SODC Councillor's Monthly Report November 2026

Government review concludes: Oxfordshire and West Berkshire to get three new unitary councils.

The government has announced the outcome of its review into local government reorganisation (LGR). It has made a decision to replace the seven existing councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire with three new unitary councils. The Government has said it is minded-to proceed with decisions in five areas, including ours, but this will be open to further representation and views from council leaders and MPs for approximately three weeks. Following this, an update will be made to parliament on these decisions before Christmas.

In Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, the three new councils will be:

Greater Oxford Council – covering Oxford and its immediate surroundings.
North Oxfordshire Council – covering most of the existing Cherwell and West Oxfordshire districts.
Ridgeway Council – covering most of the existing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts, combined with West Berkshire.

This will mean many green belt villages adjacent to Oxford City being part of the Greater Oxford Council

Keep warm. Keep well. Know where to find support.

Our Community Hub is here for you
If you're struggling financially or if you're just finding life difficult, we can help. For practical support or just advice, get in touch: Call our friendly Community Hub team on 01235 422600
Email us communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

We're open 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays.

See our website for cost-of-living help and more including:

free or affordable food support
council tax support
mental health and wellbeing guidance
We can also signpost you to debt advice and other support.

Private hire firm owner and driver fined almost £4000 for carrying passengers without licence.

The owner of a private hire firm and one of his drivers have been ordered to pay nearly £4,000 between them after the driver carried passengers for more than a year without a valid licence or insurance.

Call for renewed national litter campaign as council refocuses efforts on prevention.

South Oxfordshire District Council is stepping up its fight against littering, backing a renewed focus on prevention, education and partnership working, while also calling for a national effort to create lasting change across the country. At the Council meeting on Thursday 22 October, members approved a motion aimed at increasing litter prevention through education, recognising that enforcement and clean-up efforts alone cannot solve the problem. The motion commits the council to reviewing its current anti-litter measures, including signage, awareness campaigns and enforcement activity, to identify where further improvements can be made.

Councillors back call for stronger national action to tackle men's violence against women and girls.

Councillors in South Oxfordshire have backed a motion calling for stronger national action to tackle men's violence against women and girls. Following a motion to Council on 22 October raised by Councillor Kate Gregory, Leader Maggie Filipova-Rivers will now write to the Home Secretary and Oxfordshire MPs urging the government to do more to prevent violence against women and girls. This includes introducing a long-term national campaign to challenge misogyny, promote healthy relationships, and change behaviour. The council will also seek assurances from the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner that concerns around rape investigations and specialist resources are being addressed.

Residents with a garden waste collection permit in South Oxfordshire can have extra garden waste collected for free.

The collection will take place on their normal scheduled collection day between 2 November and 13 November 2026. Permit holders can put out a maximum of four additional sacks of garden waste, per garden waste permit, presented 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 small branches. Please use standard-sized (60L) black refuse-style sacks which combined total no more than a standard bin full.

Please DO NOT use bags larger than 60L (including one-tonne builders' type waste bags) – crews will not collect garden waste from these as they are too heavy to lift into the vehicle.
Sacks must be left untied so crews can easily empty them into the rear of the vehicle and check there are no contaminants.

Joint Local Plan hearings November to December.

The third stage of hearings for the South and Vale Joint Local Plan examination will be opening next week. There will be 11 days of hearings spanning over the period from Tuesday 17 November until Wednesday 16 December, commencing at 9:30am each day. Weeks 1 to 3 will be held in-person at Bee House on Milton Park, OX14 4SB. Week 4 has been designated as a reserve week and will take place virtually should it be needed. The hearing sessions will be held in public, and anyone can attend in person to watch (subject to capacity at the venue). The sessions will also be available to watch online via a livestream on the Councils' YouTube Channel in the Live Streaming section.

Please see our Joint Local Plan examination webpage for a detailed agenda and further information. For further information please contact the planning policy on planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk.

Rubbish collector who dumped waste near Abingdon Lock given 120 hours' unpaid work

A man who was paid to take away rubbish, only to dump it less than two miles down the road, has been ordered to carry out 120 hours of unpaid work and pay more than £1,600 following a successful prosecution by South Oxfordshire District Council.

South Oxfordshire leader writes to government on Thames Valley devolution proposals.

The government is developing plans to set up a new level of local government in the Thames Valley region, led by an elected mayor. Known as a Mayoral Strategic Authority, it would take responsibility for decisions on transport, infrastructure, skills, housing, economic growth and investment, which the government says will give local areas greater control over issues that affect their communities. As part of this process, the government asked councils across the Thames Valley to consider proposals for a new Mayoral Strategic Authority covering Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon.

The Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, wrote to the government on Monday setting out the council's response to the proposals.

Her letter set out support the principle of devolution and that decisions affecting local communities should be taken as close to those communities as possible; and how greater local control over investment and public services has the potential to deliver significant benefits for residents and businesses.

However, the council has expressed concern that local authority leaders were effectively presented with a binary choice between accepting the government's proposed geography or having no strategic authority at all with very limited time to consider the long-term implications of either option.

The council's preferred geography remains a Thames Valley area comprising Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, reflecting the strong economic, public service and institutional links that already exist across the region.

Cllr Filipova-Rivers raised concerns about the impact of excluding Buckinghamshire from the arrangement. This could require changes to the boundaries used by a range of public services and strategic partnerships, including healthcare and policing, with the costs and wider implications currently unclear.

Despite these concerns, South Oxfordshire District Council has agreed to continue to the next stage of discussions and development work.

This will allow councils across the area to build a fuller evidence base, better understand the potential benefits and risks of the proposals, and ensure residents and stakeholders have opportunities to engage in the discussion before any final decisions are made.

FINAL REMINDER Cash for community groups with councillor grant scheme
I have £7500 available to support community projects with this year's round of the Councillor Community Grant Scheme from South Oxfordshire District Council. The grant scheme launched on Monday 17 August and is open to non-profit organisations including community and voluntary groups and town and parish councils**. Please get your applications in quickly. The deadline for applications is midday Friday 4 December**.

David Turner (Updated 12th November 2026)