SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 12th October 2026

Planning reforms: parish call-ins end on 31 October

Government reforms to planning committees take effect on 31 October 2026. SODC held a special council meeting on 24 September and reluctantly approved the constitution changes the new law requires.

- A mandatory national scheme of delegation replaces local rules.
- Most everyday applications will be decided by planning officers.
- Only very large, complex or highly controversial schemes go to committee.
- A smaller application can reach committee only by passing a strict "gateway test" of significant wider community impact, agreed by a nominated officer.
- **Parish council and district councillor call-ins will no longer be allowed.**
- Committees are capped at 13 members, with mandatory training and certification.

SODC made only the minimum changes needed and kept as much councillor involvement as the law allows. Parish councils can still comment on applications for officers to consider, and speak at committee when an application goes there.
Read more: *Councils reluctantly approve constitution changes for new planning process*

New planning administration fees (in effect from 1 October)

SODC has introduced new administration fees, agreed at budget setting and delayed until the planning system backlog had cleared.

- An administration fee for applications submitted by email, to cover the extra time incurred.
- An 'invalid' fee.
- The Planning Portal remains the preferred route.

Full details: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/making-a-planning-application/planning-fees-and-how-to-pay/ . Queries: registration@southandvale.gov.uk*

Joint local Plan 1 – proceeds to Final stages of Examination

The 3rd and final phase of the Examination in Public with the 3 Inspectors will proceed from Tuesday 17th November. These are scheduled to continue until the 16th December 2026.

Councillor Community Grant Scheme – deadline midday 4th December (say 3rd!!)

- 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, play areas or sports equipment.
- Please engage with us as councillors in advance!
- The pro-rata provisional allocation for Shiplake is £3,600.
- More information: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/councillor-community-grants/*

Nature and Climate Action Fund – open since 28th September

- Grants of £250 to £10,000 for voluntary and community organisations.
- Supports climate action and nature recovery.
- Criteria and eligibility: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/climate-emergency/new-100000-grant-to-help-communities-tackle-climate-change-and-support-nature-recovery/*

Have your say on community cohesion – survey closes 13th November

SODC is developing a five-year Community Cohesion Strategy, building on this year's 'Be Together' programme. It is working with Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network. Belong is meeting community groups, organisations and residents until November. Residents can also complete an online survey, which closes on Friday 13 November. Please encourage groups in your parish to take part.
Read more: *Councils work towards stronger community connections*

Excessive vehicle noise and anti-social driving

The Leader of SODC, Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, has written to Thames Valley Police and the Police & Crime Commissioner. This followed a motion from Cllr Ed Sadler (Chinnor) agreed in July. The letter asks for data on reports, enforcement and planned action on noisy vehicles, modified exhausts and illegal off-road motorbikes.
SODC wants closer working with police and town and parish councils to map hotspots and target enforcement.
Read more: *Council leader demands answers over excessive vehicle noise and anti-social driving*

Equalities Roadshow – new Henley date: 29th October

The roadshow now visits Henley Market Place on 29 October, 9am–2pm. Details of other locations: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/accessibility-equality-and-diversity/*

Neighbourhood planning update

The Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan is under independent examination. A three-week publicity period on an addendum to the Landscape Character Assessment closed on 3 September. The responses have been published, and the Parish Council has responded to them. More information: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/neighbourhood-plans/emerging-neighbourhood-plans/eye-and-dunsden/*

Free extra garden waste collections: 2–13 November

Garden waste permit holders can have extra garden waste collected free, on their normal collection day only, between 2 and 13 November 2026. Eligibility and details: *https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/garden-waste/*

Recycling: "Check it before you chuck it"

Up to 22% of items in recycling bins are the wrong ones, and contaminated loads can stop whole lorries being recycled. Residents are asked to check the Oxfordshire Waste Wizard if unsure. SODC's Waste Team will be at upcoming markets to answer questions:

- 29 October – Henley, 9am–2pm (rescheduled date)

Read more: *Residents reminded to 'Check it before you chuck it' during Recycle Week*

Keeping our spaces clean

SODC's Clean Spaces Week thanked the volunteers and groups who already look after their local area. It asked everyone to take one small action, such as taking litter home or joining a local litter pick. Parish councils may want to promote local litter picks.

Read more: *Residents encouraged to help keep South Oxfordshire clean this autumn*

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins

District Councillors