Title	**District Councillors' Report**
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New Unitary Authorities warding arrangements for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire

Two sets of warding suggestions for the shadow elections next May have been submitted to the minister, one from Oxford City Council for the new Greater Oxford and one from OCC & SODC. It is the proposed wards around the edge of Greater Oxford which are contentious. Elsewhere the existing county divisions are proposed to be the new wards and most will have 2 councillors. Warborough and Dorchester are both very keen to be part of Ridgeway rather than Greater Oxford but it is not clear how this might be achieved. Boundary reviews should take place after next May but before the next set of elections to even up the ward sizes.

Planning Decisions: Briefing for Town and Parish Councils

Major national changes to the way planning applications are decided are due to come into force on 31 October 2026 through the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions. These changes will mean more applications are determined by planning officers and will significantly reduce the circumstances in which ward councillors or Town and Parish Councils can secure consideration by Planning Committee.

To help local councils prepare, South Oxfordshire is holding an online briefing for Town and Parish Councils on Thursday 10 September, from 5.30pm to 7.30pm. I would strongly encourage parish representatives to attend. If you cannot join live, the session will be recorded and shared afterwards. To register, email planning.admin@southandvale.gov.uk .

You may also be aware that the government have recently issued a new version of the NPPF – the National Planning Policy Framework.

New Online Council Map

South Oxfordshire's new interactive public mapping system is now live. Residents can use it to search a wide range of publicly available information in one place, including planning applications, Tree Preservation Orders, land owned by the council and other geographic information.

This should make it much easier for residents and parish councils to understand what applies to a particular site or area without having to search across several different systems. For a useful update to changes in the SODC part of the planning system see https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/new-planning-land-charges-and-mapping-systems-frequently-asked-questions-faq/

Grants availability

South Nature and Climate Action Fund – Grant applications open 28th September

This is to support local projects that help to tackle climate change or help restore nature in our District. Relevant if you are already involved in a local group or simply looking to start taking climate action.

Performing Arts Grant Fund – opened 20 July 2026

For projects that could enhance community wellbeing, foster mental, emotional and physical well-being through accessible performing arts initiatives that brings people together, or provide opportunities for diverse groups to participate in and access the performing arts, ensuring inclusivity across all demographics, including marginalised or under-represented communities. There is a fund of £60,000 available in 2026/27.

Councillor Grant Fund – opened 17th August 2026

Once again we have £15k to allocate to deserving projects and organisations in this financial year. Contact Grants@southandvale.gov.uk for any questions about eligibility.

Temporary Restrictions on Fridge and Freezer Disposal

Temporary restrictions have been introduced for disposing of fridges and freezers at Oxfordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres. This is not an Oxfordshire-specific problem: three specialist UK processing facilities have closed over the last year, reducing national capacity by around a third. Some councils have stopped accepting these appliances altogether and they cannot be taken as part of bulky waste collections booked through SODC. Oxfordshire is introducing limits to try to keep a service available.

August Bank Holiday Bin Collections

Residents are reminded that waste and recycling collections will run one day later than usual following the August Bank Holiday, from 31 August to 5 September. Please check your collection date and make sure bins are presented in time.

Support for Local Businesses

South Oxfordshire's Economic Development team provides free information and support to local businesses, including regular updates on funding, skills programmes, networking opportunities and other business support. The team's free fortnightly Business Support Newsletter is a useful way for local businesses to keep up with opportunities available across the district.

If you run a business locally, or know someone who does, we would encourage you to make use of the service and sign up for the updates. Business Support newsletter

can be requested here - https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/business-and-economy/advice-for-businesses/keep-up-to-date-sign-up-to-our-newsletter/

Free Electric Blanket Safety Testing

Oxfordshire residents can access free electric blanket safety testing this autumn. Electric blankets can develop faults that are not always visible, so the checks are particularly useful for older blankets or those that have been stored for long periods.

Local sessions include Didcot on 5 October, with a Thame date also expected to be confirmed. Places need to be booked in advance, so residents who use electric blankets are encouraged to take advantage of the free service.