

SODC A Conservative District Councillor's View
(Or What The Council Is Doing)

October 2018.

Planning

As a separate Planning Newsletter will be issued over the next few days ago, I am only including a few, more recent items.

Response to letter from Minister of State for Housing

You may have seen media coverage of our letters from both South and Vale Leaders who sent their responses to providing proposals on housing growth in our districts to support the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Corridor.

You can download a copy of the minister's letter here.

<https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fd45tutfcig1ztdm%2F2018-08-09%2520New%2520Settlements%2520letter%2520to%2520leaders%2520from%2520Kit%2520Malthouse%2520MP.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&a=0>

For South, the letter from Cllr Jane Murphy can be found here

https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fcikez8v117iicca%2F2018-08-15%2520Jane%2520Murphy%2520letter%2520to%2520Kit%2520Malthouse%2520MP_0.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&a=0

and her summary statement released here.

<https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.southoxon.gov.uk%2Fnews%2F2018%2F2018-08%2Fleader-statement-response-letter-minister-state-housing&a=0>

Three-year housing land supply

Following a consultation in July, councils in Oxfordshire now only need to provide a three-year supply of land for housing, instead of the five-year supply normally required by the government.

The government has agreed to this change while we work together with the other Oxfordshire Councils on a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, the document that will address how we collectively plan to deliver 100,000 homes across the county by 2031, which was agreed as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal.

This means it is now much less likely for developers to win planning permission on appeal after we have rejected their applications.

Neighbourhood Plan updates

Benson and Watlington plans were adopted by council on 23 August.

There was a public hearing as part of the examination of the Cholsey plan on Monday 17 September at The Pavillion in Cholsey.

The Long Wittenham neighbourhood plan pre-submission consultation concluded on Tuesday 11 September.

The examinations of the Chalgrove and Goring neighbourhood plans were expected to conclude in mid-September.

The Baldons and Warborough & Shillingford plans will be subject to public referendums on Thursday 4 October.

The Pyrton plan will be examined by Mr Timothy Jones, of No5 Chambers.

Capital Grants applications open soon

Our Capital Grants scheme opens on Monday 1 October and we are encouraging any groups with a project which could benefit from this funding to get in touch with our Grants Team before they start an application.

There's £145,000 available to help fund a variety of facilities and improvements, such as upgrading a community hall or improving a play area. For more information see our grants pages.

New legislation coming for HMOs

New legislation comes in on 1 October, which affects landlords of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

As licensing authorities, both South and Vale grant licences to larger HMOs that are three or more storeys and occupied by five or more people forming at least two separate households.

From 1 October, the legislation changes so that smaller properties used as HMOs will also require a licence. Other changes to be introduced include national minimum sizes for rooms used as sleeping accommodation and the requirement for landlords to adhere to council refuse schemes.

You can find more information on our South and Vale website

<https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.southoxon.gov.uk%2Fservices-and-advice%2Fhousing%2Fhelp-landlords%2Fmandatory-licensing&a=0>

If you have any information on HMOs in your area that may require a licence, please email our Environmental Health Team env.health@southandvale.gov.uk or by phoning 01235 422403.

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

More than 87,000 properties have responded to our 'Household Enquiry' letter which required people to confirm who currently lives in their property. However, we're yet to hear from 34,000 homes so we are sending reminder letters to those properties.

We need this information to make sure everyone who is eligible to vote is able to do so in future elections.

If people get a reminder letter, or if they can find the original letter, they should visit householdresponse.com/southandvale to confirm their details are correct or, if not, provide the correct information.

If a household hasn't confirmed their details by 7 October they could receive a visit from one of our officers to confirm the details.

£1.2million recovered

During 2017/18 we recovered more than £1.2million in council tax arrears. This was thanks to tough enforcement action we took against non-payers.

We issued 5,000 court summonses to people who had repeatedly failed or refused to pay their council tax.

Magistrates then granted liability orders against almost 4,000 of those individuals meaning we could take enforcement action, including the use of bailiffs, to retrieve the money. We of course offer support to those who are genuinely struggling to pay.

See our press release for a more detailed breakdown of the action we took and the money retrieved.

Letter to minister on Affordable Housing

You'll remember a motion carried at Council last month that requested that Cllr Jane Murphy sent a letter to the Minister of Housing about the definition of Affordable Housing. Cllr Murphy sent the letter last month and you can read it here.

<https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=61&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fx5bfif07ul3giip%2FLetter%2520to%2520James%2520Brockenshire%2520re%2520affordable%2520housing%2520170818.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&a=0>

Mountain Warehouse comes to Didcot

Outdoor retailer Mountain Warehouse have opened a new store in the Orchard Centre.

Perfectly located on the doorstep of the Chilterns, Ridgeway and Wittenham Clumps, the retailers offer a wide range of clothing and equipment for activities outdoors.

You can read the joint press release from Hammerson on our website here.

New service to help victims and witnesses to report hate crime - Reminder

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.

Recycling roadshows came to a town near you

Recycling experts from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have been out and about myth-busting over what can and can't be recycled in the districts as part of National Recycle Week 2018.

Events were planned across southern Oxfordshire gave residents the chance to ask the experts about recycling collections and what happens to the recycling after waste crews have collected it.

The district councils' officers were at special recycling stalls, giving out advice and recycling goodies.

It was the 15th Recycle Week (24 – 30 September) organised by WRAP* as part of the Recycle Now national recycling campaign for England. This year's theme is 'Recycling. We do. Because it matters.' with an emphasis on plastic items.

Cllr Caroline Newton, South Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet Member for waste and recycling, said: "Up to 80 per cent of household waste can be recycled and the councils offer lots of recycling information online, including our Binzone app which gives details of collections and of individual items which can be recycled. Recycle Week was a good opportunity to remind residents of the benefits of recycling and how the council can help people do even more to reduce waste."

More information about waste and recycling can be found on the councils' recycling pages

People can also download the Binzone app to smartphones or tablets which will tell what can and can't be recycled and also when bins are due to be collected.

*WRAP – Waste and Resources Action Programme is a registered charity set up to promote sustainable waste management

Cooking oil recycling

We've just introduced a new cooking oil recycling service for residents as part of our food waste collections.

After cooking and once it has cooled, any leftover oil can be poured into a plastic bottle no bigger than one litre in size. The bottle and its contents can then be placed into the kerbside food waste caddy, along with other food waste, and put out for the weekly collection. For those who don't want to use a plastic bottle, oil can also be poured straight into the caddy along with other food waste.

One litre of cooking oil can generate enough electricity to make 240 cups of tea!

Gambling policy review

We are currently reviewing our joint gambling act policy which is due for renewal in January 2019. The policy sets out how we manage gambling premises and permits across South and Vale.

We are proposing just three minor changes to the policy and people now have until until midnight on Monday 8 October to comment on the updated document at <https://ebtk.co.uk/resources/stats/click.php?c=2636&e=64&o=9492&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsurvey.southandvale.gov.uk%2Fs%2Fgambling%2F&a=0>

Editor - Cllr Ian White (lan.White@southoxon.gov.uk) Twitter feed: @IanWhite_DC