

South Oxfordshire District Council Report – September 2018

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

The Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council is calling on Oxfordshire MPs to back its preferred route for the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway.

Cllr Jane Murphy has written, setting out that the Council's preference for the Expressway is Corridor C, which would run between Milton Keynes and the A34 at Bicester via Buckinghamshire to the north and west of Oxford, along with sub-option C1 which would link back to the A34 between Abingdon and Didcot. The recently announced preferred option does not make it clear which side of Oxford it skirts.

We are supportive of the objectives and purpose of the Expressway and recognise that it will support economic growth along the Oxford-to-Cambridge Corridor. We strongly believe our preferred route is the best option not only for South Oxfordshire, but Oxfordshire as a whole and I am urging all of our local MPs to support this route.

The Council believes its preferred route is the best option because:

- it would more closely align with the current main route along this corridor, A34-M40-A421- M1, helping alleviate congestion along this route
- it would more closely align with the growth locations along the corridor such as Bicester and Didcot Garden Town, and potential further growth areas in Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire
- it would more closely align with the other key east-west infrastructure schemes, such as East-West Rail.

If you want to stay up to date about the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway head over to Highways England's new dedicated website. This includes all the information presented at a stakeholder conference on 23 May, as well as further context on the proposed scheme.

You can find the web site at

<http://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=48&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fhighwaysengland.co.uk%2Fprojects%2Foxford-to-cambridge-expressway%2F&a=0>

We also have information and links on our web site at

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/delivering-infrastructure/oxford-cambridge>

Making workplaces safer

The Food and Safety Team found that a quarter of employees at inspected premises across South Oxfordshire had reported incidents of verbal abuse, theft, violence and racial abuse. The team have just completed a project to help make workplaces safer. Between July 2017 and April 2018 officers inspected 26 premises which have vulnerable working conditions, such as lone working, night working and cash handling. These included betting shops, off licences and late night takeaways.

Three quarters of businesses had good measures in place such as CCTV, lighting, magnetic locks on doors, and cash-handling procedures. However we had to make recommendations for improvements at five businesses - the good news is that all five made improvements by the time we did a re-visit.

The project was part of the team's proactive enforcement activities. From now until next April they will be focusing on the prevention of carbon monoxide poisoning in catering businesses and transport safety in large scale warehousing.

Local Plan update

We're continuing our dialogue with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the progress of the Local Plan. We've updated our partner authorities who are part of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and continue to work to the approach agreed by Council to ensure we are in the best possible position to produce a 'sound' and robust Local Plan.

The timetable states that councillors will make a decision in December on which of the 15 available major housing sites will be included in the plan, following completion of necessary assessment and filtering work. The final plan, outlining how the district should develop until 2033, will then be published and residents will have a chance to comment on its technical 'soundness' early next year. It will then be submitted for public examination by an independent planning inspector later in 2019. For more please see our Local Plan page.

CIL update

We've just published the 2017/18 financial statement for our Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The total CIL receipts amounted to £2,190,161 of which £205,890 has been transferred to town and parish councils.

SODC is exploring whether to take over on-street parking enforcement in the district.

The council is liaising with Oxfordshire County Council (the highways authority), which is responsible for formally applying to Westminster for powers and then delegating civil parking enforcement responsibilities, to find out whether this could be possible. Councillors have also asked for work to be carried out to look at the business case involved in the district council taking over enforcement, including costs and projected income.

Thames Valley Police is currently responsible for this across most of South Oxfordshire, apart from a small number of spaces in Wallingford, which the district council deals with, and the on-street & residents parking Henley, which the town council is responsible for on behalf of OCC.

We're very mindful that problems do exist with on-street parking in some areas of South Oxfordshire. That's why we're taking this issue seriously, not only by contacting by liaising with the police and partner organisations, but by exploring whether we should apply to take over responsibility for enforcement.

It's a yellow letter day in South and Vale as residents are urged to confirm their details

Residents in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are urged to respond to a yellow letter which recently arrived through their letter boxes. The 'Household Enquiry Form' requires people to confirm who currently lives in their property.

South Oxfordshire District Council needs this information to make sure everyone who is eligible to vote is able to do so in future elections, including the district, town and parish elections happening in May 2019.

Residents who do not have access to the internet can confirm their details by completing and returning the form that comes with the letter. If your details are correct you can confirm this by phone or text – the details required for this are included on the yellow letter. If a household doesn't respond they will receive reminder letters. Council staff will also visit properties which haven't responded by the Autumn to confirm the details.

Fire-damaged council headquarters up-date

Demolition work has started at the former headquarters of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council.

Excavators are on-site to dismantle the building, which was severely damaged in an arson attack in 2015. The reception area, where the fire was started, was among the first sections to be demolished.

The contractors have been at the site, in Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford, since early July carrying out preparatory works before starting demolition. It is expected to take around three months to completely clear the site. The contractors are salvaging as many leftover materials from the building as possible so that they can be recycled or re-used. So far, everything is going to plan and the demolition work is being carried out with neighbouring properties in mind. We're continuing to work with the contractors to minimise disruption and I'd once again like to thank residents for their patience. This is a project that has been a long time getting under way and both the Council and the residents of Crowmarsh are pleased that, at last, work is beginning. There is still a lot of planning to do, but things are now moving forward.

Opening the doors to volunteering

Help is now available in South Oxfordshire for voluntary groups who have difficulties recruiting volunteers for financial reasons.

