

District Councillor Report  
Haseley Brook ward  
03 June 2024

Cllr Georgina Heritage



### **My Meetings and Activity**

Since my last report we have welcomed in a new council year, including new cabinet and committee appointments. In the past 12 months I have enjoyed sitting on Licensing, Grants and Planning committees, and found them to provide an excellent foundation in my work as a district councillor. With the new council year came new responsibilities, and it was a privilege to be elected to a cabinet position by my colleagues. This means I will not be able to sit on those committees I was previously involved with, however I have a large and interesting portfolio to focus on, which I'm hugely motivated by and which I know will keep me very busy!

The 2024 reshuffle means that SODC's cabinet is now made up as follows:

- Cllr David Rouane – Leader
- Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers – Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Hub, and Statutory Deputy Leader
- Cllr Robin Bennett – Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Deputy Leader
- Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker – Cabinet Member for Finance and Property Assets
- Cllr Sam James-Lawrie – Cabinet Member for Environment
- Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
- Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson – Cabinet Member for Planning
- Cllr Georgina Heritage – Cabinet Member for Communities

### **'Everyone Active' grant scheme now open**

SODC's "Everyone Active" grant scheme aims to help fund projects that help communities keep active, and a new funding round is now open.

SODC is providing £50,000 in funding for community organisations to apply for, with a maximum grant of £1,000. Applicants need to show that their projects will help communities to become more active or sustain activity, and the grant is open for a wide range of groups and organisations in the district. Examples of what the funding could be used for include projects that encourage physical activity, leisure/playground equipment, community gardens, training courses to improve physical and mental wellbeing, projects that support access to green spaces, projects that address rural deprivation – and many more - as long as the project benefits more than one person becoming active, or supports ongoing activity to groups of residents in South Oxon.

More information about the grant scheme can be found at [southoxon.gov.uk/grants](https://southoxon.gov.uk/grants) or organisations can contact the council's Community Enablement team on 01235 422405 or [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk). The closing date for applications is 22nd July 2024 (midday).

### **Funding Advice**

There will be a funding advice session at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot on Thursday 20 June from 1pm-5pm. If you have a project you'd like to discuss, have any questions about eligibility or the application process for the above scheme or other upcoming grant schemes, you can book a face-to-face meeting with SODC. If you are unable to attend in person, a phone call or Teams chat can be arranged for an alternative day. Email [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk) or call 01235 422405.

### **New partnership to tackle crime in rural areas**

The Rural Crime Partnership is bringing together Thames Valley Police, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse District Councils and the Community Safety Partnerships to tackle crimes such as fly-tipping, burglaries and theft in rural areas. There will also be more support for local communities on crime prevention as well as an increase in the gathering and sharing of information about rural crime.

Rural crime affects victims' livelihoods, physical and mental wellbeing and that of the wider community. In 2023 the National Farmers' Union reported a 22 per cent increase in the value of rural crime with costs reaching a total estimate of £49.5 million across the UK. Rural crime can have a very serious impact, particularly for farmers who have to replace stolen equipment or pay to have fly-tipped rubbish removed from their land. By having more surveillance and increased support for local crime prevention we hope to reduce the problem and catch those involved.

The project has been made possible due to £156k funding which the partnership secured from the PPC for Thames Valley and the Home Office's Safer Streets initiative.

Initiatives include:

- New covert cameras to be used by the Police's Rural Crime Taskforce alongside off-road bikes to target criminals in hard-to-reach areas.
- Working with farmers to improve security. Farms will be eligible to sign up for security checks and will be given DNA marking kits for agricultural machinery. These kits include property marking labels to deter theft, and where theft happens enable machinery to be tracked back to the farm.
- A new Rural Crime Advisor will work to promote rural crime prevention and engage with rural communities, industries, farms and organisations such as Young Farmers and the National Farmers' Union, to help them become harder to target for criminals.
- New surveillance equipment will help district councils catch fly-tippers and tackle hot spot areas.

### **Cash boost for local rural projects**

More than £350,000 has been injected into projects that support businesses and community organisations in South Oxfordshire. Drawn from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), SODC has allocated funding for several projects across the district. For

example, Thomley (near Thame) received funding to create an Eco Woodland Outdoor Adventure and Learning Centre, and an eco-friendly interactive water feature. An exciting site for people with disabilities and their families, the charity hosts activities to help visitors develop the skills they need to enhance their day-to-day lives.

While the council is finalising a range of plans for this year's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, there is further funding to award through the next round of the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

Example projects that could be supported include sustainability infrastructure, the creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses, and purchase of equipment to support rural and community owned businesses.

The next round for applications has now opened and organisations can apply for the scheme via [the council's website](#).

### **Green Infrastructure and Open Space survey**

Land use experts at [LUC](#) are supporting the councils to gather information about greenspaces in the districts. As part of this LUC are asking residents and organisations to complete a short online survey to understand how they use greenspaces in their local area. This ranges from parks and recreation grounds to natural spaces like woodlands and meadows.

The survey runs from **Thursday 30 May to Sunday 30 June 2024**.

You can take part in and help share LUC's short survey here:

[South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse GI and Open Space Public Survey](#)

If you have any questions about the survey, please email the LUC team at [SouthandValeGI@landuse.co.uk](mailto:SouthandValeGI@landuse.co.uk)