

Title	District Councillors' Report
Councillors	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson & Cllr Crispin Topping
Parish	Moulsford Parish Council
Date	12 June 2025

[Booking link](#) for planning surgeries for town and parish councils

The public hearings for the South and Vale Joint Local Plan took place last week.

This stage of the examination involves our appointed Planning Inspectors holding sessions to hear from the Councils and other participants about whether the local plan is sound and has been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements. You can [watch back the recordings of the hearings here.](#)

Find out more on our [Joint Local Plan examination webpage.](#)

Local Government Reorganisation

Our public engagement exercise on Local Government Reorganisation launched on Wednesday 4 June and will run for six weeks. You can **find out more** and [take part in the online survey here.](#)

This will inform our proposal for a new model for local government in our area that we are seeking to submit to the government in the autumn.

We are working closely with our counterparts in West Berkshire Council, Cherwell and West Oxfordshire District Councils on both the proposal and the engagement, providing a unified and robust solution to the government's plans to end Oxfordshire's two-tier council structure in a way that best serves our communities.

Our proposal seeks to create two brand new unitary councils that cover the following areas:

- **Oxford City, Cherwell and West Oxfordshire Council** (created from the existing district councils of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire)
- **Ridgeway Council** (created from the existing district councils of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse and the unitary council of West Berkshire).

Engagement drop-ins

Our first drop-in event is on Friday 13 June at Coffee Aroma, Abingdon between 1.30pm – 4.30pm and on Tuesday 17 June we'll be at Berro Lounge, Orchard Shopping Centre, between 10.30am – 1.30pm. You can find the survey and a [full list of the drop-in events here.](#)

Capital grant scheme now open

To support community projects that help improve the quality of life for local people, Our Capital Grant Scheme opened on 2 June for applications of up to £75,000.

The grant gives organisations a financial boost towards capital expenditure such as making improvements to buildings or play areas.

Applicants must show how their projects will help improve the quality of life for people in South Oxfordshire through projects that; support thriving, healthy and inclusive

communities, provide infrastructure that meets local need, that take action on climate change and nature recovery, and improve participation, accessibility and accountability.

Organisations eligible to apply are:

- Town and parish councils
- Non-profit businesses and Community Interest Companies
- Community-based organisations

The Capital Grant Scheme is open for applications until **25 July**. Applicants can apply online through our website, southoxon.gov.uk/grants where the full guidance is available to help submit the best possible application. Thank you for sharing our social media messages on the grant.

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.

Plans include identifying issues early on such as 'hidden homelessness' and sofa surfing - as eviction by family and friends is the top reason for home loss in the districts. The councils will continue to work closely with every individual at risk of homelessness to help them find sustainable accommodation.

Whilst the numbers of people sleeping rough are relatively low in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, the councils are committed to continue doing all they can to end rough sleeping by preventing it wherever possible. The council's outreach team will continue to proactively identify any rough sleepers without delay, ensuring that they receive advice from the councils' dedicated team.

Supporting rough sleepers who have complex needs through continued partnership work is an important area of the strategy. By strengthening close, collaborative working with partners in health, criminal justice, the Department for Work and Pensions, social care services and local agencies, the councils will help those who are vulnerable and have multiple needs.

The consultation is now open and runs until 11.59pm on 16 June.

To take part in the consultation go to

southandvale.gov.uk/homelessnessandroughsleepingstrategy/

Leisure Centres in Berinsfield and Henley to benefit from new clean green energy

Multi-million-pound plans have been approved to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions at two South Oxfordshire leisure centres in Berinsfield and Henley.

South Oxfordshire District Council has been successful in its bid for government funding of around £1.5m towards installing energy efficiency measures including double glazing and insulation, as well as solar panels and air source heat pumps to replace end-of-life gas boilers at the leisure centres.

The owners of the buildings, Oxfordshire County Council, will put in £2m towards the improvements, while the district council will fund a further £2.8m from developer contributions. All work should be finished by the end of March 2028.

Abbey Sports Centre in Berinsfield was built in 1959 as a school, before being converted to a leisure centre in the 1980s. Because of the age of the building, the roof insulation is well below current standards and the centre will benefit from extensive roof renovation to minimise heat loss.

