

ASTON ROWANT PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the above Council held on Wednesday, 13th September 2017 in Kingston Blount Village Hall.

PRESENT: Cllrs. M. Day, L French, P Hetherington, T. Hill, S Sowerby & P. Tinson (In the Chair)

APOLOGIES: C/Cllr Jeanette Matelot, D/Cllr Lynn Lloyd.

- 1) **DECLARATION OF INTEREST** – *None.*
- 2) **MINUTES** of the Parish Council Meeting held on 12th July 2017, were approved and signed.
- 3) **MATTERS ARISING:** - *None.*
- 4) **REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS** - *The District Councillors reports (Chinnor Ward) for August & September were circulated to all Councillors by email and the County Councillors report for August. Copies are attached to these minutes. It was noted that the new fleet of waste trucks are now in operation, together with a change in the way waste is collected – 2 separate vehicles will make collections, one for food and the other for recycling/rubbish. All this should alleviate some of the disruption caused by old vehicles breaking down.*
- 5) **OPEN FORUM** – *1 member of public was present, and reported that despite the recent road closure on Kingston Hill it appears that the work has not been completed as there are still potholes and uneven road edges right at the top where the road turns 90° prior to joining the A40 at Aston Hill. Additionally, the grips on Kingston Hill need clearing. The clerk is to write to OCC re: the former and Cllr Hill will deal with the latter.*
- 6) **PLANNING**
 - i. **Applications** as follows were confirmed/discussed:
 - P17-S2497-FUL** – Queens Gate Bungalow, Butts Way, Aston Rowant - **should be refused.**
 - P17-S2719-O** – Land at Paddock House, 22 Church Lane, Aston Rowant - **should be refused.**
 - ii. **Decisions** of S.O.D.C. as follows were noted:
 - P17/S1941/HH** – Single Storey front extension and first floor extension at 5 Aston Park, Aston Rowant. **GRANTED.**
 - P17/S2004/HH** - Single storey and 1st-floor extension and alterations at Chiltern Cottage, The Green Kingston Blount. **GRANTED.**
 - P17-S2119-HH** – Tiled lean-to extension at Field House, Chinnor Road, Aston Rowant. **GRANTED.**
 - iii. *Further to the presentation made at the July meeting by St John Homes, they continue to speak to the two households who would most immediately be affected by the proposed entrance to the development about concerns over access. OCC have rejected any exit directly onto the B4009. A full planning application is expected in early 2018, accompanied by the offer of funding for traffic calming to cover the difference between any Community Infrastructure Levy money received and the actual full cost.*
 - iv. *Consultation on the Revised Draft Section 106 Planning Obligations, Supplementary Planning Document & Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 123 List. It was noted that the consultation was open until 11th October. The consultation documents are available on the SODC website. Any comments on the revised draft should be forward to Cllr Day for him to form the Council’s response.*
- 7) **FINANCE**
 - i. *The following payments were noted (Costs include VAT):*

	£	p
Clerk June Salary		
HMRC/P.A.Y.E re: clerk June salary		
Chiltern Society Annual Subscription	30.00	
MK Watts (Grass Cutting, May)	308.56	
mh-p Internet Ltd	18.00	
MK Watts (Grass Cutting, June)	308.56	
Filcris Ltd (Moors Footpath Upgrade)	5150.00	
Robyn Leinster (Litter, June)	25.32	
OALC (5 copies of The Good Councillors Guide)	20.00	
Clerk July Salary ISSUED IN AUGUST		
HMRC/P.A.Y.E re: clerk July salary ISSUED IN AUGUST		
OALC (Course payment) ISSUED IN AUGUST	78.00	

