

SODC Monthly Report - June 2022

Cllr Caroline Newton, Haseley Brook Ward

Joint Local Plan

The public consultation on the key issues relating to the Local Plan (being created jointly with Vale of the White Horse District Council (VWHDC)) closed on 23 June, and officers have started analysing responses.

SODC Headquarters

SODC and VWHDC are due to leave their temporary HQ in Milton Park, Didcot at the end of the summer. They will move to an interim home in Abbey House, Abingdon (property belonging to VWHDC) before moving to their forever home in Didcot - at the Gateway site - in due course.

Refugees

Two Afghan families have been resettled in this district under the UK Resettlement scheme, and are receiving intensive support from council officers.

The housing team continue to support Ukrainian refugee households into their host accommodation. SODC has undertaken 230 accommodation checks in South Oxfordshire.

We've just appointed two new Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who will work with Asylum Welcome and help community groups to support Ukrainian guests who are settling in households across our districts. They will provide information, advice and guidance and liaise with local authority support teams across Oxfordshire, to build a support framework for refugees that need it.

Government Cost-of-Living and COVID payments

SODC has been responsible for making payment of the Government's £150 council tax energy rebate. About 40,000 households (council tax bands A-D) in this district are eligible, and it is anticipated that all will receive their payment by 4 July. The total dwelling count in South Oxfordshire District is 65,000.

A separate discretionary fund scheme for households in need who would not otherwise be eligible (bands E-H) will go live June/July and is due to conclude in Sept 2022.

The discretionary COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund scheme from central government will also go live in June/July. It will be targeted at business that were excluded from the earlier grant schemes but do pay rates.

The Test and Trace isolation £500 grants has now closed. In South there were 849 successful applications - £424,500.

Housing

Meanwhile, in May, the housing team witnessed a significant increase in demand year-on-year, with a rise in 11% of the number of residents needing intervention to prevent homelessness. The number of rough sleepers in South remains very low, with one person recorded in May. This reflects the intensive work of the housing team to identify households at risk of homelessness and prevent rough sleeping in the first place. The council is responsible for re-housing any Ukrainian refugees whose sponsorship arrangements fall apart for any reason, and this may be responsible for the large increase in interventions.

Community Safety

The Community Safety Partnership (which brings together public sector representatives from social and health services, emergency and probation services, housing associations etc) has agreed its priorities for the next three years. They align with the Police and Crime Commissioner's priorities and are: Domestic Abuse, Violence (including serious violence, violence against women and girls and knife crime, exploitation and rural crime).

Licensing

Since April, SODC has been doing compulsory tax checks on all taxi driver applications to ensure applicants are registered to pay tax.

Pavement licenses were introduced during the pandemic in 2020 to support hospitality businesses.

Government has recently announced these will be made permanent and SODC is waiting for more details about the licensing process.

Boiler Upgrade scheme opens

The government has announced a new £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme to help improve the energy efficiency of homes, reduce energy bills and cut emissions in the long-term. The scheme is now open for people to apply for the following support when replacing their oil or gas boilers:

£5,000 off the cost and installation of an air source heat pump

£5,000 off the cost and installation of a biomass boiler

£6,000 off the cost and installation of a ground source heat pump.

You can find out more about the scheme via [the government's website](#)