

Title	District Councillor's Report
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Parish	Berinsfield Parish Council
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Garden Waste Collections

The garden waste collection service should be back to normal this week. Those using this service have had their subscription period extended by 3 months.

As you may have heard from OCC, Oakley Wood will be closed on Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 November for a deep clean and to enable essential work to be carried out.

Capital Grant funding available to help good causes in South Oxfordshire

South Oxfordshire District Council is launching a new round of its Capital Grant Scheme with grants available of up to £75,000 for local voluntary and community organisations and town and parish councils.

This grant can fund up to 50 per cent of the total cost of capital projects like contributing to buying a building, replacing or making improvements to long term assets such as play areas and equipment.

Voluntary and community organisations and town and parish councils will also need to consider how their project will contribute to at least one of the council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 priorities, such as 'protect and restore our natural world', 'action on the climate emergency' or 'improved economic and community well-being'

New offices at the Gateway site opposite Didcot station

The concept design for the new district council building at Didcot Gateway has been approved, and the detailed design process is now getting underway.

The concept design for the building is available to view on the council's website. Because of its location the building is being designed to reflect the town's industrial and railway heritage as well as meeting the principles set out in the Didcot Garden Town delivery plan, meaning it reflects both local history and the town's future.

In line with the councils' commitments to tackle the climate emergency, the offices will be built to meet a strict sustainability standard, known as the BREEAM Excellent standard – this would put the building in the top 10 per cent of new non-domestic buildings in the UK in terms of its sustainability performance. To help meet that standard, the building will feature solar panels on its roof and potentially even on covered visitor parking spaces.

To help the councils meet their commitments to building stable finances, the building will also include commercial office space the councils can let to a third party. The location opposite the station should help in our efforts to encourage sustainable commuting and the flexible space will accommodate organisations, which like the council want to explore more flexible ways of working after the pandemic. The central site will also be more accessible to the public than the current expensive offices at Milton Park.

SODC car parks changes

Next year there will be some minor changes to how parking is enforced in our car parks. This will include changes to the way in which people can appeal a parking fine, and the introduction of two set levels of fine, one for more serious offences like parking in a disabled bay without a badge, and a lower level for less serious misdemeanours like overstaying your time. In November public notices informing people how the orders will change will be published. People will then have 21 days to submit any comments. Changing a parking order is quite a long process and then signage in all our car parks will need altering – as a result, the changes won't come into effect until 1 April 2022.

The parking orders need altering so that they match the Traffic Management Act 2004 legislation that will be operating across Oxfordshire following the move to Civil Parking Enforcement from 1 November. Enforcement in district council car parks will continue to be carried out by Saba. This will remain separate from on-street enforcement, which will be carried out by Oxfordshire County Council.

Council Motions

At its council meeting on Thursday 7 October, South Oxfordshire District Council agreed a series of motions aimed at boosting efforts to address the climate emergency, and to protect and enhance the natural environment and increase biodiversity.

The motions all highlight the need for government to take action to remove unnecessary barriers which are delaying or impacting measures to tackle the climate emergency at a local level. In the run up to COP26, councillors believe these actions will be vital if the UK wishes to lead by example in the fight against climate change.

Levelling up and planning

Following a motion proposed by Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson, Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, has written to HM Government to call on it to scrap the current proposals for planning reform. Cllr Rouane asks the government to transform the process into one that assesses the 'climate fitness' of a district and plans for growth within the environmental capacity of that area, looking at carbon emissions, water availability and the pressing need for nature recovery at scale.

Cllr Rouane also calls for a thorough review of Building Regulations and the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure require property developments to be built to net-zero standards in manufacture and use, and reiterates the council's belief that the 5 Year Housing Land Supply measure is flawed and inappropriate, as councils should not be held to account for the actions – or indeed lack of action – of developers, with regard to the delivery of housing on allocated or approved development sites.

Decarbonisation of leisure centres

In order to achieve its own carbon reduction targets, South Oxfordshire District Council needs to be able to successfully decarbonise its leisure centres. Funding to carry out this work has been made available by the government through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund. However, so far, the fund has been significantly oversubscribed and the application process made more difficult by stop-start initiatives and significant restrictions on how the money can be provided.

South Oxfordshire District Council believes it would be more effective to resource local areas to deliver their own decarbonisation strategies, meaning long-term funding to decrease the long-term cost of operating pools, and contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions. This would also provide local suppliers with the confidence to invest in staff, skills and the technology.

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, has written to the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to highlight these concerns.

Retrofitting homes for energy efficiency

Following a motion proposed by Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Cllr Rouane has also written to the government to urge it to address retrofitting as a priority. The letter highlights the need to recognise retrofitting's importance in achieving our national and international carbon emission targets and calls for adequate funding to be made available for all local authorities in any retrofit strategy.

Finally, the council calls for the government to develop long term support for householders, including changes in relevant laws, guidance and tax regulations, and to encourage businesses and the skills development needed to support retrofitting.

All of the Leader's letters can be viewed on the SODC website.