**District Councillor Report- Cllr Robin Bennett, June 2023**

**My role on the council 2023-4**

At the recent Full Council meeting, David Rouane was re-elected as Leader, and confirmed that the Lib Dem group will remain in partnership with the Green group and continue our successful joint administration at SODC. Having been re-elected as Green group leader for 2023-4, I am continuing in my role as Deputy Leader as well as Cabinet Member of Economic Development and Regeneration, and indeed there’s only one change to the cabinet, which should enable continuity and mean current plans are not interrupted.

**Tomorrow: Come and say hello! New drop-in sessions on grants and support**

SODC officers will be at Cornerstone Arts Centre’s café in Didcot on Tuesday 6 June from 2pm. Our grants team will be available to meet with voluntary sector groups and town and parish councils to provide advice and guidance on grants.

Our grants advice sessions begin at 2pm and you can just drop in on the day or book a face-to-face meeting, phone call or Microsoft Teams chat with us, email us at **grants@southandvale.gov.uk** or call us on 01235 422405 to book a slot. For more information on our grant schemes see our web page.

Our Community Hub team will also be in the café at Cornerstone from 2pm – 5:30pm.

They can offer cost-of-living help, including access to food support and advice and signposting on a wide range of issues. A vital part of our work is the Homes for Ukraine scheme so can offer guidance and information for anyone curious about becoming a host for the Homes for Ukraine scheme or offering support to guests on this scheme.

If you can’t come and meet us in person but need help because you’re struggling financially or just finding life difficult, we can help. Whether it’s practical support or just advice, please get in touch on 01235 422600 or via email, **communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk**

**Berinsfield Steering Group**

This group will meet on Wednesday at the BCA, including reps from SODC, OCC and the Parish Council, as well as Ptarmigan. One of the clear messages from the Community Planning weekend was that, now the allocated Mount Farm site is moving forward, better working together between SODC and the site promoters, and I’ve already been working on how we can do this following the elections.

Another item for discussion is whether some of the ‘small interventions’ from the community facilities study can be put forward for funding from SODC’s Shared Prosperity Fund, and we will also hear updates on the sports centre improvements and possibilities for community energy, as well as looking at the draft community facilities report.

Other items on the agenda include a proposal for some outreach work in Berinsfield by Fusion Arts, and the grant application from Citizens Advice Bureau for a Berinsfield drop in session and other support.

**Help develop our local food action plans**

We’re calling for all local businesses, community growers, voluntary and community groups, food businesses and producers, and more to help us provide fairer, healthier and more sustainable local food systems for our districts.

Join us on Friday 9 June where we’ll be raising awareness of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy, which the councils adopted along with the other Oxfordshire councils and partners in December 2022. We’ll also be discussing the development of the South and Vale Food Action Working Group, which will work with stakeholders and partners to shape new action plans.

You can register for the event online or email communityconnectors@southandvale.gov.uk.

The meeting will take place on Friday 9 June, from 11am to 12.30pm at The District Community Centre, Great Western Park, Didcot.

**Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership**The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) brings together employers, business, education, community groups and local government working to share knowledge, expertise and resources to address some of our greatest challenges.
The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership is working together to create opportunities and benefits for all people within the county. We are working to tackle some of our region’s biggest problems to create a fairer environment where everyone can contribute and share in our success.
The Partnership has developed a charter and pledges to help individuals, companies and organisations to set out ways in which they will help deliver the ambitions and activities to create an inclusive economy for Oxfordshire.

**I’ve joined the Steering Group for this new partnership. One if its early programmes is to spread the successful ‘Growing Minds’ pilot from Berinsfield to new areas. I’m also keen to hear from local businesses who would like to sign up for the Charter or be part of this in any way.**

**Didcot Garden Party returns**

Didcot Garden Party is back this summer with a great selection of free activities for everyone to enjoy, from creative and arts activities to sport, yoga and live music.

The party starts on Saturday 22 July and will run through to the end of August.

The free activities will take place across the garden town area, day and night, weekends, and weekdays, with key events happening at Cornerstone Arts Centre and in the town and surrounding village’s parks and community halls. The focus for this year’s party will be health, wellbeing and the environment.

The programme includes: live music at Cornerstone on Friday evenings in the courtyard and a community open mic night, free activities for children including skateboarding, Xplorer, table tennis and dance with the Active Communities Team.

Most Saturdays there will be free performances and activities in the courtyard at Cornerstone for families to take part in.

The garden party is a great opportunity for residents from the town and surrounding areas to come together. Four community days are also planned at Cornerstone and the Civic Hall with the themes: environment, keeping active, food and finances and Independence Day of Ukraine.