- SODC (Dog-bins) ISSUED IN AUGUST 87.91
- ii. Receipts as follows to be noted:
None
- iii. The following payments were approved (Costs include VAT):
- | | |
|---|--------|
| Clerk August Salary | |
| HMRC/P.A.Y.E re: clerk August salary | |
| MK Watts (Grass Cutting, July) | 308.56 |
| MK Watts (Grass Cutting, August) | 308.56 |
| Robyn Leinster (Litter, July) | 31.65 |
| Robyn Leinster (Litter, August) | 18.99 |
| RoSPA (Annual Play Area Inspection) | 113.40 |
| Information Commissioner (Data Protection Registration) | 35.00 |
| mh-p Internet Ltd (Annual Plan Payment) | 828.00 |
| BDO LLP Annual Audit Fee) | 240.00 |
| DM Payroll Services (6 monthly payroll admin fee) | 40.50 |
- iv. The current financial situation as at 31st August 2017:
- | | |
|---|----------|
| Barclays Bank – Community Account | 23805.59 |
| Barclays Bank – Business Saver Account | 1090.47 |
| National Savings | 11224.62 |
| Village Hall Reserve fund | (690) |
| Play Area Reserve Fund | (5636) |
| Parish Notes Reserve Fund | (1000) |
| Trees, Footpaths & Environment Reserve Fund | (14236) |
- v. Budget 2017/2018 v4/5 – Noted.
- vi. 2017 Grants/Donations to local organisations – all grants to be made as last year except for Chinnor Community Pool primarily as they had failed to cash the cheque for a grant awarded in the previous year. Several new requests for funding have been received, but as they have not been budgeted for it was decided to decline. For future years, it was proposed to put a notice on the web-site, KBAR and in the Parish Notes to invite parishioners to nominate local causes they may like to see benefit – these, along with current recipients, would then all be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- vii. The clerk reported that the Annual Audit has now been completed by BDO LLP and returned without query or comment. Results to be posted to web-site.

8) HIGHWAYS: -

- i. Cllr Day reported that OCC have now completed the design work for the proposed chicanes at each end of Kingston Blount and are confident the designs will pass the safety audit. Public consultation will occur shortly with letters to households and a link to the OCC web-site for comment.
- ii. Discussions on possible path to Crowell have established a need to relieve the current land-owners of any responsibility re: its usage, particularly as the main use will be to get to and from the pub in Crowell. Cllr Hetherington will speak to a contact at OCC to see how this should proceed, particularly the issue around liability.
- iii. St John Homes. See item 6iii under planning.

9) HILLWERKE TRUST: - No report.

10) NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- i. Cllr Sowerby attended the meeting held on 12th September and reported that A change in wording of SODC Local Plan policy H7 wording on smaller villages was noted and discussed. No changes have been made to the “protected” green spaces following results of the public consultations, but Cllr Hetherington also wished to ensure that land at Fiveways be included. The date of the SODC Local Plan briefing forum was noted as 11th October. The NP Chairman is attending and it was felt that the PC should also be represented, but the date clashes with October’s PC meeting. It was agreed to defer the PC meeting by one week to 18th October. Full minutes can be found on the NP section of the parish web-site under the “Planning” tab.

- ii. *The clerk reported that we are still waiting for the payment of the £5,000 grant from SODC for preparation of the plan, despite having chased by email. Funds were promised by w/e 8/Sept so this will be followed up as a matter of urgency.*
- iii. *It was agreed unanimously to amend Clause 6.5 of the NP Terms of Reference to give the parish clerk delegated authority to approve expenditure up to £100 but in the event such expenditure exceeds £250 in a 3-month period, the aggregate spend should be referred to the Parish Council for approval.*
- iv. *Approval was given to pay the Hillwerke trust for the use of the Village Hall meeting room to date (£127.50).*

11) KINGSTON BLOUNT PLAYGROUND

- i. *The annual RoSPA report was generally favourable, with the present overall risk rating being “Medium”. Some of the issues have already been highlighted from recent monthly inspection reports.*
- ii. *Approval was sought to make various minor repairs as quoted – proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Hetherington. The clerk will follow through and confirm with the contractor concerned.*

12) ASTON ROWANT SCHOOL – The Head Teacher’s September report was circulated to councillors 8th Sept and is attached to these minutes.

13) GRASS CUTTING & GENERAL PARISH MAINTENANCE – See Open Forum re: Grips on Kingston Hill.

14) ASTON ROWANT CRICKET CLUB – No report, but the PC wished to place on record congratulations to the 1st and 3rd teams who both won their respective Leagues and gained promotion. Additionally, as widely reported elsewhere, the 1st team enjoyed their best run in the Village Knock-Out in recent years, being knocked out at the semi-final stage away to Hertfordshire team Reed.