Plans also include replacing gas heating with air source heat pumps, adding double glazing, insulating the squash court walls and installing solar panels on the roof. It is projected that the new measures will mean a 75 per cent saving in energy kWh (gas and electricity).

Built in the 1970s, Henley Leisure Centre has some elderly heating plant – two of the boilers set to be replaced are estimated to be between 22 and 25 years old. Even though the centre is shaded by trees it will still benefit from solar panels. In addition, the council will install air source heat pumps and roof insulation. It is projected that these three measures will bring a 59 per cent saving in energy kWh (gas and electricity).

The funding for the decarbonisation work has been provided from Phase 4 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme which is delivered by Salix Finance on behalf of the government. The scheme is run by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. It is aimed at tackling emissions from heating public sector buildings, aid a green recovery and support the UK's 2050 net zero target and clean growth goals.

£1.2 million boost for local infrastructure

Over the last six months, we have invested over £1.2 million in vital infrastructure delivered by the council, town and parish councils and other community organisations.

Investments have ranged from public art and flood defences to bus service improvements.

As the local planning authority, we collect financial contributions in the form of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) – this is the funding from housing developers to support the growth of the district when new developments are created.

S106 funding approved towards community projects between 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 has totalled £251,580. During this six-month period we have also transferred £960,503 of CIL to town and parish councils that have experienced CIL liable development in their area.

Find out more about [CIL here](#) and [S106 here](#). If you have any questions please email infrastructureclaims@southandvale.gov.uk

Wallingford bathing

The bathing season in England has started, and this means that from 15 May, regular tests will be carried out on water samples from the River Thames at Wallingford throughout the summer.

Since Wallingford Beach was designated as a bathing water area last year, the Environment Agency is obliged to take weekly water samples from the site during bathing season (15 May

– 30 September), test them for two types of bacteria (both of which can cause serious illness, including vomiting and fever) and publish the results within a few days.

South Oxfordshire District Council has installed a new noticeboard at the site, and this will display information about the bathing water site including details of how to find the test results. This allows swimmers and other river users to make informed choices about how they can safely enjoy the river at Wallingford.

At the end of each bathing season the Environment Agency then gives a classification depending on the results of that year. Bathing water sites can be classified as ‘excellent’, ‘good’, ‘sufficient’ or ‘poor’, based on the analysis of levels of the bacteria, E. coli and intestinal Enterococci, found in the samples.

Following testing during its first season in 2024, Wallingford Beach was classified by the Environment Agency as ‘poor’. Analysis of the samples showed that there were high levels of bacteria on two occasions during the weekly testing over the five months of testing. A poor bathing water classification means the water at a designated bathing site has not met the minimum standards set by the Bathing Water Regulations. It indicates a potential health risk for people who bathe in the water, and sites with this classification, such as Wallingford, are marked with a sign advising against bathing. This does not mean that bathing is banned, sites remain open for people to enjoy as they choose to. River users are always advised to check up to date data sources to help understand the current water quality and, links to these data sources have been provided on the new sign.

Summer fun comes to Riverside

The Riverside Park and Pools which is owned by South Oxfordshire District Council and managed by their leisure contractors GLL are open, kicking off a summer of fun for families and fans of outdoor swimming in South Oxfordshire.

The Riverside campsite is also 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. The splash pad will be available to use daily from 9am to 6pm until early September.

The pool will be open from 7am to 6pm weekdays and 9am to 6pm at weekends.

The campsite can be booked via the Better UK website and bookings for the pool will open 7 days before for members and 5 days for non-members.

Bookings can be made via the Better UK app and [Better website](#).

Summer at Cornerstone Arts Centre

Join the team at Cornerstone for a night of timeless glamour and unforgettable music with the Cutting Edge Big Band on 20 June, a sensational 16-piece ensemble complete with vocalists, bringing the golden age of swing to life.

From smooth, romantic ballads to high-energy dance numbers, this is a celebration of the iconic sounds of the 1930s and '40s.

Tickets available now on the [Cornerstone website.](#)