Title	**District Councillors' Report**
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Local Government Reorganisation – Government presses the Pause button!

Just to confirm, following the "pause" implemented by the Government on Local Government Reorganisation, we still await further news about a revised timescale. May 2027 elections will proceed for South Oxfordshire DC, and elected councillors will serve at least two years, if not more, depending on how the Government decides to proceed. In the meantime, OCC has issued a Pre-Action notice focusing on the evidence based used by HMG to choose the "Three Unitaries" model. So LGR continues to be the gift that keeps on giving.

Community Cohesion Project

We have circulated details of a very important initiative taking place within SODC (and actually beyond across the wider county), which is to develop a long-term Community Cohesion Strategy, addressing some of the challenges facing our growing communities. Extensive house-building, coupled with some of the social challenges being seen across the country (e.g. the "Raise the Flag" campaign), have created for many a sense of division and exclusion, while many families are so focused on dealing with cost-of-living problems that they haven't had the capacity to embrace all that their local area has to offer. We believe that, in partnership with many other agencies and community groups, local councils can help to reduce divisions and to foster a sense of belonging and cohesion. The community cohesion strategy is designed to foster integration by encouraging social participation, cultural understanding, and mutual support.

An online survey has been launched in partnership with an organisation called **Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network.** Residents are invited to take part to share their views and their own experiences within their communities.

Additionally, SODC has secured £100k of funding from a programme called Common Ground, which is funded partly by the National Lottery, and which will help the Council to develop and implement the community cohesion strategy developed in partnership with Belong.

New National Scheme of Delegation for Planning

As we explained at September's meeting, the new National Scheme of Delegation (NSD) for planning decisions will come into effect at the end of October 2026 and the Council is preparing its members and other relevant parties (e.g. Parish Councils) for the new procedures. The new system divides applications into Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 cases. **Schedule 1** applications will always be delegated to officers and include:

- Householder development
- Minor commercial development
- Minor residential development
- Modifications to planning obligations connected to a schedule 1 application

- Reserved matters up to 499 dwellings and creation of less than 50,000sqm floorspace
- Approval of details (otherwise known as discharge of conditions)
- Prior approvals, certificates of lawfulness, PIPs, NMAs

For Schedule 2 applications, the overriding presumption in law is that these will be also delegated to officers.

This includes:

- Applications that are not householders, minor residential or commercial
- Retrospective applications
- Advertisement consent
- Listed building consent, and associated planning applications
- Works to TPO trees
- Reserved matters 500+ dwellings and creation of more than 50,000sqm floorspace

A new concept is being introduced *for Schedule 2 applications only* – the Gateway Test and associated Referral process, which will be used if a Member would like an application to be considered for decision by the Planning Committee (given that we will lose the power of "call-in"). This can only be initiated:

a. ***Where the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area***

b. ***Where the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations***

A two-step process will then be implemented with the Director of Planning ultimately deciding if an application should NOT be delegated to officers for determination.

Grants availability – a Reminder

South Nature and Climate Action Fund – Grant applications opened 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. Do discuss your proposals with one of us before applying.

Waste and Recycling

Extra garden waste collections - If you are a garden waste permit holder, you will be able to have extra garden waste collected for free, on your normal collection day only between 2 November and 13 November 2026. To check if you are eligible for a collection and for details on how to leave the extra waste out, please follow the guidance found on our garden waste page.

Sue had an interesting visit to our new recycling contractor recently and saw in action how waste film – plastic bags and the like – are sorted and baled. This means we too can now put these plastics into our recycling bins. More information on this should appear on our website soon but any such plastics put into our bins will be recycled. The contractor is currently sending such plastics to a factory in Peterborough if you are interested.

Waste-Free Hallowe'en - Save the insides of your pumpkin to make delicious pumpkin soup or bake the seeds with salt and pepper for a healthy snack. You can find wickedly tasty recipes on our Halloween waste page. If you can't eat your pumpkin just slice it up and pop it in your food bin or leave it whole beside the bin during the week commencing 2 November. We will collect it on your scheduled collection day. Please make sure to remove any candles, melted wax, or other decorations first!

Ready to quit smoking?

October is Stoptober, the annual campaign encouraging people to quit smoking. If you're thinking about stopping, this month is a great time to try, with thousands of others trying with you across the country. Smokefree Oxon is Oxfordshire's free local stop smoking service, offering confidential support to help you quit in a way that works for you. This includes specialist advice, a 12-week programme beyond October, and free nicotine replacement products.