

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

Get ready for Easter fun with free and low-cost holiday activities across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse! South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are thrilled to announce their exciting programme of free and low-cost activities for young children, teenagers and families this Easter holiday. Taking place at various locations across the districts, there's something for everyone to enjoy! Don't miss out – bookings are open now and activity sessions are expected to be very popular, so book early to avoid disappointment! Join us for FREE Fun Days, running from 10am to 3pm:

Wednesday 9 April – Didcot Leisure Centre – Mereland Road, Didcot OX11 8AY

Thursday 10 April – Faringdon Leisure centre – Fernham Road, Faringdon, SN7 7LB

Monday 14 April – Cholsey Pavilion – Station Road, Wallingford, OX10 9PT

Tuesday 15 April – Botley Dean Court Community Centre – Pinnocks Way, Oxford, OX2 9DG.

At each Fun Day, you can join in free activities throughout the day and find out more information about other local activities and programmes. The fantastic activities on offer across the four days, include: New Age Kurling, Born to Move, Family Fun Fitness, Pickleball and Badminton. Table Tennis, Swimming, Gym Sessions, Xplorer, Football, Boxercise and an Easter Scavenger Hunt! But that's not all! There's also low-cost entertainment and activities at The Beacon in Wantage with the mind-boggling '24K Magic with Danny Lee Grew' (5 April) and 'Family Art Play' (12 April), and at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot on 9 April with a chance to 'Make your own cardboard creature'. To find out what's on and when, and to book a session, visit southandvale.gov.uk/holidayactivities

£50,000 'Everyone Active' grant scheme launching in April to support fitness and wellbeing. Community organisations in South Oxfordshire can continue to offer enjoyable fitness and wellbeing opportunities thanks to the £50,000 Everyone Active grant scheme launching next month. A new round of the South Oxfordshire District Council Everyone Active grant scheme will launch on Tuesday April. 1st. Previous grant recipients Thame the Disc and Didcot Town Council are using the grant to offer new fitness activities and opportunities for local people to help boost their quality of life. See the SODC website for details.

Driving ban for taxi driver who worked illegally during Henley Regatta. A private hire driver has been handed a four-month driving ban and ordered to pay over £2,700 in fines and costs after being caught operating illegally during the 2024 Henley Regatta.

Tougher fines to tackle fly-tipping and protect our environment. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are stepping up efforts to combat environmental crimes with stricter penalties for fly-tipping, littering and for householders who fail to ensure that their waste will be disposed of legally. From 1 April 2025, those who fail to meet their legal responsibilities for waste disposal will face significantly higher fines as part of a national crackdown on anti-social behaviour. Environmental crimes like fly-tipping harm wildlife, damage public spaces and cost taxpayers millions in clean-up efforts. The tougher fines, introduced by the government, aim to deter offenders and ensure those who disregard the law face serious consequences. Key changes include:

Householder duty of care breaches: on-the-spot fines will rise from £300 to £600.

Fly-tipping: maximum fixed penalty notices will increase from £400 to £1,000.

Littering and graffiti: fines will rise from £80 to £500.

Failure to pay these fines may lead to prosecution in court, which could result in an unlimited fine or even imprisonment for large-scale fly-tipping offences.

Brown bin permit holders can have extra garden waste collected.

Residents who have purchased a permit for the district councils brown bin garden waste collection service in South Oxfordshire or the Vale of White Horse can have extra garden waste collected for free, on their normal scheduled collection day only, between 31 March* and 11 April. Permit holders can put out a maximum of up to four additional sacks of garden waste, per brown bin subscription, next to their brown bin. To be eligible for a collection, please follow this guidance:

Only present natural garden waste, such as cut grass, plants or branches.

Please use standard sized (60L) black refuse-style sacks or boxes / containers totalling no more than a standard bin full.

Bags and containers must be left open so crews can easily empty them into the rear of the vehicle.

Please DO NOT use bags larger than 60l (including one tonne builders' type waste bags) – our crews will not collect any garden waste from these, as they are too heavy to lift.

New depot helps secure the future of waste collections A new vehicle depot at the Haseley Trading Estate will significantly contribute towards South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils long-term future of successful waste collections in the districts. The councils are working on securing a long-term vehicle depot at former Haseley Trading Estate (the former Ariens/Countax site) in South Oxfordshire, for their waste collection and street cleansing service's vehicle fleet. The new site would be used as a depot for parking waste and recycling collection vehicles, street cleansing and maintenance vehicles and where members of staff would operate from. The proposed depot would not be used to store or dispose of waste or operate as a waste transfer station. The current vehicle depot is located in Culham and includes recycling and waste collection vehicles, street cleansing and maintenance vehicles, alongside staff facilities. Longer term, the Culham site is due for redevelopment for new homes and is identified in the Local Plan.

Introducing Ridgeway Council – part of a two unitary council option for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire

Published Friday 21 March 2025. Introducing Ridgeway Council, an ambitious proposal to create a brand-new council that delivers high-quality services, improves financial resilience and value-for-money, and ensures it is able to maintain truly local representation. An initial proposal has been submitted on behalf of West Berkshire Council and the district councils in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse for the creation of a new unitary council that would see the three areas combined. The move is in response to a government invitation following its announcement in December 2024 to end two-tier authorities like those in Oxfordshire.

REMINDER. 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

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