cabinet members, Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson and Cllr Andy Foulsham, both with portfolio responsibility for planning policy at the councils.

The letter supports the climate ambitions in the emerging Joint Local Plan, as well as the strategic priorities of both councils, as it urges government to reconsider proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that would prevent local authorities from requiring higher energy efficiency standards for new buildings, as we have included within the emerging Joint Local Plan. The letter warns that by restricting local authorities in this way, the draft NPPF would halt progress on the delivery of net zero carbon buildings in

England, and undermine the ability of councils, including South and Vale, to address climate change locally and meet their climate obligations.

Car parking

There will soon be a consultation on changing car parks to pay on arrival, and ticketless/paperless (rather than Pay and Display). Some of the existing ticket machines are getting past their best and need replacing – apologies if you are inconvenienced by one of these in Wallingford. We have been assured that these will be amongst the first to be replaced when the new machines become available.

Planning appeals

There was a very high turnout on the first day of the appeal hearing for “The Orchard” site in Benson. Ominously, we have recently heard that a different inspector has allowed the planning appeal on another unallocated site on the edge of Chalgrove, although their site was not for elderly people’s accommodation. Despite agreeing with most of the very strong reasons for refusal, the Inspector determined that the lack of a five-year housing land supply tipped the balance in favour of the developer.

Garden Permit Renewals for 2026/27

The existing garden waste permits will expire on 31 March 2026. Residents need to buy a new permit to continue receiving collections from 1 April. Renew now to avoid any interruption to the service and to ensure benefit from the full years' worth of scheduled garden waste collections up to 31 March 2027. To buy a new permit visit southandvale.gov.uk/gardenwastepermit. Anyone who needs assistance to buy their permit should call the Customer Services team on 01235 422422.

Removal of Untaxed Vehicles

At its meeting on 5th March, Cabinet will consider whether or not to take on the devolved power from the DVLA to remove untaxed vehicles from the public highway. This follows a motion to Council in December 2025 requesting officers investigate the feasibility of doing this, given the significant public nuisance caused by untaxed vehicles, particularly in some specific locations in the district. Given the likely number of untaxed vehicles on the roads, it might be more cost-effective to target particular hot-spots and work with DVLA to remove them. These are the options being considered by Cabinet.

Free Compost!

Residents will be able to collect free compost on Saturday 7th March between 9.00am and 11.00am from Howbery Park, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh.. Residents should bring their own bags and spade and can collect up to three bags per household while supplies last. The councils' Waste and Recycling team will be on hand to share composting tips and answer questions. Please help spread the word!

New Electric Waste Vehicles Purchased

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have taken delivery of their second electric waste collection and street cleansing vehicle – which produces 70 per cent fewer carbon emissions than its diesel predecessor – part of the councils' ambitions to reduce their carbon emissions and move towards net zero.

The new vehicle, an IVECO eDaily caged tipper, was delivered to the councils at the Culham depot of their waste contractor, Biffa, last month. It is being used throughout both districts by crews as part of their work on street cleansing, emptying litter bins, picking up waste collected on litter picks and clearing rubbish left as fly tips.

It replaces a diesel tipper truck which covered approximately 33,000 miles per year. By changing to an electric tipper waste vehicle, the councils expect to save more than 13 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent a year, with this one vehicle alone. This is a 70 per cent reduction on the previous diesel truck.

As well as having the tipper function the new vehicle has a tools compartment making it easier for crews to keep street cleansing gear easy to access and separate from the waste itself. The vehicle like most EVs, is also quieter than diesel and petrol vehicles.

