

SODC Councillor's Monthly Report to Chalgrove Ward (March 2025)

New garden waste permit payment system rolls out this week Published Monday 3 March 2025

Residents in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse can now sign up for a new garden waste permit as part of changes to the councils' subscribed collection service. The updated scheme, launching on 1 April 2025, introduces an annual permit sticker system. Residents need to pay for their permit to ensure their garden waste collections continue without interruption. The new payment system is now available online at www.southoxon.gov.uk/gardenwaste

Once they have purchased a permit, customers will receive a sticker through the post displaying their address which needs to be stuck to their garden waste bin lid to identify it as fully paid for and eligible for collection. Customers now need to make an annual payment for a permit – this replaces the existing direct debit scheme. Everyone's payment year will run from 1 April to 31 March each year. Every bin needs its own permit and customers will receive a new sticker annually each time they renew.

New plan to help power Oxfordshire using local renewable energy. As the UK transitions away from fossil fuels towards cleaner, renewable energy sources, the energy grid will need to adapt to store and distribute energy more efficiently, ensuring it is available where and when it is needed. Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council and West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have joined together, under the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, to deliver pioneering local area energy plans (LAEPs) for Oxfordshire, to address climate change and secure cleaner, more affordable energy for the county.

The plans will provide clear, strategic, and community-focused actions for transforming the way local energy such as wind and solar is generated, used, and managed, supporting both local and national climate goals. They will assess how building improvement measures such as insulation and low-carbon heating can reduce reliance upon fossil fuels. At the same time, they will improve the quality of information necessary to plan and deliver the energy we will need from the electricity grid, ensuring homes and businesses can benefit from cleaner, more reliable power in the years to come. To develop the plans, the authorities will work with local communities and businesses to identify projects that will help manage the transition to cleaner energy. The plans will identify specific actions for each district, together with more strategic projects to be delivered at the county level.

Community groups to benefit from over £1.4 million grants this year. Communities in South Oxfordshire are set to benefit from £1,450,000 over the next year through a range of grant schemes to support community projects. South Oxfordshire District Council confirmed that its budget for 2025/2026 includes continued financial support of organisations in the district that help residents, businesses and the environment. To help organisations plan their applications the council is hosting an event at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot on Thursday 20 March with appointments available to book from 12.30-4pm. Voluntary and community organisations will have the opportunity to discuss projects, ask questions about the application process including eligibility for any of the upcoming grant schemes. Places are limited, and you can book a time slot by emailing grants@southandvale.gov.uk or phone 01235 422405.

The following schemes will be launching over the next year:

Everyone Active Grant: 1 April – 26 May

Capital Grant: 2 June 25 – July 25

Performing Arts Grant: 28 July – 5 September

Councillor Community Grants: 18 August – 5 December

Community Infrastructure Levy Grant: January 2026

Help shape new rules for charity collections in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

Residents, charities and businesses in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are encouraged to comment on a new policy for charity collections across the two districts. Aimed at safeguarding donors and beneficiaries, ensuring fair access to collection opportunities and preventing unlicensed fundraising, the proposed policy introduces key measures, including: A requirement for applicants to provide detailed supporting material about their charity. Restrictions on where collections can take place to prevent blanket district-wide collections. A minimum of 80 per cent of money donated during house-to-house collections to go to the charitable cause. A fairer allocation of street collection opportunities. Clear grounds for refusing applications and licence revocations. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are keen to hear from local people and organisations to help shape the final version of the policy before it is implemented. The consultation is open until 11.59pm on Wednesday 26 March 2025. For more information and to take part, visit southandvale.gov.uk/CharityCollectionsConsultation

Councils offer help to bring empty homes into use. Property owners are being offered support to bring empty homes back into use, to help meet local housing needs. Financial assistance towards refurbishing properties where eligible, rent in advance and help with finding a tenant are just some of the support options available to empty homeowners from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils. Property owners could also benefit from reduced VAT for works on empty homes – if the owner is paying the Long-Term Empty Property Premium tax (payable if a property has been empty for more than two years). The councils’ teams can talk property owners through the various benefits and options available for preparing a property for renting out or selling. An estimated 1,092 properties (549 in South Oxfordshire, 543 in the Vale) are currently empty, but could once more become a home for those who need it most.

Some of these homes are unoccupied for a good reason – such as undergoing major refurbishment or awaiting sale. This initiative will target those properties that may need some extra help in being brought back into use. Members of the public can also play a part in bringing empty homes back into use by reporting empty properties to the councils. Local residents have already reported 59 empty homes (19 in South Oxfordshire, 40 in the Vale) and 29 are now back in use.

Local Government Reorganisation. Following the Government's announcement of a reorganisation of how Local Government is delivered the Leaders of South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Council have written to the Leader of West Berkshire Council to support the creation of a joint forum of senior council members from each authority to support the three authorities to work up a proposal for a possible unitary council across the three neighbouring areas. You can read the letter on the SODC website.

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