SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 9th November 2026

Government Review Recommends Three New Councils

The Government has concluded its review of local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire and announced that it is minded to still proceed with three unitary councils! Under the proposal, most of South Oxfordshire would become part of a new Ridgeway Council alongside Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire. However a set of parishes in the north of the district would be lost to "Greater Oxford". This proposal has been criticised for being partisan, for being contrary to the guidelines originally set and thus creating two unviable unitaries: Greater Oxford and North Oxfordshire.

Read more: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/lgr/government-review-concludes-oxfordshire-and-west-berkshire-to-get-three-new-unitary-councils/*

"Thames Valley" Devolution Fast-Tracked

Leaders from the 13 councils, including South Oxfordshire, have written to Government supporting the creation of a "Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority". The area has now been placed on the Government's fast-track programme for devolution, with further details expected in the coming months. SODC has criticised the Government's potential inclusion of Swindon, for a multitude of reasons. This proposal does not include Buckinghamshire, which is generally agreed to be part of the proper Thames Valley (unlike Swindon), but where the unitary council have not wished to be included.

Read more: *Thames Valley devolution information*

Climate and Nature Recovery Milestone Reached

South Oxfordshire has announced a major milestone in delivering its Nature and Climate Action Plan. The council reports significant progress in projects designed to tackle climate change, support biodiversity and accelerate nature recovery across the district.

Read more: *South Oxfordshire marks a major milestone in its climate and nature recovery work*

Nature and Climate Action Fund Open for Applications

Community groups, parish councils and local organisations can apply for grants of between £250 and £10,000 through the Nature and Climate Action Fund. Funding is available for projects that help tackle climate change, improve energy efficiency and deliver benefits for nature.

Read more: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants-and-funding/*

Councillor Community Grants Available

The Councillor Community Grant Scheme remains open, offering grants of between £250 and £7,500 for local voluntary and community groups. Projects supporting residents, community facilities, the environment and local wellbeing are encouraged to apply.

- Up to £7,500 per councillor for community and voluntary organisations – so £15,000 for this two-member Sonning Common ward.
- For projects benefiting our local part of South Oxfordshire, such as village hall energy improvements, local environment, play areas or sports equipment.
- Please engage with us as councillors in advance!
- The pro-rata provisional allocation for Shiplake is £3,600.

Read more: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants-and-funding/*

Donkey Sanctuary Benefits from Community Grant Funding

The Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary in Britwell-cum-Sotwell has used Councillor Community Grant funding to purchase a new trailer to help manage the needs of its 140 donkeys. The project was highlighted as an example of how local grant funding can support organisations making a difference in their communities

Read more: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants-and-funding/*

Wellbeing and Employment Fair

A free Wellbeing and Employment Fair will take place at the District Community Centre on Great Western Park in Didcot on 16 November. The event will bring together organisations offering employment support, health advice, training opportunities and wellbeing services for residents.

Read more: *https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/a-place-for-everyone/be-together-events/*

Council Calls for National Anti-Litter Campaign

South Oxfordshire is calling for a renewed national campaign on litter while increasing local efforts focused on prevention, education and behaviour change. The council says preventing littering is more effective than simply cleaning up after it has occurred.

Read more: *Call for renewed national litter campaign as council refocuses efforts on prevention*

Extra Garden Waste Collections

Garden waste permit holders can put out up to four additional sacks of garden waste alongside their usual brown bin collection between 2 and 13 November. The material will be composted locally and reused by farmers as a soil conditioner.

https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/garden-waste/

Read more: *Garden waste collections*

Action on Violence Against Women and Girls

South Oxfordshire councillors have backed a motion calling for stronger action to tackle violence against women and girls. The motion reinforces the council's commitment to prevention, awareness and partnership working to improve safety across local communities.

Read more: *Action Against VAWG Motion*

Rotherfield Greys Neighbourhood Area Designation

Rotherfield Greys Parish Council has applied to designate the parish as a Neighbourhood Area. This is an important step in preparing a neighbourhood plan and further updates will be published as the process progresses.

Read more: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/neighbourhood-plans/*

Great Haseley Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

Great Haseley Parish Council is undertaking consultation on its draft neighbourhood plan. Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to review the proposals and provide feedback before the plan moves to the next stage.

Read more: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/neighbourhood-plans/*

Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan Review Submitted

The review of the Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council and is currently being validated. Once validation is complete, the plan will progress to the formal publicity and consultation stage.

Read more: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/neighbourhood-plans/*

Neighbourhood Planning Map Updated

Parish councils and residents can use the council's interactive Neighbourhood Planning Map to view the latest position of neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood areas across South Oxfordshire. The map is updated regularly as plans progress.

Read more: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/neighbourhood-plans/*

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins

District Councillors