15) FOOTPATHS AND AMENITIES GROUP (FAAG): -

- i. *The works to improve the surface on the Moors Path (AR7) had been completed. It was noted that several positive comments had been received on the KBAR page. Cllr Day noted a potential risk to cyclists along the stretches of the path where the boarding to contain the surface material is not flush with the adjacent land. It was noted that, as this is a footpath, cyclists should not be using it but acknowledged that they have done for years and would continue to do so, particularly children on the way to school. It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate signage to advise cyclists that they use the path at their own risk. There is continued use of the path as a bridleway, but it was agreed to defer further discussion until the surface has settled down and an assessment made on how it wears.*
- ii. *The cross-village lanes in Kingston Blount are very muddy and will only get worse in the winter. All stocks of path planings have been used up with the section of the Moors Path which was not subject to the improvements. Permission was sought and agreed for the purchase of more stocks - £450. Proposed by Cllr. Tinson and seconded by Cllr. French.*
- iii. *Further expenditure at Fiveways for planting, £75.50 already paid by Mike Eaton. Proposed by Cllr. Tinson and seconded by Cllr. French.*

16) CORESPONDENCE: -

- i. *SODC Waste Team re: “deep cleanse” due for October – areas for attention discussed and the Clerk to report back.*
- ii. *Letter from Historic England re: Aston Rowant War Memorial. Noted - no specific historical importance*
- iii. *Letter from Aon re: ceasing to provide Local Councils Insurance cover WEF: 2018 renewal. Noted.*
- iv. *Email regarding Salt Bin on corner of Brook St & Pleck Lane – the Clerk to follow up with OCC for replacement.*

17) OTHER MATTERS & WRITTEN REPORTS - None

18) CLERK’S REPORT – None.

19) CORRESPONDENCE – None.

20) WEBSITE – Annual Plan fee – invoice approved in point 7iii. 5 year contract ends in 2018.

21) OTHER URGENT MATTERS at the discretion of the Chairman – None.

22) DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 18th October 2017 in Kingston Blount Village Hall at 7.30pm.

DEFERRED BY ONE WEEK – SEE POINT 10i

CHAIRMAN

SODC A Conservative District Councillor's View
(Or What The Council Is Doing)

August 2017.

Ward Specific

We have both advised both Parish Councils and residents on matters of Enforcement, including further issues at Taylor Wimpey, Greenwood Avenue and Old Kiln Lakes, the Bloor Homes site and also issues at Aston Rowant.

We have dealt with a significant number of resident enquiries and issues regarding building matters, the regulations and requirements and Ian is working with SODC in respect of the expected Perssimon Appeal.

Please remember that we both have available funds for grants under the Councillor community grants scheme. We are sure that there are groups in the community that can benefit from this scheme, but please bare in mind that the Capital Grants Scheme is there as well.

Details can be found at:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/community-advice-and-support/grants-and-community-loans/councillor-community-gra>

We have other on-going work, but this covers some of the main areas for this month.

Planning Matters.

Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS)

Joint work of Oxfordshire councils, pulling together Oxfordshire's infrastructure, as existing (stage 1) now published on website. Current stage working on what our priorities are for infrastructure up to 2031 and potential in the pipeline up to 2050 (stage 2). This is an evidence document to all our Local Plans.

Joint Spatial Plan for Oxfordshire (JSPO)

The Growth Board agreed to receive a business case for the production of a Joint Spatial Plan by all Oxfordshire authorities. Such a plan could become a statutory document if all councils agree to that. It would be a strategic document, pulling together adopted and emerging Local Plans and setting the scene for growth in the future - up to 2050 and beyond. As our Local Plans cannot work in isolation, it would help to co-ordinate policy making and infrastructure (including help Utility companies) to help delivery of growth, assist in securing funding for infrastructure and it is fundamental to our Duty to Cooperate (DTC). It needs to be seen in the context of the Government's suggestion about the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor.

NIC Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor discussion paper

We will need to comment on this paper from the National Infrastructure Commission. Discussion about the potential for a strategic corridor strategy and potential governance arrangements, ensuring local democracy.

Enforcement

- 39 new cases opened
- 28 cases closed
- Six cases closed were more than six months old

Our six week performance was 85 per cent this month (target 80 per cent). This includes a site visit for all new cases within our priority targets and to assess whether a breach has occurred. The number of new cases remains high this month and although we closed more cases than last month we ended the month with eleven more cases on the books.

Upcoming public appeals

Tetsworth – Inquiry for a traveller site of 12 pitches outside the Green Belt scheduled for 6 and 7 June has been postponed by the Planning Inspectorate until Autumn. New dates: 21-24 November.