Community groups have told South Oxfordshire District Council that one of the biggest obstacles they face when trying to attract volunteers is finding money to meet training and transport and insurance costs.

In answer to this, the council has launched a pilot volunteering grant scheme with a total of £25,000 to give away to help voluntary and community groups find the volunteers they need.

Small voluntary groups in South Oxfordshire can apply for a new volunteering grant of between £250 to £750 to help cover costs, for example the costs of training as a sports coach or the costs of additional insurance needed to be a volunteer driver.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any community group – we know there are lots of people out there who want to help out in their local community, but sometimes the costs can be a barrier. We want to do everything we can to open those doors and give our local groups and charities the lift they need to help them continue to build thriving communities.

The scheme will be run as a pilot in 2018/19 and depending on its success in improving the voluntary sector, councillors will decide whether to continue with it in the future. The district council made a commitment in its Corporate Plan to provide additional support to voluntary and community groups to help them find the volunteers they need. The volunteering grant is the first of a range of exciting new projects underway to do that, and to help get communities working together to make life better in the district.

To find out more about the grant, eligibility and how to apply please see southoxon.gov.uk/volunteering

New service to help victims and witnesses to report hate crime

Victims and witnesses of hate crime who are not comfortable talking to the police now have an alternative place to go to report incidents in confidence. Hate crimes can be reported to specially trained staff at familiar locations across South and Vale, including at Citizens' Advice Bureaus. Incidents can be reported in person or by telephone.

Staff will be available to talk about the incident and can offer to report it to the police on their behalf. They will also refer people to Victims First, a service dedicated to ensuring that victims or witnesses receive the support they need to cope with and recover from their experience. To find out where your nearest reporting centre is visit southoxon.gov.uk/hatecrime.

National Parks and AONB government review

SODC has written to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs expressing our wish to respond to, and feed into, a government review of National Parks

and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which will assess whether AONBs can become National Park Authorities.

Please let me know your views about this, as all 10 villages in my District Council ward are in the Chilterns AONB.

Thames Valley Police.

Reminder - Nottingham Knockers Are Still About

Thames Valley police has received reports of 'Nottingham Knockers' in our area. Often these people try and sell you cleaning items and say that they are trying to improve their lives following release from prison. These people are often trying to find out more about the home owner and whether they are vulnerable and could be scammed out of more money.

Please do not buy from these people and report it to Trading Standards by calling 03454 04 05 06 (Citizen's Advice) or emailing TSinformation@oxfordshire.gov.uk. If you feel threatened in anyway please call the Police on 999 (or 101 to report an incident after it has happened).

Reminder - Protect Your Shed Or Garage

Opportunist thieves identify sheds and garages as easy pickings because they are usually fairly unprotected and lack basic security measures. The buildings often contain property that can be sold on or implements that can be used to force entry into the owner's home. Many people fall short on basic security of their sheds and garages.

- Keep your shed/garage in good condition.
- Fit a closed shackle padlock to the door.
- Fittings should be bolted through the door and any screws concealed.
- It is easy to unscrew the ironmongery, steal contents and in some cases replace the screws to make it look as if the shed has not been tampered with.
- By using tamper proof screws or coach bolts, together with a good quality pad bar or hasp and staple and close shackled padlock, the shed owner will make it harder for the would-be thief.
- Bond any window glass in with mastic to prevent easy removal. Fit grilles or mesh to windows to slow down the thief.
- Ensure all equipment and tools are locked away when not in use.
- Install a shed/garage alarm.
- Post-code or mark all property such as lawnmowers, bikes, and tools using ultraviolet pens, forensic marking such as Selecta DNA, SmartWater or engravers.
- Install security lighting as a deterrent, and plants such as thorny shrubs to act as a barrier at potential access points.
- If building a shed, put it where it is most visible to you and neighbours.
- Ensure ladders are locked to a secure fixture in the shed or garage so they can't be used to reach top floor windows.
- Chain large items such as bicycles together, making it much more difficult for a thief to carry away.

- Fit a wire cage inside a shed where more expensive items can be locked away.
- No thief wants to hang about longer than they have to so delay the time it will take them to get their hands on your tools

Lottery offers more than jackpot with family theatre ticket giveaway

South Oxfordshire's community lottery has joined up with Cornerstone arts centre in Didcot to give away a free family ticket to the Christmas production of 'The Pied Piper'. The ticket is being offered as an extra prize by SO Charitable Lottery, which supports local charities and voluntary organisations, in addition to a jackpot of £25,000 and smaller cash prizes.

Residents simply need to play SO Charitable Lottery before 29 September to be in with the chance of winning the ticket for the show, which is running at the arts centre from 14-29 December.

It costs just £1 per draw to play the lottery, going to good causes in South Oxfordshire and helping to support local communities. Players can choose which local good cause to support when they purchase tickets and can see how much is being raised from week-to-week. The lottery was set up earlier this year by South Oxfordshire District Council as part of its work to assist the voluntary sector.

We're grateful to Cornerstone for giving the prize and it promises to be a fantastic show, which I'm sure many families would love to see. This is an extra incentive to play our community lottery and support local charities and voluntary organisations in South Oxfordshire. Many people have already got behind the lottery and play regularly, and this is a great way for people to support local causes, while being in with the chance of winning a prize.

The lottery runs online and draws take place every Saturday. To find out more about buying tickets, or if you are a good cause working in South Oxfordshire that would like to apply to become a beneficiary of the lottery, visit www.socharitable.co.uk