

SODC ward councillor's report

Shiplake – 13th June 2022

Covid-19

The reliability of data on Covid cases is now much reduced following the end of test and trace. However national figures suggest sharp falls in cases and this appears to be supported by hospital data and makes sense for this time of year.

At 5th June **reported** cases in SODC were down to a weekly rate per 100k of population of 84 (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan) although it may be that reporting is incomplete. Indeed Reading BC have ceased reporting their figures because of fears about accuracy.

It seems reasonable to assume that levels will remain low as we go into summer.

Platinum Jubilee

The Platinum Jubilee celebration on 2nd-5th June passed off well and was saluted across the district and beyond.

It is intended to support tree-planting across the SODC district – thus supporting the Queen's "Green Canopy" initiative.

Ukraine

Refugee arrivals continue to arrive as the war in Ukraine goes on.

Joint Local Plan

I repeat :-

SODC is underway with consultation and work on a new Joint Local Plan with Vale of White Horse DC. The councils are trialling an innovative new digital approach to this consultation. This enables users to explore more interactive online content and hopefully will find the approach to be quicker and more appropriate. The aim is to gain more responses for ordinary residents – as well as parishes and others. The consultation is open from **Thursday 12 May until 11.59pm on Thursday 23 June 2022**.

This is the link :

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2041/>

Energy rebate

The energy rebate of £150 for Bands A-D properties is being actioned. It is much simpler to do so for direct debit payers where the Council Tax account and Bank account have the same name. For residents who pay by other means much more administration is required to enable payment to the correct person.

Once (largely) complete staff will move on to administering the (overall much smaller) discretionary scheme covering bands E-H.

There's more information on the SODC website at [southoxon.gov.uk/counciltaxrebate](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/counciltaxrebate)

Women's Cycling Tour

The tour was on the 11th June with the finale in Oxford.

New EV vehicle charging in Henley

The SODC car parks in Greys Road and Kings Road now have operational EV chargers.

This work is part of a county-wide scheme to install hundreds of EV charging points in council-owned car parks. More info link :

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/parking-roads-and-streets/parking/car-parks/park-and-charge-ev-charging-sites-in-our-car-parks/>

The Park and Charge scheme allows residents without off-street parking to park overnight and charge up using a 'fast' 7 – 22kw EV charging point. The chargers will also provide much needed battery top-ups to commuters and visitors during the daytime.

More info on Park and Charge in the county is available via this link

<https://parkandchargeoxfordshire.co.uk/> .

SODC meetings system

SODC are vacating their very expensive (temporary post January 2015 fire at Crowmarsh) offices in Milton Park – using an opportunity in the lease to break the let. On a temporary basis a very small essential part of the office will relocate to Abbey House in Abingdon. Abbey House is an old and rather run-down office which has been occupied by Oxfordshire County Council but which they have long been scheduled to leave as not fitting their needs. As yet they remain there.

In the context of the above and a future move to permanent offices expected to be in Didcot Gateway, near the station, officers are considering the best meeting system. The space at Abbey House will not support full meetings of council – so those will need to happen in hired locations. This implies that equipment might need to be mobile.

The intent is to get back to more face-to-face meetings, but ideally with some capacity for virtual attendance – which has great benefits.

Chair of SODC

At its annual council meeting on the 19th May Jo Robb (Green councillor for Woodcote and Rotherfield) stood down after her year in office and David Turner (veteran LibDem councillor for Chalgrove with 27 years' service as a district councillor) became Chair for the year ahead.

David has previously been Chair of both SODC and OCC. He has been a parish councillor and school governor for 41 years and formerly served as a county councillor for 24 years, being a life alderman of Oxfordshire. He is a keen fan of rugby and played both rugby and tennis competitively in his youth.

The new Deputy Chair is now Kellie Hinton (HRG councillor for Henley). She is a former mayor of Henley and known for her charity work.

Leigh Rawlins

District Councillor