Venue – Tetsworth Memorial Hall

CABI, Crowmarsh – Awaiting decision

Benson – appeal against refusal of outline application for 130 houses off St Helens Avenue, inquiry runs 1 and 2 August.

Venue – Howbery Park

Long Wittenham – an appeal is taking place against our non-determination of application for 35 homes. There is to be an inquiry scheduled for November 2017.

Judicial Reviews/Challenges

East Hagbourne – 170 units dismissed on appeal - was the subject of a JR by Savills – Judgement just received - refusing permission to pursue.

Waste

Plastic bags can now be used to line food waste bins

Residents in South Oxfordshire can now use plastic bags to line their food waste bins and caddies. Food waste is collected every week and taken to Agrivert’s anaerobic digestion plant near Wallingford to be recycled into gas for electricity and fertiliser for local farmland.

The processing plant is now able to accept thin plastic bags, such as carrier bags, bread bags, paper wrappings, or normal pedal bin liners. Residents can also continue to use compostable bags or newspapers to line their caddies and bins, or put food straight in without any liner. Any bags used as liners will be removed at the processing plant and sent to an Energy Recovery Facility to be turned into energy.

Cllr Tony Harbour, Cabinet Member for Waste at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We know that compostable bags can be expensive and easily tear, so it’s great news that the processing plant can now take plastic bags.

“We are very grateful to our residents for their efforts in recycling – which have helped our district to achieve the highest recycling rates in the country. We are always looking for opportunities to work with our partners to improve services for our residents and this is a good example of this.”

All cooked and uncooked food can be put into food waste bins. Residents are advised that plastic retail packaging, or anything other than food waste, should not be put in. For example, bacon should be removed from its plastic packet and fruit taken out of punnets.

During 2016/17, 10,024 tonnes of food waste was collected and sent for recycling in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

For further information about food waste recycling and other household waste and recycling collections, see the councils’ websites: www.southoxon.gov.uk/waste or call 03000 610610.

Council tax discount review

Over the next few weeks we will be checking that everyone who currently claims a 25 per cent single person discount on their council tax is entitled to do so.

This review will involve us working with credit reference agencies to check that our records are accurate and that people are only receiving the discounts they are entitled to.

We will be encouraging anyone that currently receives a discount to contact us if they're unsure about their entitlement to avoid any action being taken at -
sodc.counciltax@secure.capita.co.uk / 0345 302 2313

This is part of our continuing work to prevent and detect fraud on behalf of our residents.

Grants

Grants Scheme Awards

Five play areas are set to receive a facelift as part of a £423,000 boost for community facilities across South Oxfordshire. South Oxfordshire District Council has awarded grants to 13 projects to benefit local residents with play areas in Benson, Berinsfield, Hagbourne, Long Wittenham and Little Milton all receiving funding.

Grants have also been awarded for a replacement pavilion in Ewelme and £170,000 needed to carry out a much-needed roof replacement at Wallingford Corn Exchange. Funding will also help pay for replacement facilities at clubs and village halls in Lewknor, Benson, Peppard Stoke Row, Sandford on Thames, Wallingford and Watlington.

The full awards were:

Benson Parish Council - £6,050 for play area improvements

Berinsfield Parish Council - £33,922 for play area improvements

Corn Exchange Wallingford Ltd and Sinodun Players - £170,000 towards a replacement roof and heating system

Ewelme Parish Council - £75,000 for the rebuilding of Ewelme Pavilion

Hagbourne Village Hall - £10,000 for village hall play area improvements

Lewknor Village Hall - £4,585 for replacement doors

Long Wittenham Parish Council - £7,291 for play area improvements

Little Milton Parish Council - £50,000 for play area improvements

Millstream Day Centre (Benson) - £17,590 for a replacement kitchen

Peppard Stoke Row Cricket Club - £2,765 for a replacement cricket roller

Sandford on Thames Village Hall - £1,799 for a storage shed

The Watlington Club - £19,453 – for replacement squash court flooring, fire doors and lawn aerator

Wallingford Rowing Club - £24,882 – for replacement boat launching platforms

Cllr Elizabeth Gillespie, Cabinet Member for Grants at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “This funding achieves our goals to make a real difference in our communities across South Oxfordshire, helping ensure existing facilities are upgraded and that new ones become available for residents to use.”

