

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

**January 2021.**

### **CoVID-19 Vaccination**

This week we received the very welcome news that the second Covid-19 vaccine, the Oxford-AstraZenica version, has been approved for use in the UK by the MHRA (the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) and is being rolled out. The strict approval process it has gone through means that the approved vaccines will not only be safe but will also be our best defence against the virus. Really good news in view of the discovery of the new 'English Variant.'

Detailed planning for the rollout of the vaccination programme is well underway both locally and nationally and inoculation has started, but plans are having to be revised on an almost daily basis because of new scientific evidence changing the playing field. A problem facing governments internationally.

From a hands-on perspective we're currently supporting our health colleagues with the co-ordination and delivery of the local vaccine programme.

Something we can all do is put our faith in the system to deliver this process just as effectively as every other challenge faced so far like the shielding programming during the first lockdown and delivering a number of much needed financial packages to support our businesses.

Further up-dates will be on the council's a web site as they become available.

### **Planning**

#### **Local Plan 2034**

**We have asked that the attached article be included in the Chinnor Pump, and we believe that you may find it of interest and helpful. As residents have been asking questions and there is considerable misunderstanding about the situation it may be helpful for residents if you would publish it on your web sites.**

#### **Planning Decisions - reminder**

From our previous reports you will be aware that under the Covid-19 Emergency Powers, the Administration had suspended the Automatic referral of Planning Applications to Planning Committee if Parish Councils disagreed with the Planning Officer differed. This was subject to review after 6 months

and at Full Council, the Administration has put forward its proposal to extend this provision until the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021. This has been put in place as we expected.

### **Latest update on Car Park Fees**

As reported last month, the Cabinet has been looking at car park fees for the SODC owned carparks, as these have not been reviewed for some years. Full details of the Cabinet discussion can be found at:

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=10361>

At December's Full Council, these proposals were approved.

One of the provisions is for the introduction of charges for the car park in Chinnor High Street, although quite how these will be implemented and enforced remains to be seen. As Chair of Scrutiny, Ian had asked for a report to be brought forward to the Scrutiny Committee for review and whilst it is still proposed that there will be a 2-hour limit for parking, this will not be subject to parking fees.

### **Councillor Grants - reminder**

With Covid-19 infection rates continuing to impact life the emergency councillor grants that we have been able to make will continue for a while longer although our pot is getting smaller.

At the outset we decided that we would effectively pool our two Grant pots as this would give us much greater flexibility. To date we have been able to support a number of areas, which include a grant to the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (£500) to help them with their work with residents in our Ward, the Sharing Life Trust (£2,500), based in Thame, who provide support with a food bank and who can also help out with vouchers for bills like electricity and gas, and a small grant to Towersey Parish Council to help with additional waste due to the dramatic up-turn in walkers during lock-down.

We also now have available the normal Cllr Grants of £5,000 each for local causes. Our Councillor Grant Scheme opened last Friday and will close at noon on Friday 5 February 2021. Each councillor has a budget of £5,000 to award to projects or services that will benefit communities in their ward.

The scheme is open to Parish Councils and other non-profit community organisations.

We're especially keen to fund projects that will contribute to our new corporate plan priorities, to protect and restore our natural world; action on the climate emergency and improved economic and community well-being. The funding is ideal for projects which are relatively low in costs and can complete within a year.

To make an application, firstly have a chat with your ward councillor, and then submit an application via our [website](#).

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/councillor-community-grants/>

If you have any further queries, please contact the [community enablement team](#).

<mailto:communityenablement@southandvale.gov.uk>

### **What should I do if I see a person rough sleeping in our districts? - Reminder**

During office hours, please call the housing needs team on **01235 422 452**. This is a direct line to a Housing Needs Officer. If the person is in immediate danger, call an ambulance or the police on **999**. Don't put yourself in danger or approach someone acting strangely, even to help.

Outside office hours, please report to the non-profit homelessness organisation Streetlink which is funded by the Government. You can report someone rough sleeping via its website [www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk) <http://www.streetlink.org.uk/>

or by calling **0300 5000 914**. Streetlink is the national scheme for reporting rough sleeping and connects rough sleepers to local support services. Please be aware that these reports will be dealt with next working day. To contact the Out of Hours Officer, please call **01235 422 420**.

