

Playgrounds and outdoor gyms advice

The government has just published this [guidance and practical advice](#) on how outdoor gym and playgrounds can be reopened and managed effectively to enable their use while minimising risk of transmitting COVID-19.

Visitors are encouraged to wash their hands before and after they visit, maintain social distancing, and to come back at a quieter time if the area looks busy.

Playgrounds and the skate park in Henley have reopened as have public lavatories. Please observe signage relating to hygiene and social distancing.

Leisure centres update

As things stand, indoor gyms and swimming pools must remain closed and we are still waiting for the government to confirm the timetable for them to reopen. In the meantime, we are continuing to work on potential reopening plans to ensure we are ready once we've been given the go-ahead.

Shielding guidance relaxed

You may have seen the government is relaxing the guidance for residents who are currently shielding from today (Monday 6 July).

We want all of our shielding residents to be aware that even after the guidance has been relaxed, we're still available to provide support and advice – they can continue to call 01235 422600 or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk. Lines are open 9am to 6pm Monday to Saturday.

If you weren't aware – the changes that come into place on 6 July state that people who are shielding:

- can meet in a group of up to 6 people outdoors, including people from different households, while maintaining strict social distancing
- no longer need to observe social distancing with other members of their household
- can form a 'support bubble' with one other household – all those in a support bubble will be able to spend time together inside each other's homes, including overnight, without needing to socially distance.

You can find the full details about how shielding arrangements are changing on [the government's website](#).

Virtual meetings update

We are currently testing a system to allow Parish Councils, the general public and other organisations to take part directly in our online committee meetings.

The meetings are currently working well, and many town and parish councils and members of the public have contributed by providing a written statement, although officers hope to have the new system up and running very soon.

Cabinet takes place online this Thursday (9th July) followed by full council on 16th July. All meetings can be streamed via meeting links on the SODC website.

The Examination in Public of the Local Plan is also due to be streamed live, starting on 14th July.

New Thames Champion for South Oxfordshire

Cllr Jo Robb, ward councillor for Woodcote and Rotherfield, is taking on the newly created role of Thames Champion. The River Thames is one of our most precious natural assets and Cllr Robb will be networking with river users, councillors and neighbouring councils to improve access to the river, and to protect and enhance its biodiversity and cleanliness.

Jo is proposing a motion to council on 16 July asking officers to begin the process of applying for Bathing Quality Water status for the Thames.

Open for Business

Through our various social media profiles, following work from SODC licensing, environmental health and business support teams, we're helping to spread the word that town centres, shops and businesses are now open, and how shoppers can get involved while – importantly – staying safe. We're joining the national social media campaign #OpenForBusiness to show the extra hard work staff in the shops and parishes have put in to reopen and protect their customers and staff.

Local shops and businesses can join in using the hashtags #OpenForBusiness #ShopLocalStaySafe and tagging @southoxon.

We'll retweet or share your post to help spread the word that the shop has opened and is ready for customers.