“The next round of grant funding is now open for applications - we’ve still got more than £105,000 available so I urge groups with a project that will benefit the local community to contact our grants team on 01235 422644.”

Community groups have until 6 September to apply for a minimum of £1,000 – for more information visit southoxon.gov.uk/grants.

Grants for rural community projects

Last month we reported that Grant funding up to £75,000 was available from the LEADER Programme for farmers, foresters, businesses and community groups in rural Oxfordshire. Good news; they can now apply for even more grant funding for projects which support the local economy.

Individual projects can now apply for up to £100,000 funding from Oxfordshire LEADER and, under exceptional circumstances, they may qualify for even more money. The scheme aims to support a wide range of rural activities including: farm productivity and diversification, forestry productivity, tourism, community services, heritage and culture and small business development. Oxfordshire LEADER would particularly welcome applications that will revive local waterways, support local food markets, create vibrant villages, or unlock the potential of woodlands.

To find out if your project could qualify for this funding visit www.oxfordshireleader.org.uk. All grants must be allocated by March 2019, so don't delay in finding out more.

You can also find out more at the Oxfordshire LEADER information event on Tuesday 22 August at Faringdon Old Town Hall (SN7 7HL) – drop in any time from 10am until midday.

The Oxfordshire LEADER Programme is open to applicants until March 2019. Anyone with a viable idea is being urged to contact Oxfordshire LEADER Programme Manager Sophie Milton by calling 01235 422245 or via oxfordshire.leader@southandvale.gov.uk.

Elizabeth Gillespie, Chairman of the Oxfordshire Local Action Group said: “We know there are lots of projects across Oxfordshire which could benefit from this funding and support our local communities. To ensure we support as wide a variety of projects as possible we’ve increased the amount that individual schemes can apply for to £100,000, with even more money available in exceptional circumstances.

“We’ve got £1.5 million available but this must be allocated by March 2019 so I urge anyone with a viable scheme to get in touch and start the application process as soon as possible.”

Leisure

New £353,000 pool changing area open at Thame Leisure Centre

Swimmers at Thame Leisure Centre are enjoying using an upgraded changing area, thanks to a £353,000 investment from South Oxfordshire District Council.

The main changing and shower areas have been significantly improved, while new bench seating, cubicles, lockers, toilets and dryers have also been added. New ceilings, including LED lighting, along with significant redecoration, have also resulted in a better overall environment in the changing area.

Cllr Lynn Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Leisure at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “I’m sure swimmers at Thame Leisure Centre will appreciate their new changing facilities. This upgrade marks a real improvement to the overall environment of the changing area in the

centre and highlights our ongoing commitment to providing the best leisure facilities for all our residents.”

Reminder - Wallingford Riverside outdoor pool now open

The heated outdoor swimming pool by Wallingford Bridge has opened its doors. The site features a 23 metre pool, changing rooms, refreshments and a campsite. Jubilee Splash Park has been open for a while for younger children to enjoy.

A swim costs just £4.45 for adults, £2.85 for junior/seniors or £13.40 for a family swim (two adults and two children). Regular swimmers are also able to take advantage of a season pass for £69 for adults and just £34 for juniors and seniors.

Riverside Outdoor Pool is now open until 3 September* at the following times:

Monday - Friday 7am-6pm

Saturday-Sunday 9am-6pm

*subject to adverse weather conditions

For more information about Riverside Park and Pools please visit <http://www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/south-oxfordshire/riverside-park-and-pools> or call 01491 835232.

Information leaflet on rats and mice available

Rats and mice can be highly destructive as they can cause structural damage by gnawing and burrowing. Our Environmental Protection Team can help residents by investigating properties and gardens where signs of harbourage or evidence is reported.

The team has produced a handy booklet that explains what signs to look out for and tips for preventing any problems.

You can download the booklet from here:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=528bce359f&e=eda6ce4f57>

For any further information, you can contact the team on 01235 422403 or by email: env.health@southandvale.gov.uk

Staff Volunteer in Berinsfield

Following on from the staff volunteering open day, our participation team spent a whole day helping out at the Berin Children's Centre in Berinsfield. The team got stuck into clearing, sanding down and repainting two large sheds and a wendy house. They also cut back brambles and cleared away rubbish making the whole outside area safer for children to play.

The team managed to make such a difference in one day that the Managing Director of Employment Action Group who runs the Centre said passers-by had noticed and thought it looked brilliant!

