

## **SODC Councillor's Monthly Report to Chalgrove Ward (June 2025)**

**Cornerstone Arts Centre at the heart of a new culture strategy for South Oxfordshire.** Arts and culture in South Oxfordshire has gone from strength to strength over the past year, with Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot at the heart of efforts to improve what's on offer to the community. Over the past year, the centre has seen more community groups adopt the centre as their location for monthly meet ups, seen sell out shows such as The Zoots, Primary School Assembly Bangers, Spires and Boden, Shaparak Khorsandi and more! Plus, the introduction of the first pantomime at the centre in December, Cinderella, which saw new audiences coming to Cornerstone for the first time. Off the back of the success of Cinderella, the Council is now working on a long term contract with a pantomime company so that Cornerstone Arts Centre can be the go to panto venue for families each year. A year after it announced its plans to introduce an 18-month action plan to secure its future, Cornerstone is now ready to move into the next phase after a successful year.

**Let's rethink bulky waste – could you rehome or repair it instead?** South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are encouraging residents to think twice before booking a bulky waste collection – because that old cupboard, television, table or unwanted bookcase might still have plenty of life left in it. As part of a new campaign, the councils are highlighting that there are plenty of smart, sustainable – and often free – alternatives to throwing items away. Whether it's selling, donating, repairing or rehoming, a little extra effort can reduce waste, save money and even help others. If an item is still usable – before people book a bulky waste collection or take it to a recycling centre, we are encouraging them to please check to see if they could:

Freecycle it or give it away on social / community platforms.

Sell it on sites like Facebook Marketplace, Gumtree or eBay.

Donate it – get in touch with local charities or community action groups to check if they collect or accept bulky items in good condition.

Repair or upcycle it – ask a local repair café or friend for help.

Check with retailers – they should pick up the old electrical item for recycling when they're dropping off your new one.

Local charity shops, repair cafés and community groups across the districts are often happy to take on good quality furniture or help to bring broken items back to life. Residents are encouraged to check locally before deciding to throw anything away. And if an item doesn't shift right away, don't give up!

Rehoming things can take a little time, but it's worth it – and it will be helping the community and the planet. For more information and advice, visit [southandvale.gov.uk/reuse](https://southandvale.gov.uk/reuse)

**Reducing need for temporary accommodation part of new homelessness consultation.** Minimising the use of temporary accommodation\* which can be disruptive to people's lives, especially for children, is one key aim of proposed updates to how councils tackle homelessness in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse. Increasing the provision of genuinely affordable, long-term homes remains a core focus of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils' work to reduce homelessness and end rough sleeping. The councils are now inviting people to have their say on proposed objectives for the new strategy to reflect changes in homelessness and lay out their plans. See the SODC website.

**Summer fun comes to Riverside.** The pool and splash pad at Wallingford Riverside are set to open later this month on Saturday 24 May, kicking off a summer of fun for families and fans of outdoor swimming in South Oxfordshire. The Riverside Park and Pools which is owned by South Oxfordshire District Council and managed by their leisure contractors GLL, is being prepared ready for everyone enjoy this Summer. The Riverside campsite is now open to welcome campers for the new season. The site has seen some exciting upgrades since last year, including new accessible mooring and associated paths and ramps, a new Changing Places accessible bathroom – providing better accessibility to all Riverside visitors including wheelchair users. The pool will offer popular activities such as aqua aerobics, swim for fitness, adult and children swimming lessons, swimming Dr sessions and more. Following the success of last year's event, Riverside will once again host the 'End of Season Dog Swim', where dogs can take a splash in the pool accompanied by their owners.

**Let's talk rubbish! Tell us what you think of our waste services.** South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are inviting residents to have their say on how rubbish and recycling are handled across the districts. A new waste services survey is now live, giving people the chance to share their experiences and opinions on everything from household waste and recycling collections to street cleaning and waste reduction initiatives. By taking part, residents can help shape the future of local waste services, highlighting what's working well and where improvements can be made.

Your opinion really does matter to us – take the survey now by visiting – [southandvale.gov.uk/2025WasteSurvey](https://southandvale.gov.uk/2025WasteSurvey) Comments are open until 13 June 2025.

**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](mailto: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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