

## DISTRICT COUNCILLRS REPORT

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**Date:** December 2025

### Volunteering for nature recovery

The council's Climate and Biodiversity team used volunteering leave to help build a new section of boardwalk at the Hinksey Heights Nature Reserve. The raised wooden walkway allows members of the public to visit the nature reserve without damaging the plants or disturbing the wildlife. It has been part funded by the Vale's Climate Action Fund. Everyone got stuck in and learned new DIY skills. To find out more take a look at the; Hinksey Heights Nature Trail. ([hinkseytrail.org](http://hinkseytrail.org)).

Volunteers were also out in force at the Abbey Fishponds Local Nature Reserve in Abingdon – the area is owned by Vale and managed by the Earth Trust. Volunteers scythed reeds and sowed seeds in a bid to restore rare alkaline fen habitat and increase biodiversity at the site.



### Thames Water funding for community flood prevention projects

Thames Water is offering local organisations funds to install small scale SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) schemes e.g. planting, paving removal, water butts etc like the rain gardens we have installed at Portway car park in Wantage. The funding will prioritise areas that are known flooding hotspots.

Applications are open until **31 March**. There is a webinar on applying in January. Interested parties should get in touch with [swmp.applications@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:swmp.applications@thameswater.co.uk). Please help us to spread the word.

## **Reform of the Planning System**

SODC Planning team have sent letters to the Town and Parish councils with a clarification and summary of the government's current proposals to reform the planning system.

[Microsoft Word - FINAL Town and Parish Council update letter](#)

## **Reservoir FAQ**

SODC have created a useful FAQ for Thames Water's proposed South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) as we know this is an important topic for both council members and our residents.

[SESRO-Consultation-FAQ.docx](#)

## **Have Your Say - NHS**

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board has developed 'commissioning intentions' for the new Thames Valley ICB to support its strategic priorities around improving care and investing in the right services. To find out more and have your say on these plans, visit the BOB ICB engagement platform at '**Your Voice BOB**' view the [Developing NHS Thames Valley | http://yourvoicebob-icb.uk.engagementhq.com](http://yourvoicebob-icb.uk.engagementhq.com) '**Developing the NHS Thames Valley**' section which includes details on the '**Thames Valley Commissioning Intentions 2026 - 2030**' (you might need to register on the site if it's your first visit). You can leave your comments in the discussion forum on the webpage – closing date **11 January 2026**

## **2026 Council Calendar**

Our Diversity and Social Campaign calendars for 2026 are now live on our website [Diversity and Social Campaign Calendar - South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

The dates in these calendars have been approved by Cabinet and Leaders and are important for us as they reflect our council priorities and the key messages we want to communicate with residents and businesses, including those championing diversity and inclusion. Please help us to share these messages throughout the year

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# County Councillor Report

Chinnor division

31<sup>st</sup> December 2025

Cllr Georgina Heritage



## What I've been doing - Meetings and Council Activity

I do hope you all enjoyed a peaceful and restful Christmas and I wish you a very Happy New Year. I know 2026 will have its challenges but I'm looking forward to working with you all on our local priorities over the coming year.

- I have now received a response from officers regarding the inconsistency of the 322 bus service to Icknield College, including the following explanation regarding the use of this particular service for school children: *"We currently have 33 students who have eligibility who travel on the 322. The remaining students do not have eligibility, and the 322 public bus is their only option for bus travel. Previously, we had a contractual route that served the same stops, but it was removed to support the Red Rose public bus service. Without this adjustment, approximately 40+ non-eligible students would have been left without a means to travel. This importantly ensured continued travel access for students to Icknield Community College"*. Due to this being a commercial service, the council evidently has limited ability to intervene directly, and issues relating to the service need to be raised with Red Rose Travel. While they acknowledge that I didn't receive a response to my previous correspondence, OCC has asked that we again try approaching Red Rose Travel direct. I will do this and have written to parents who've contacted me to encourage them to do the same.

