

Title	District Councillor's Report
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Parish	Berinsfield Parish Council
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Infrastructure Funding Statements now available

SODC has published its Infrastructure Funding Statements for 2020/21 to provide an annual summary on developer contributions. Through Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106, we were able to secure £20,665,018 from local developers, which will go towards local infrastructure to support the growth in our districts. You can read more information on funds allocated to projects via the SODC website: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/infrastructure-to-support-communities/>

As part of the budget-setting process for 2022/23, a prioritised list of projects which will use the SODC portion of these funds has been created; this new approach will ensure that 3rd party funds are used wherever possible for major projects, thus reducing the demand on the Council's reserves. The majority of these projects relate to the District's leisure centres, the Riverside pool, campsite and other facilities in Wallingford, tree planting projects and to the purchase of housing for social rent. This includes a budget for replacement of the artificial pitch at Abbey Sports centre and some upkeep and drainage improvement for the pool.

2022/23 Budget

The SODC budget is working its way through the democratic cycle of meetings (Cabinet, Scrutiny and then Full Council) at the moment, so hopefully it will be approved on 17th Feb and we can put in place delivery plans for the projects identified for the second full year of our current Corporate Plan (e.g. the roll-out of our Climate Action Plan, which was approved by Cabinet on 3rd Feb). These come on top of our statutory obligations, of course. We are pleased to report that, thanks to bringing the Finance function back in-house from Capita, we have much better processes for budget-setting, scrutiny and approval. This has helped us to identify savings in our base budget while not compromising on the services we offer to residents. Although we still only have a one-year financial settlement from the Government, we are still obliged to set a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which takes us through to 2026/27. Our current projections indicate that we have been successful in closing the gap between revenue and expenditure since being elected in 2019 (one of our Corporate Plan priorities) and that Council reserves are in a much stronger position than the predictions we inherited.

Covid-19 Grants available for businesses in South Oxfordshire

Businesses based in South Oxfordshire in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors are being urged to apply for support from the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant fund. The government has given £1,482,084 to South Oxfordshire to help support local businesses that have been struggling financially due to the recent Covid-19 Omicron variant.

To apply, eligible businesses must have been open and trading from a property where they are responsible for paying business rates on 30 December 2021. The criteria of the grant is set by the government and rules of how the money is distributed cannot be changed by the

council. Successful applicants could receive between £2,667 and £6,000 depending on the rateable value of the property.

Business owners can find out the full criteria and complete an online application form via the district councils' South and Vale Business Support website – <https://svbs.co.uk> up until midday on 18 February. There's also a Winter Support grant for businesses without a rateable property which closes at midday on 9th Feb. www.svbs.co.uk/winter-support-grants/

Businesses can also stay up to date with all government grants given to the district councils by signing up to the South and Vale Business Support newsletter.

Council Tax and Energy Bill Rebate

You have probably seen the [announcement](#) about the measures the Government is taking to help protect households from rising energy costs. This includes a £200 Energy Bills Rebate and a £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate.

Households in England, which are in council tax bands A-D, will receive a £150 rebate. The rebate to bills will be made by local authorities to households from April directly rather than through the Council Tax system. This will not need to be repaid. This one-off payment will benefit around 80 per cent of all homes in England.

On top of this discount, discretionary funding of £144 million will also be provided to support vulnerable people and individuals on low incomes who do not pay Council Tax, or who pay Council Tax for properties in Bands E-H.

Community hub team support

On top of managing the household support fund (as described in last month's report, our Community Hub team remains very busy supporting for residents who are self-isolating. In January the Hub:

- made 502 phone calls to people who've asked for help whilst self-isolating
- contacted 105 residents who've received the £500 test and trace payment to offer them support
- delivered 11 food parcels
- handled 436 enquiries from residents, mostly on financial help.

A letter has gone out to all Council and NHS staff in Oxfordshire to thank them for their tireless efforts to provide services and support communities and the most vulnerable throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Berinsfield Garden Village

Activity this month has included a visit with the SODC team and members of the parish council to look at Elaine's Ditch and start planning some maintenance of the parts which run through SODC land. The community grand scheme is likely to open in the middle of the month, which will offer revenue and capital funding to Berinsfield organisations. The team will be in touch with those, more info can be found at www.southoxon.gov.uk/berinsfield