Other teams are also planning on spending a day volunteering in their local communities.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

We've updated our Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) by reviewing all previous assessments and taking into account the revisions made to national guidance in 2015 which included a change to the definition of Travellers for planning purposes. We prepared the assessment jointly with Vale, Cherwell, Oxford City Councils.

For the Vale, the assessment identifies a need for two additional pitches for households that meets the planning definition of a Gypsy or Traveller and for the South, a need for nine additional pitches is required.

You can view the GTAA on our website:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=39e237aef7&e=eda6ce4f57>

Editor - Cllr Ian White (Ian.White@southoxon.gov.uk) Twitter feed: @IanWhite_DC

SODC A Conservative District Councillor's View
(Or What The Council Is Doing)

September 2017.

Well, the summer is over, and if you had holidays, we hope you had good ones. The weather forecasters are suggesting we may have a nice, sunny September and October, but let's see what materialises!

Ward Specific

We have both advised both Parish Councils and residents on matters of Enforcement.

We have dealt with a significant number of resident enquiries and issues regarding building matters, the regulations and requirements and Ian is working with SODC in respect of applications from Cala Homes and behind Doveleat and the expected Perssimon Appeal and the Appeal in respect of The Barn, Lower Icknield Way.

Please remember that we both have available funds for grants under the Councillor community grants scheme. We are sure that there are groups in the community that can benefit from this scheme, but please bear in mind that the Capital Grants Scheme is there as well.

Details can be found at:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/community-advice-and-support/grants-and-community-loans/councillor-community-gra>

We have other on-going work, but this covers some of the main areas for this month.

Planning Matters.

Thames Farm Planning Appeal

Recently we lost the Appeal against our refusal of Planning Permission for this site, notwithstanding the existence of a Neighbourhood Plan and our publicly having a 4.1 year Land Supply. The Inspector's argument was that our Land Supply was, by his calculation, 2.998 years, or 17.6 hours short of the required 3 year supply under the Minister's Written Ministerial Statement. We believe that his calculation base is seriously flawed and that he is wrong in his decision on the basis of the legal advice we have received. On this basis we will be challenging his decision in the Courts.

Neighbourhood Plans

Good news! We are extending the current district grant support to community groups preparing revised neighbourhood plans. The amount of grant support available is as follows:

Market Towns £15,000

Larger Villages £10,000

Smaller and Other Villages £5,000

Community groups seeking to revise their neighbourhood plans need to submit a statement to explain why a review of their neighbourhood plan is necessary, alongside a project plan with associated costings.

Find more information on the neighbourhood grant support email the policy planning team.

Modern Slavery - speak up

You may have seen in the news recently that some members of a traveller site in Lincolnshire have been convicted for running a slavery ring. Vulnerable people were forced to carry out work for little or no pay and live in squalid conditions over many years.

This case highlights that modern slavery can happen anywhere and we all have a responsibility to report anything that looks suspicious and could relate to this kind of exploitation.

Our community safety team has put together a short guidance note to help you recognise signs of possible modern slavery.

You can read the note here by copying and pasting the link. <http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=ee506f6118&e=eda6ce4f57>

New waste and recycling trucks

Some of our new waste and recycling trucks are already making their way round the districts.

This should help to alleviate some of the disruption caused by the old vehicles. The rest of the new £6.5m fleet will be in place by 2 October and will be covered in eye-catching designs to encourage recycling.

With the new fleet, there'll be a change to the way our waste is collected. At present, food waste and recycling (or rubbish) is collected in separate compartments within the same truck. When the full fleet is here, these collections will be by two separate vehicles – one for food waste, another for recycling or rubbish. This will not affect collection days or how you use your bins.

Read the press release we issued about the new vehicles here; <http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=6b6be4bd99&e=eda6ce4f57>

Council tax discount review

Reminder; Over the next few weeks we will be checking that everyone who currently claims a 25 per cent single person discount on their council tax is entitled to do so.

This review will involve us working with credit reference agencies to check that our records are accurate and that people are only receiving the discounts they are entitled to.

We will be encouraging anyone that currently receives a discount to contact us if they're unsure about their entitlement to avoid any action being taken at - sodc.counciltax@secure.capita.co.uk / 0345 302 2313

This is part of our continuing work to prevent and detect fraud on behalf of our residents.

