

District Councillor Update to Parish Councils

August 2026

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Ward member for Goring and South Stoke



Dear Clerks, Chairs and Councillors,

Please find below a summary of recent updates from South Oxfordshire District Council and our partners.

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1. Resident Surgeries in Whitchurch and South Stoke

It was really good to join Tim Bearder, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, and Freddie van Mierlo MP for resident surgeries in Whitchurch and South Stoke. Fair to say we came away with plenty of casework to get through, covering a range of local and individual issues.

Nothing really beats face-to-face contact and constructive conversations with the people we represent. Thank you to everyone who came along, raised an issue or simply stopped for a chat. We will be following up the cases raised with the relevant councils and organisations.

Freddie will be piloting online surgeries, but I am happy to consider running surgeries more regularly if that is something people would find helpful for local issues.

2. Recent Anti-Social Behaviour



Great to see the Parish Council, SODC Community Safety team and the police working together to tackle some of the antisocial behaviour we've been seeing in Goring recently.

I also took the opportunity to speak to police representatives about the illegal off-road bikes we regularly see in and around Woodcote.

I say this as someone who pushed plenty of boundaries myself as a teenager, so I really don't want to come across as preachy. But I would make a plea to parents: please talk to your children about consequences. What might seem like a bit of fun at the time can have a serious and lasting impact on their lives and future opportunities.

I have also recently contacted TVP asking the police to update me on the incident exposure case which has gone on for far too long.

3. Goring to Wallingford Greenway: Progress Update

Work continues to progress on the proposed Goring to Wallingford Greenway, with discussions going well with the two affected landowners. The preferred route remains along the western side of the B4009, providing a safer connection between Goring and Wallingford for walking, cycling and riding.

A further site visit is planned for early September to work through the remaining legal and rights-of-way issues with the landowners. There is still work to do before a route can be confirmed, but discussions are moving in the right direction and I hope we will have further good news to share in the autumn.

3. Developing a Local Walking and Cycling Plan

I was pleased to welcome Oxfordshire County Council officers to Goring to begin discussions about developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Goring and the surrounding villages. An LCWIP is a long-term plan identifying where improvements to walking and cycling routes are most needed, helping communities build an evidence-based case for future investment when funding becomes available.

The first meeting included representatives from Goring and Whitchurch Parish Councils, and the newly set up Active Travel Group, with discussions beginning about what geographical area the plan should cover. We will soon start talking to other neighbouring Parish Councils so this can be developed collaboratively. It currently looks as though funding to develop the LCWIP could be included in the next financial year's budget, which gives us a little more time to get organised, agree the right footprint and identify the connections that matter most to local communities.

4. Local Government Reorganisation: Government Decision

The Government has now announced its preferred structure for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. This is a major change for local government and will ultimately replace the existing district and county council structure with new unitary authorities responsible for the full range of local services. For us here in the south, **the decision is to create a New Ridgeway council, which will include most of South Oxfordshire, the Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire.**

The immediate priority is to make sure residents continue to receive services without disruption while the detailed transition arrangements are developed. I will continue to update parish councils as the timetable, governance arrangements and implications for South Oxfordshire become clearer.

5. Planning Decisions: Briefing for Town and Parish Councils

Major national changes to the way planning applications are decided are due to come into force on 31 October 2026 through the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions. These changes will mean more applications are determined by planning officers and will significantly reduce the circumstances in which ward councillors or Town and Parish Councils can secure consideration by Planning Committee.

To help local councils prepare, South Oxfordshire is holding an online briefing for Town and Parish Councils on **Thursday 10 September, from 5.30pm to 7.30pm**. I would strongly encourage parish representatives to attend. If you cannot join live, the session will be recorded and shared afterwards. To register, email planning.admin@southandvale.gov.uk.

6. Joint Local Plan 1: Examination Update

The first Joint Local Plan continues through its independent examination. Three days of hearings took place in July, covering issues including the plan period, settlement hierarchy, cross-boundary infrastructure and how South Oxfordshire and Vale will monitor and deliver the housing needed by Oxford.

Importantly, the councils' current evidence is that there is already sufficient housing supply in the plan to meet identified needs, so the possible changes to the plan period being considered do not in themselves create a need to identify additional development sites. Further examination work will continue before the Inspectors provide their conclusions.