### **What support do residents receive during their time in temporary accommodation?**

Some of the residents have complex support needs and we therefore provide a comprehensive support package:

- A Housing Needs Officer assesses residents' support needs and helps them to secure longer term accommodation quickly
- A Temporary Accommodation Officer, who is the point of contact for residents during their stay, attends a sign up with all new residents. The sign up includes a welcome pack with key information on the local area; a contact number if residents need any assistance; emergency household items if necessary, during their stay (bedding, kitchen utensils etc) and referrals to other support agencies including the Community Hub
- A Floating Support Officer visits residents at least weekly to provide practical and emotional support. The support includes helping with benefits, arranging care support, financial assistance and help with moving into longer term accommodation

**There is much more we could write but this will do to start the year off!**

**We close by wishing everyone a Happy and Corona virus free 2021!**

**Lynn Lloyd and Ian White**

**South Oxfordshire District Councillors for the Chinnor Ward.**

## SODC Local Plan

We have been asked a number of questions about the Local Plan 2034/5 (LP) which was adopted by the Council last month, so this article is to help people understand the situation. It may also help to relieve insomnia!

Firstly, please remember that the Plan covers the period from 2012 to 2035, so much of the housing in it has already been delivered; around 15,500 homes to date. (Numbers are being rounded.) The LP seeks to deliver 23,500 homes during that time so there are now 8,000 to provide during the remaining term of the Plan. you have probably heard the number of 29,000 homes referred to and this is the 'site allocations total'. We know that some of the sites we allocate in LP will not be delivered for a variety of reasons; the landowner changes his mind about selling; the land is unsuitable or there may be environmental issues. To prevent 'under-supply' from rendering the Plan 'out of date' we include a headroom of 20%. In this instance, some 5,000, which, when allocated to the planned homes of 23,500 gives the total 28,500, which gives the allocation total, (remember I am rounding these figures for simplicity,)

We do not plan to deliver all these 'allocations'. The headroom is there to provide a buffer against allocations found to be undeliverable.

Specifically, for Chinnor Ward, so long as the LP remains 'up-to-date', with Neighbourhood (Development) Plans (NDP) in place, we should not see unplanned, speculative development as was happening from 2015. Chinnor in particular is in a very strong position as its allocations have all been delivered, and the recent review of the NDP carried out by the community, which will go to referendum in May, supports this position. This doesn't mean that no more houses will be built, but they will be very small developments that are referred to as 'windfall' and come from in-filling and such like.

You will be aware that the Secretary of State (SoS) had to intervene, effectively compelling the current Administration of the Council to adopt the LP, and some are saying that this is an attack of Local Democracy.

To understand this, we must look at the way that our democracy works. Subject to international law, all power and responsibility in this country is vested in Parliament. As it would be impossible for Parliament to deal with every aspect in fine detail, Parliament, through the ministers, delegates some of these responsibilities to local councils (one being planning) and the councils are responsible for managing these matters. To enable our system to work, councils operate within well-defined boundaries which are set by Parliament through law and regulation.

One such requirement is that planning authorities like SODC must have up-to-date LPs in place and that these should be up-dated every 5 years. In SODC's case, the first plan was Core Strategy 2012 (CS) and the LP builds on this. We know from the results of a number of Planning Appeals, that CS was considered out of date in 2018 and this was driven home by the Wheatley Brooks Appeal in 2019. We had expected that the LP would have been examined and in place by late 2019, but the change in administration, who had stood on a platform of withdrawing it, meant it was delayed.

The fundamental issue is that the new Administration had no alternative plan to offer and intended to rely on out-of-date CS while they developed an alternative, which would have taken 3 to 5 years. The District would have very little control of its destiny until, at the earliest, the end of 2022 and during that period, developers would have been able to build pretty much where they wanted. The Appeal Decision at Wheatley Brooks, and the findings of the Inspector when examining the Oxford City LP

make it clear that we had to meet some of the Oxford Unmet Need for homes, and that the Green belt provided very limited restriction in this case. In a nutshell, as well as being able to build pretty much anywhere they liked in the District, developers would also be able to build unplanned housing in the Green Belt.

The question then is, should an administration be allowed to ignore the requirements set by Central Government and legislation? This is the dilemma faced by the SoS. Allow an Administration to ignore its legal responsibilities, effectively inflicting unplanned development on its communities, or intervene, overriding an unrealistic election pledge?

We hope that this helps and if you want to know more, please do read Local Plan 2034/5 and the supporting documentation which is available on the Council's web site

We have other matters on the go including Corona Virus work, but this is enough for now!

Lynn Lloyd and Ian White. Twitter feed: @IanWhite\_DC