Should others have the need to comment about the service, the email addresses used by OCC officers which typically elicit responses are: [accounts@redrosetravel.com](mailto:accounts@redrosetravel.com) and [redrosebuses@gmail.com](mailto:redrosebuses@gmail.com). The email address for the owner Taj Khan is [twk786@googlemail.com](mailto:twk786@googlemail.com)

I've been advised to follow the following complaints process:

1. **Red Rose Travel** – [Red Rose Travel - Your local bus service in Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire & Oxfordshire](#)
2. But should you remain unsatisfied you may contact: **Bus Users UK** – [Make a complaint • Bus Users](#)
3. **Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA)** – [Report a bus arriving late, early, not stopping or not turning up - GOV.UK](#)

While accepting that this is a commercial bus service, I will also write to cabinet if we do not receive a satisfactory response and are obliged to escalate.

- Full council was on 9<sup>th</sup> December in which a motion was passed on community cohesion, to confront racism and disinformation. I made my maiden speech in chamber in favour of this motion. I and other councillors are regularly and increasingly approached by people who feel intimidated by the motives of those behind certain activities such as attaching flags to council lamp posts. Our communities need to know that they are being heard and supported.

Details of the full council agenda can be found here: [Agenda for County Council on Tuesday, 9 December 2025, 10.30 am | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

There is an update on the council's policy on flag removal further in this report.

- Alongside Lewknor Parish Council who raised the issue, I'm pleased to report that flexible bollards will be trialled in January on a section of the B4009 by the Lewknor Turn, where vehicles are regularly parked dangerously on a pavement/footway opposite the M40 southbound exit. The Lewknor Turn offers valuable coach services to and from Oxford, London and airports in an area otherwise pretty bereft of public transport services. These options are greatly appreciated by our villages, however the area already has problems with limited pedestrian pathways, no lighting for pedestrians and some "creative" parking by users, and I implore people to park with safety and consideration for others when using these services.

## **Update on Flag Removal**

Following the increasing number of flags being put up on streetlights across Oxfordshire, OCC has [updated our public statement](#). This confirms we are stepping up the removal of flags and other unauthorised items on streetlights and other street furniture maintained by the county council.

Our overarching priority is people's safety: the safety of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians who may face reduced visibility or an increased risk of distraction; the safety of people who are climbing up street furniture to put up flags, which can lead to personal injury; and the safety and wellbeing of our contractors, who are removing flags. We want to keep our public spaces safe and inclusive for everyone.

### **Reporting and removal**

To report flags or other potential unauthorised items, please use [Fix My Street](#).

The removal of unauthorised items will be prioritised based on the level of risk. Items that present an immediate danger will be removed as quickly as possible, while other items will be removed as soon as practically possible, but within 28 days of us being informed.

If we have locations where flags are repeatedly re-installed, we will consider the best approach to take, both to support community concerns and to ensure appropriate use of council resources. To date, we have removed in the region of 332 flags at a total cost of approximately £14,800.

### **Other action**

We are working closely with our partners at Thames Valley Police on this issue. They are looking at increased visibility on the ground through additional neighbourhood policing teams where required. They will also investigate any incitement to hatred incidents - whether threatening words, behaviour or material. Please report any such incidents directly to the police.

### **Household Waste Recycling Centre Booking System**

OCC is introducing a new booking system to help reduce queues and ease traffic on nearby roads, in the hope of making visits to the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) quicker and easier. From 14th January 2026 you will need to book a time slot to visit an HWRC. To book, you need to select your site, the type of waste you are bringing, and the date and timeslot. Bookings can be made up to two weeks in advance or up to 30 minutes before you visit (subject to availability).

Once you have booked your visit:

- You will receive a confirmation email with all the details you need. Ensuring everything is clear so you have no surprises on the day.

