

SODC Councillor's Monthly Report to Chalgrove Ward (March 2026).

New electric waste vehicle will save councils 13 tonnes of carbon emissions per year.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have taken delivery of their second electric waste collection and street cleansing vehicle – which produces 70 per cent fewer carbon emissions than its diesel predecessor – part of the councils' ambitions to reduce their carbon emissions and move towards net zero. It replaces a diesel tipper truck which covered approximately 33,000 miles per year. By changing to an electric tipper waste vehicle, the councils expect to save more than 13 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent a year, with this one vehicle alone. This is a 70 per cent reduction on the previous diesel truck.

Over £1.5M grants funding available for community organisations

Community groups and non-profit organisations in South Oxfordshire will be able to apply for grants totalling £1.5M over the next year.

South Oxfordshire District Council confirmed the £1,550,000 community grants funding in their budget announcements on the 12 February. This will be available via a range of grant schemes that will give a financial boost to projects that improve community facilities, enhance the health and wellbeing of residents and support the fight against climate change across the district.

The schemes coming up this year and their provisional launch dates are as follows:

Everyone Active Grant: £50,000 launches 30 March – for projects that improve the health and wellbeing of residents

Capital Grant Scheme: £320,000 launches 1 June – for projects such as play areas, community and sports facilities, and sustainability projects

Performing Arts Grant Scheme: £60,000 launches 20 July – designed to enhance the cultural landscape and support local performing arts groups

Councillor Community Grant Scheme: £270,000 launches 17 August – for projects and activities that offer community benefits including sports equipment, trees for community orchards, events for the elderly

Climate Action Fund: £100,000 launches 28 September – aimed at projects that help to tackle climate change and nature recovery.

Community Infrastructure Levy Grant: £750,000 launches 15 February 2027 – for organisations to deliver infrastructure for their community

There are a number of opportunities for organisations to find out more about the grants available and the criteria for applications, at events taking place across the district over the coming months. Grants officers from South Oxfordshire District Council will be on hand to answer questions and offer advice:

Connecting Local Action – climate and sustainability event: 5 March
Thame Barns – midday to 2.30pm

Didcot Garden Town Community Update Meeting: 18 March 5-7.30pm

Partnership event with OCVA and Oxfordshire Community

Foundation: 15 April District Community Centre in Didcot 11am – 4pm and 6 May Holton Village Hall 12.15 until 6pm

Revamps for changing rooms at Didcot Wave and Thame leisure centres.

This March both Thame and Didcot Wave leisure centres will benefit from a £600,000 investment to revamp the ‘dry side’ changing facilities giving them a much-needed makeover. The facilities at both centres are in need of improvements to make them as modern and easy to maintain as possible. The refurbishments will include the installation water saving devices in the toilets and showers and new

LED energy efficient lighting will be fitted. At Thame the centre will have its main corridor decorated,

Residents reminded to buy their new garden waste permit.

Residents who receive garden waste collections in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are being reminded to buy a new permit if they wish to continue receiving collections from 1 April through to 31 March 2027. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils introduced the garden waste permit scheme in spring 2025. More than 69,000 residents across both districts signed up in the first year, helping to support a reliable and sustainable garden waste collection service. Brown bin permits expire on 31 March each year and residents must buy a new one annually to keep receiving the service. The quickest and easiest way to buy a new permit to do so online at southandvale.gov.uk/gardenwastepermit

Anyone who needs help to buy a permit can call the councils' Customer Services team on 01235 422422.

Dig in for free! South and Vale residents invited to grab complimentary compost this March.

Spring is coming – and so is your chance to give your garden a natural boost! South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are inviting residents to collect free, nutrient-rich compost at special giveaway events this March. It's the perfect way to recycle, reduce waste and grow something great!

