

SODC District Councillors' Report

Emerging Local Plan 2034

Following the Secretary of State's intervention on 9 October, Council was unable to take a decision on the Local Plan 2034 at the Full Council meeting on 10 October. Accordingly, the Local Plan 2034 is now in abeyance and carries no weight in planning decisions. Officers from SODC will be meeting with officers from MHCLG tomorrow (Wednesday 23 October) to discuss next steps.

Last week, OCC signed off on the £218m Housing Infrastructure Fund money, funds that are earmarked for road upgrades in the Didcot area. The decision on whether to release the funds is now with Homes England.

Climate Emergency

The previous Council administration declared a climate emergency in April. Following this, the new administration established a cross-party Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, chaired by Cllr Sue Roberts, with the aim of devising and implementing an ambitious and wide-ranging response to this crisis. Council unanimously approved a motion to aim to reduce the Council's own carbon emissions to net zero by 2025 and the District's emissions to net zero by 2030.

Officers, working alongside members of the CEAC, are in the process of compiling a comprehensive and ambitious work programme detailing areas for change in seven broad categories:

- Council business
- Partnership
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Transport
- Biodiversity
- Behaviour change

A key area of focus in point 7 is engaging with community groups and engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process. Parish Councils will be a central part of this consultative process.

Grants

The Councillor Grant Scheme has opened again. Under the scheme, each Councillor has a budget of £5,000 to award to projects or services that will benefit our communities.

Councillors can award between £250 and £5000 to a project - examples might include new play equipment, installation of solar panels or accessibility improvements for a community facility. Unfortunately, Jo's funding allocation is now gone. Lorraine still has some funds remaining. However, if you have a project you would like help with financing, the Grants officers can advise on alternative sources of money.

Apply through the website: www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants

Fly-Tipping

A Bix resident raised concerns about the imposition of charges for disposing of waste at Council recycling centres. Similar concerns have been raised by Keep Britain Tidy and the Telegraph and Sun newspapers.

Figures obtained under Freedom of Information show there has been an increase in fly tipping nationally since the introduction of charges, there is no definitive evidence to show the increase is as a direct result of these fees.

SODC's Environmental Services department said: "We work proactively on enforcement wherever we obtain evidence and have had significant successes over the last few years.

During the investigations and interviewing process, the introduction of charges hasn't been shown to be a factor as to why someone has fly tipped."

Fly tipping does not result in a specific clearance cost to the District Council as the contract with Biffa is all-inclusive and covers the removal of fly-tipping.

Jo Robb and Lorraine Hillier