7. Joint Local Plan 2045: September Scoping Consultation

At the same time, Government regulations require us to begin preparing the next Joint Local Plan, known as JLP2. The first stage is a Scoping Consultation running from Tuesday 8 September to Tuesday 29 September 2026. This consultation is not about choosing development sites or commenting on detailed policies; it is an early opportunity to say what issues the new plan should address and how communities should be involved as it develops.

With more planning decisions expected to be delegated to officers in future, getting involved at the policy-making stage will become increasingly important. I would therefore encourage Town and Parish Councils and residents to engage early, particularly on the issues that will shape the character, infrastructure and sustainability of future development.

8. £270,000 Councillor Community Grant Fund Opens

The latest round of South Oxfordshire's Councillor Community Grant is now open, with £270,000 available across the district to support projects that benefit residents and help create healthy, thriving communities. This is a useful opportunity for local voluntary and community organisations to secure funding for practical projects in their area.

The deadline for applications is midday on 4 December. If you know of a local organisation or project that could benefit, please encourage them to look at the criteria and apply. I am also happy to hear from groups in the ward that are considering an application.

Read more: [South Oxfordshire grants](#)

9. Performing Arts Grant Fund

South Oxfordshire District Council's Performing Arts Grant Fund is open, with £60,000 available to support local theatre, music and dance projects. Community and voluntary organisations, Town and Parish Councils and other eligible not-for-profit groups can apply for grants of between £500 and £5,000, with applications open until midday on Wednesday 30 September.

The fund can support new or expanded performing arts activities, workshops, performances and partnership projects. The aim is to help more residents take part in the arts, develop local talent and reach people who might not otherwise have access to these opportunities. If you know a local group with an idea, please encourage them to take a look at the scheme.

Read more: [Performing Arts Grant Fund](#)

10. New Online Council Map

South Oxfordshire's new interactive public mapping system is now live. Residents can use it to search a wide range of publicly available information in one place, including planning applications, Tree Preservation Orders, land owned by the council and other geographic information.

This should make it much easier for residents and parish councils to understand what applies to a particular site or area without having to search across several different systems.

Read more: [South Oxfordshire Council website](#)

11. Temporary Restrictions on Fridge and Freezer Disposal

Temporary restrictions have been introduced for disposing of fridges and freezers at Oxfordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres. This is not an Oxfordshire-specific problem: three specialist UK processing facilities have closed over the last year, reducing national capacity by around a third. Some councils have stopped accepting these appliances altogether, and Oxfordshire is introducing limits to try to keep a service available.

For now, Oxfordshire residents can make one fridge/freezer booking every three months, with up to two appliances per booking, and bookings will be released one week ahead. Out-of-county residents temporarily cannot bring fridges or freezers to Oxfordshire sites. Other recycling centre services continue as normal. The County Council has asked Government to

intervene to increase national processing capacity, and the restrictions will be reviewed as capacity improves.

12. August Bank Holiday Bin Collections

Residents are reminded that waste and recycling collections will run one day later than usual following the August Bank Holiday, from 31 August to 5 September. Please check your collection date and make sure bins are presented in time.

13. Support for Local Businesses

South Oxfordshire's Economic Development team provides free information and support to local businesses, including regular updates on funding, skills programmes, networking opportunities and other business support. The team's free fortnightly Business Support Newsletter is a useful way for local businesses to keep up with opportunities available across the district.

If you run a business locally, or know someone who does, I would encourage you to make use of the service and sign up for the updates.

[Business Support newsletter](#)

14. The Big Conversation on Care

The Government has launched a national conversation about the future of adult social care and the proposed National Care Service. Residents are being invited to share their views on issues including who should receive support, how care should be funded, the role of families and unpaid carers, and what a better care system should look like.

The consultation will continue into 2027 and is an opportunity for people with direct experience of care, either personally or through supporting a family member, to help shape future national policy.

15. Free Electric Blanket Safety Testing

Oxfordshire residents can access free electric blanket safety testing this autumn. Electric blankets can develop faults that are not always visible, so the checks are particularly useful for older blankets or those that have been stored for long periods.

Local sessions include **Didcot on 5 October**, with a Thame date also expected to be confirmed. Places need to be booked in advance, so residents who use electric blankets are encouraged to take advantage of the free service.