Event Details:

- **Saturday 7 March – 9am to 11am – Howbery Business Park, Benson Lane, Wallingford, OX10 8BA**
- **Sunday 8 March – 9am to 11am – White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre (overflow car park), Audlett Drive, Abingdon, OX14 3PJ**

The councils' friendly Waste and Recycling Team will be on hand to answer your composting questions and share top tips for greener living.

How it works:

- Bring your own bags and spade.
- Collect up to three bags of compost per household.
- Available while supplies last.

Helping residents access compostable material recovered from the waste process is part of the councils' [Rethinking Waste – Waste Resources and Street Cleansing Strategy 2024](#), which focuses on the key themes of reduce, reuse, recycle and recover.

By turning food and garden waste into compost at home, it helps to reduce the amount of waste that needs to be collected.

South Oxfordshire Leader on the government's strategic planning proposals.

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We do not agree that Swindon is a good fit for our area – it has completely different economic and demographic challenges and needs. We will be submitting a full response to the Government's consultation and will continue to work with partners across Oxfordshire and the wider area to ensure that any future arrangements genuinely reflect how our communities, transport links, and local economy work.”

Residents urged to respond to government consultation on once-in-a-generation opportunity to change local councils Published 5 February 2026.

The government has launched a consultation on options to reorganise local councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. Local Government Reorganisation is a government-led reform to change how councils in two-tier areas are structured, replacing county and district councils with single unitary structures responsible for local services.

The upcoming consultation asks residents for their views on each of the three proposals put forward for Oxfordshire.

This consultation will inform the government's decision later in the year on which proposal to implement. The change in council structures provides an opportunity to transform how councils work to deliver services, drive economic growth and support local communities.

In late 2025, a clear consensus emerged when five councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire formally supported a proposal for two new, innovative, responsive and locally accountable unitary authorities to address current inefficiencies, enhance services, and save millions.

These councils agreed that the two-unitary model offers the best outcomes for local residents and have urged the government to adopt it when making its decision later in the year.

The clear benefits of the two-unitary proposal put it ahead of the other options:

Delivering better services: The proposal responds to what residents, businesses and public sector partners say needs improving, from highways and social care to planning.

The best financial outcomes: Delivers significant potential savings (£59.8m annually) and carries the lowest financial risk of all three proposals, helping to protect key services, avoid cuts and ensure long-term stability across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

Boosting both rural and urban economies: Drives fast-paced, sustainable growth across Oxford, market towns and rural areas, creating more jobs, better transport and the right homes in the right places.

Creates councils more responsive to their communities: Keeps councils close to all local communities and tailored to their specific needs, ensuring strong local accountability and representation.

Forming two unitary councils has the potential to save money by re-imagining and redesigning services across a sensible geography, making use of scale and local delivery where it works best. The two-unitary approach would create authorities that are big enough to be

efficient, stable, and reliable, but small enough to care for and be responsive to communities.

During decision-making last year, the councils raised concerns about the other proposals.

For the single-unitary proposal, they expressed concerns that it was too large and too remote from communities and that it did not show the ambition local communities and businesses deserved. Additional concerns have since been raised about whether services with a county-wide footprint, such as highways maintenance, are sustainable and can be funded at that scale, given cuts proposed in recent budgets.

For the three-unitary proposal, they expressed concerns that it would not create financially sustainable councils, would fail to meet the government criteria, and would negatively impact Oxford and damage the green belt.

The government intends to decide on which structure is implemented in Oxfordshire before the government's summer recess in July. The preferred model is expected to be fully operational in 2028, replacing the current councils.

Residents can take part in the consultation by visiting <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/oxfordshire>

The consultation is open from 5 February to 26 March 2026. Respondents can either take part in an online survey or write directly to government with their views.

Residents can read the full two-unitary proposal or a shortened version on the website www.twocouncils.org. The proposal covers all the key points, including how services will be run, financial modelling, implementation plans, and the vision for the future.

The other two proposals can be found at:

Single unitary proposal – www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oneoxfordshire
Three unitary proposal – www.oxford.gov.uk/three-councils

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