On the day:

- You will need proof of address to show you are an Oxfordshire resident and are eligible to access the HWRC's for free. This can be a driving licence, council tax or utility bill.
- Please sort the recyclable items in your waste before you arrive on site. This will help speed up your visit and help Oxfordshire to recycle even more.
- If you are unable to sort everything before you set off, don't worry, there will be sorting areas available on site to make this easier.
- The onsite team will greet you when you arrive, direct you to a bay and will answer any question to help you recycle as much as possible. Find out more about the new booking system [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hwrcbooking](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hwrcbooking)

The most frequently asked questions/comments are:

### **Will a booking system cause more fly tipping?**

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) concluded in their 2023 report that there is no evidence that the introduction of booking systems causes fly-tipping to increase. From speaking to other councils, they have not experienced an increase in fly tipping when they introduced their booking systems.

Fly-tipping is a criminal offence which can be punished by an unlimited fine and up to five years' imprisonment if convicted in court. The severity of these punishments is enough to deter most people from committing offences.

The booking system will help with waste enforcement by improving the information held about users of our household waste recycling centres. If someone is refused entry because of suspected trade waste, then this can help us trace the person if their waste is later found fly tipped. OCC will continue to work closely with enforcement teams in the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership to monitor fly tipping and continue to liaise with the Thames Valley Police Rural Crime Task Force and the Environment Agency.

It is illegal for businesses to dispose of their waste at a household waste recycling centre. They must use a licenced commercial waste transfer station to dispose of their waste to comply with the law.

**You've made it harder for me to visit a household waste recycling centre, so instead I'll hire a person with a van to take my waste away.**

Remember it's Your Waste, Your Responsibility. We all have a duty to ensure our waste is disposed of responsibly. This is called our householder duty of care. If we follow the S.C.R.A.P fly-tipping code, we can help reduce the amount of rogue traders who take waste away for a fee which is often too good to be true and prevent it from ending up being fly-tipped. The booking system is simple to use: It takes just under 5 minutes to read all the terms and conditions and to make the booking, and the booking alone takes just over a minute.

S.C.R.A.P stands for:

**S** - Suspect Don't let anyone take your rubbish until they give you proof that they are legitimate. Also, note their vehicle's registration plate.

**C** - Check You can check whether they are a registered waste carrier on the Environment Agency's website.

**R** - Refuse If you suspect that someone who you have spoken to will be disposing of waste illegally, refuse to use their services, and instead report them to the Environment Agency.

**A** - Ask Always ask for evidence of how your rubbish will be disposed of.

**P** - Paperwork Ask for paperwork that includes a description of the waste being removed and the waste carrier's contact details. This paperwork could be a proper invoice, a waste transfer note or a receipt.

More information can be found on the fly tipping page on OCC's website.

## **Thames Valley devolution expression of interest submitted to government**

It is Government's intention to create mayoral strategic authorities (MSAs) following local government organisation, and councils across the country were invited to submit their expressions of interest. An expression of interest letter to create an MSA within the Thames Valley has now been submitted following discussions and agreement by 13 councils within the region.

The [expression of interest](#) sets out a shared ambition for an MSA – a new combined authority led by a directly elected mayor and made up of a number of councils – to secure new powers and funding for the area. This would enable local councils to plan and deliver more integrated and effective transport, infrastructure, the right type of housing – with an emphasis on social housing – creating the conditions for faster, more inclusive growth across the region.

The MSA will make strategic decisions that impact communities and businesses across the wider region, with local councils continuing to deliver critical and wider public services for the benefit of all residents.

Councils across the region debated the expression of interest in their meetings during November and December. The letter submitted to government was signed on behalf of these authorities by Councillor Mary Temperton, Leader of Bracknell Forest Council and Chair of the Berkshire Prosperity Board, and Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council.

### **Clearance work to begin at Kidlington waste dump**

Planning work has begun to clear the illegal waste dump in Kidlington, the [Environment Agency](#) has announced.

New information regarding the likelihood and potential impact of a fire at the site means that an exceptional decision has been made to progress work to entirely clear the site of waste.

The Environment Agency expects to fund the clearance efforts through making efficiencies in its operations, without impacting or scaling back any of its other services.

However, it is not funded to clear up waste sites nationally and will only make these decisions under truly exceptional circumstances.