Look out for your yellow letter

Please remind people to keep a look out for a yellow letter arriving in the post.

The yellow letter, which is going to all residents, explains that we need confirmation of who is currently living at their property so we have the correct information on who is eligible to vote.

As soon as the letter arrives, they should visit household.reponse.com to confirm or update their details. We still need them to respond even if their details are correct.

It would help us greatly if you could encourage others to do this to avoid us having to send out reminders and to help save money. We've launched an awareness campaign to encourage people to look out for the letter and to respond as quickly as possible.

Housing team award

You might remember that our housing team was recognised as one of the country's top performers by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS).

This followed a detailed review of our advice services where we scored 80 per cent against an average of 69 - putting us in the top eight councils in the country. The review checked that the advice and support we give to our residents is provided in a targeted, effective and efficient way.

The team has now been presented with their Bronze Award certificate and are already working towards the Silver Award.

Leisure

Henley swimmers to benefit from changing area refurbishment

Swimmers at Henley Leisure Centre will benefit from a major upgrade to their changing area this year, thanks to South Oxfordshire District Council.

The planned refurbishment will significantly improve the environment, with the pool-side changing rooms and toilet areas being refurbished throughout.

There will also be new changing cubicles, lockers and vanity units, while new LED lighting will also be installed to help improve the environment and reduce the amount of energy the building uses.

Work on the changing area is expected to start in November and will take around eight weeks to complete. During this time the swimming pool and all other facilities will remain open.

Cllr Lynn Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Leisure at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "The refurbished area will provide a much better changing environment for swimmers at Henley Leisure Centre. This investment is part of our ongoing commitment to provide the best leisure facilities for all our residents across South Oxfordshire."

Didcot Wave

South Oxfordshire District Council is to invest £100,000 into Didcot Wave for essential maintenance and improvement works.

Swimmers will benefit from refurbishment work to the poolside shower area and improvements to the changing area and changing cubicles, including new benches.

Essential maintenance will be carried out to improve the flow of rain water from the roof of the building with repairs to the gym roof and gullies.

Parts of the swimming pool air handling unit will also be upgraded and the lighting in the pool hall will be improved.

Cllr Lynn Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Leisure at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We are committed to providing quality leisure facilities for our residents. This essential work will provide swimmers at Didcot Wave with improved changing and shower facilities, while also ensuring that the building is better protected from bad weather.”

New pay and display machines for district council car parks

Motorists using district council car parks in South Oxfordshire will benefit from the use of new pay and display machines.

Following a successful trial, the new machines have been installed. They will allow payment by credit and debit card and also accept coins, including the new £1. Old £1 coins will continue to be accepted until they cease circulation on 15 October.

Motorists will also still be able to pay by mobile phone via the Connect Cashless system.

When using the new machines motorists will need to insert their vehicle registration on the key pad when paying to park.

The new machines will be much cheaper and easier to maintain than the current stock which is a number of years old. The system will be powered by solar panels making it much cheaper and greener to run and, where possible, will be installed into the existing machine holders to save waste.

Cllr David Nimmo-Smith, Cabinet Member for the 5 Councils Partnership and Corporate Services Contracts at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “The new machines introduce debit/credit card payments to our car parks for the first time which will be a great help for those who don’t like to carry change around. Using solar panels means we’re making another small contribution to reducing the environmental impact of the council.”

Superfast broadband update

Our work with the 'Better Broadband for Oxfordshire' programme to deliver superfast broadband to our districts is on track to complete later in the year. To date take up of superfast broadband has been 47 per cent across Oxfordshire, one of the highest take up rates in the country.

To find out progress and coverage in your local area copy this link;
<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=31f67f955b&e=eda6ce4f57>

For those areas not covered by the programme, we have been in discussions with a number of wireless providers about addressing the remaining gaps of 1,822 premises in South. The county has launched a scheme for communities to co-fund broadband partnerships. Copy this link for more information.

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=9c68fa4265&e=eda6ce4f57>

We've sent updates on the superfast broadband for Oxfordshire programme to all parish councils and district councillors. If you haven't seen a copy or would like further information

please contact Suzanne Malcolm, Economic Development Manager, by email suzanne.malcolm@southandvale.gov.uk or telephone 01235 422217.

Editor - Cllr Ian White (Ian.White@southoxon.gov.uk) Twitter feed: @IanWhite_DC