

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 13th April 2026

Planning and Land Charges System Upgrade

SODC are moving to a new Planning (and Land Charges) system, which will require temporary service downtime in April 2026. The Planning system will be unavailable from **9–23 April 2026**, and the Land Charges system from **9–30 April 2026**, with the new Planning system going live on **23–24 April 2026**.

During this period, the website will have a revised look and feel, and support and guidance will be available for users who need assistance. Further updates will be provided closer to the time. More information is available here:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/planning-and-land-charges-systems-update/>

Waste Permits and Collections

Existing garden waste permits expired on **31 March 2026**, and residents must purchase a new pink permit to continue receiving collections without interruption. Early renewal is encouraged to ensure continued service and full-year coverage through to **31 March 2027**.

Most customers can renew via their MyAccount or at :-

<https://southandvale.gov.uk/gardenwastepermit>.

Residents needing support can contact Customer Services on **01235 422422**.

Additional garden waste will be collected free of charge for permit holders on their normal collection day between **20 April and 1 May 2026**. Residents must follow published guidance to ensure eligibility for the extra collections.

Residents can now access the updated waste and recycling collection calendar for 2026/27. Full details are available at: <https://southoxon.gov.uk/wastecalendar>

Everyone Active Grant Scheme new open

The latest round of the **Everyone Active grant scheme** launched on **30 March 2026**, offering a total fund of **£50,000**, with up to **£1,000 per application** for projects supporting health and wellbeing across South Oxfordshire.

The SODC scheme is open to voluntary and not-for-profit organisations, including parish councils. Community groups can also access support through events on **15 April (Didcot)** and **6 May (Holton)**, with booking required via the council website: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/>

More information:

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

LGR Updates

The Government's consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire has now closed. Council leaders have thanked residents and stakeholders who contributed views on the three options under consideration for replacing the current two-tier system with unitary authorities.

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), alongside partner councils, has continued to support a **two-unitary model proposal**, which would create larger, more efficient councils while maintaining local accountability. Leaders emphasised that the proposals aim to deliver clearer service responsibility, improved efficiency, and stronger long-term capacity for housing, infrastructure, and economic growth.

The Government is now expected to review all submissions and responses, with a final decision anticipated in **summer 2026**.

Further detail is available here:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/leaders-reflect-on-the-close-of-the-governments-lgr-consultation-for-oxfordshire-and-west-berkshire/>

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/thames-valley-devolution-expression-of-interest-moves-forward/>

Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use

Over the past year, SODC has carried out with owners of **854 empty properties** to identify barriers to occupancy and provide support. This has already helped **232 homes** return to use across South Oxfordshire.

There remain approximately **1,162 properties** with potential to be brought back into use.

Continued engagement and support will focus on helping owners unlock these homes for local residents.

More information is available at:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/bringing-empty-homes-back-into-use/>

Nature Site Investment – £500,000 Funding Approved

SODC has agreed **£500,000 investment** towards improvements for the Earth Trust, a local nature site, supporting biodiversity and long-term environmental enhancement. This funding forms part of wider efforts to improve access to nature and strengthen local green infrastructure.

Full details are available here:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/south-oxfordshire-district-council-agrees-500000-towards-improvements-for-nature-site/>

Deputy Chief Executive Appointment

A new Deputy Chief Executive for Corporate and Communities has been appointed. **Julian Osgathorpe** joined on **1 April 2026**, bringing extensive experience in local government transformation and corporate services, including senior leadership roles in major council reorganisation programmes.

New Director of Planning

Following a very long period of service Adrian Duffield has retired as Director of Planning.

He will be succeeded by Jeni Jackson who is currently Head of Planning and Infrastructure at Basingstoke and Deane Council, having previously worked in the London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames and Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Jeni brings with her nearly 30 years local authority experience and she is really looking forward to joining SODC on **Wednesday 1 July**.

Council Tax Information

Council tax continues to fund a wide range of essential public services across Oxfordshire. Of every £1 of Council tax contributed, just 6p goes to SODC.

Residents can find a breakdown of how their council tax is allocated here:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/council-tax/about-your-council-tax/where-your-council-tax-goes/>

Electric Vehicle and Renewable Energy Event – 25 April 2026

In partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and other district councils, SODC is holding an electric vehicle and renewable energy showcase event at **Abingdon Market Square on Saturday 25 April 2026 (10am–3pm)**.

Around 17 vehicles will be on display, including Tesla, Jeep, MG, and Lotus models, alongside e-bikes and renewable energy providers. A similar event is planned for Didcot in September. Residents are encouraged to attend and share details locally.

Event poster download:

<https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/2026/03/25-175-OxLEVI-poster-Abingdon.pdf>

Councillor Surgery – Cllr Mike Giles

Residents can book weekly surgery appointments with Mike via an online booking system. Sessions are available on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Booking link:

<https://outlook.office.com/bookwithme/user/e314e162adb84b059599e16268f53434@southandvale.gov.uk/meetingtype/iawkTjWk-k6-NJT9ullaw2?anonymous&ismsaljsauthenabed&ep=mcad>

Mike and Leigh remain available via other communication routes, including phone and email.

New Road appeal

Happily the New Road appeal by the applicant was refused on the grounds that there was more harm in the proposal than benefit. The threat to further inappropriate development outside the NP's settlement boundary was recognised. I believe that the Inspector also tacitly recognised the large amount of speculative development that Shiplake has already suffered.

However this good result was also associated with some disappointing news from a Neighbourhood Plan perspective – see next item.

Neighbourhood Plans and the “Edith Weston” ruling

Edith Weston is a small parish in Rutland which has an emerging Neighbourhood Plan. It took a case to court claiming that Paragraph 14 of the NPPF gave them protection against a site not allocated in their NP.

Predictably the court found that since the NP was not yet complete and made it could not have such protection. However disappointingly it went on to make a wider judgement. It said that the full protection of Paragraph 14 of the NPPF should ONLY apply to NPs who had made housing

allocations beyond routine infill. Since this was a court ruling the Inspector in the New Road case supported that view and awarded partial costs against SODC because the applicant there claimed to have hired an extra specialist barrister to argue this particular point. As councillors we disagree the court's interpretation of the NPPF, however it has been a route that the Government have endorsed in the current consultation version of the NPPF that came out in December 2026.

It now appears that NPs will need to make an allocation to have full protection under paragraph 14.

[Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins](#)

District Councillors