

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

Leaders reflect on the close of the government's LGR consultation for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Published 27 March 2026

As the government consultation on local government reorganisation (LGR) for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire draws to a close, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council leaders have thanked everyone who has submitted their views on the three proposals for this area.

Both councils, along with Cherwell and West Oxfordshire District Councils and West Berkshire Council, have supported a two unitary council proposal. Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, added: "I'm proud of the work we've put in, alongside our partner councils, on the two unitary council proposal – and I believe we have put forward a good case to the government for why this is the best option. We will keep everyone updated once the decision is made in July and regardless of the outcome, we will strive to ensure a better future for our communities and to ensure a continuity of services as we transition towards a new authority."

**Communities invited to get moving with Everyone Active Grant
Published 26 March 2026.** Local community groups are invited to apply for funding to help residents across South Oxfordshire be more active, improve their health, and enjoy new wellbeing activities. The Everyone Active grant scheme opens on Monday 30 March, with a total of £50,000 available. Organisations can apply for grants of up to £1,000 to support projects that make a real difference to the physical and mental wellbeing of residents.

Important changes to planning and land charging services.

We are updating the software behind our Planning and Land Charges services, to ensure it remains reliable, supported, and able to meet future service needs. The current system is nearing the end of its support lifecycle, which means it will no longer receive essential updates. Moving to a new system is a significant step; we appreciate that the change in layout and functionality may feel different at first.

During the transition period, there will be some downtime and temporary changes to how some requests are submitted and processed. This page sets out what you can expect and how to send us information while the work is underway.

To help you prepare, we will also provide step-by-step videos demonstrating the new system and showing how to complete key tasks. These resources will be available before the new system goes live, and links will be added to this page as they become available. Please check back regularly for updates and training materials.

Key dates:

Planning system downtime: 9–23 April 2026

Land Charges system downtime: 9 – 30 April 2026

New planning system goes live: 23–24 April 2026

For further details see the SODC website.

Councils offer help to transform empty properties into a home 12 March 2026.

The transformation of hundreds of empty properties into homes once more is under way as councils offer help to homeowners. Over the last year South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have been working with owners of 854 empty properties to understand why their properties are empty and offer support. Of these, 232 properties are now back in use (102 South, 130 Vale). An estimated 1,162 properties (597 in South Oxfordshire, 565 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. The councils' work targets those properties that may need some extra help in being brought back into use.

South Oxfordshire District Council agrees £500,000 towards improvements for nature site.

South Oxfordshire District Council has agreed to give £500,000 to fund major improvements at the Earth Trust site in Little Wittenham, making it safer and more welcoming for visitors to enjoy the area's natural beauty. Environmental charity Earth Trust looks after the largest free-to-access green space in Oxfordshire, at Wittenham Clumps. Each year around 200,000 people visit this area of open countryside including around 6,500 education visits. New housing in the area has increased the numbers visiting this public open space, which has had a significant impact on the small country lanes and parking nearby. The charity has secured planning permission for the improvements which include building a new junction and access road and 80 new parking spaces, including disabled spaces. In addition, there will be new hedgerows and sustainable drainage installed. These upgrades aim to reduce traffic, resolve parking issues, and improve access to the site. New safe walking and cycling routes will also be added, encouraging people to get outdoors and stay active. The project will create new jobs and volunteer opportunities, helping to strengthen the local community and economy.

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