

District Councillor Update: August 2023

2 August 2023

Cllr Jo Robb, Cllr James Norman

Summer Activities

There is a range of free and low-cost activities taking place over the summer holidays including family yoga, skateboarding lessons and free theatre shows. Many events are happening in Didcot but there is lots happening across the District too. Please point your residents to the SODC Active Communities pages on the website where they can find lots of information about activities and events that are taking place across the district to keep the children occupied:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/school-holiday-activities/>

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/didcot-garden-town-latest-news/>

Energy Efficiency

The Council's Climate Team has produced extensive information on insulating and retrofitting buildings in the district.

Community buildings such as village halls are often draughty and expensive to heat. SODC's Climate Team hosted an information event for community groups interested in insulating their buildings and information from this presentation has been collated on the SODC website. If you are looking at retrofitting your community building, please don't forget councillor community grants, capital grants and the Rural Prosperity Grant scheme, which could all support retrofit and insulation projects for public buildings.

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/what-you-can-do-as-a-community/improving-the-energy-efficiency-of-community-buildings/improving-energy-efficiency-in-community-buildings-case-studies/>

The team is now hosting an information evening for community groups and town and parish councils who wish to support programmes to retrofit **residential properties** in their local areas. This is happening on **Tuesday 10 October**. More details to follow but do please put this date in the diary. It would be great to have parish council and community representatives who are interested in supporting retrofit rollout in our district, in particular for those on low incomes.

Grants

A range of grant funding is available for community groups. Please take a look at our Grants page on the SODC website and do share this with your community groups.

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/>

A new round of funding for the Councillor Community Grant scheme has launched. Jo and James, your ward councillors, each have £5000 to support local projects that directly benefit local residents. Please get in touch to find out more and do encourage your local community groups to attend our information and advice session, Monday 17 July 1-5pm. Please RSVP to grants@southandvale.gov.uk

Applications for Community Grants can be made online and close at midday on Friday 20 October so do get in touch!

The last round of funding which closed earlier this year, awarded £170,800 to help 100 projects across the district.

Rural Prosperity Fund

South and Vale District Councils have secured more than £1.2m from the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund to help support the rural economy across our districts. The funds can be used for a huge range of projects including, for example, to set up community energy schemes, diversify farm businesses or establish rural business hubs. Any organisation with legal status can apply for funding when it opens in the Autumn. These can include: public sector, higher education, private sector, voluntary organisations and registered charities.

Before applications open, our Economic Development team wants to understand which organisations might apply and for what type of project. Please send your Expressions of Interest in the run up to the opening of the scheme. Contact

business.support@southandvale.gov.uk for more information or check the website: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/business-and-economy/advice-for-businesses/rural-england-prosperity-fund/>

Tourism Survey

Tourism South East and SODC's Economic Development Team want to find out residents' views on the current provision for visitors in the local area and what support is needed to support our visitor economy.

The aim is to promote our districts for tourism, leisure and wellbeing ensuring the sector is sustainable and contributes to the vitality of our town centres, high streets and cultural facilities.

Please do share your views and encourage residents to do the same. There are three £75 vouchers available for those who complete the survey. The survey closes on Sunday 13 August.

<https://online1.snapsurveys.com/interview/b8e3bfd8-f901-4cef-9e5a-416a9ee486bf>

HIF-1 Update

The HIF-1 road project is a £215m infrastructure scheme near Didcot that was designed in 2016. It was a key part of the deliverability of several strategic housing sites contained within SODC's Local Plan 2035. Oxfordshire County Council's Planning Committee last

month refused permission for the scheme on climate and planning grounds including its impact on the setting of the River Thames. The Secretary of State has now “called in” this application, taking the decision out of the County’s hands. A Planning Inspector will be appointed to carry out a public inquiry and will then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State. The Government’s Climate Committee last month recommended that all new road schemes be re-examined in light of net-zero targets.