

District Councillor Report

Haseley Brook ward

25 August 2025

Cllr Georgina Heritage



What I've been doing - Meetings and Council Activity

- Attended full council on 17th July, details of which are below.
- Registered a planning committee call-in for the Lewknor planning application P25/S1987/FUL, for the proposed **solar farm**. My reasons are mainly policy-based - with reference to Lewknor's Neighbourhood Plan, SODC's Local Plan and the emerging JLP - as well as concern for the proximity and loss of amenity for many Postcombe residents, some of whom live almost on top of the proposed site.
- The **Haseley Trading Estate** consultation has now closed on the planning portal but I'm continuing to correspond with SODC, County Councillor Cllr Judith Edwards and Freddie van Mierlo MP on areas of concern in advance of the planning committee hearing, which is likely to be in **October**. In the meantime, SODC - which doesn't have the expertise or authority to write a traffic plan - has written to OCC Highways as a statutory consultee to ask their position on a traffic plan and is awaiting their response. I will correspond with the local parish councils about planning committee representation over the coming month, and I will of course speak to voice residents' concerns.
- Chaired July's Community Safety Partnership meeting.
- Visited the organisers of Waterperry Opera Festival, a recipient of SODC's 2024 **Performing Arts grant** for their children's outreach project. We're so pleased to be able to offer this grant to support community and voluntary sector performing arts groups within the district, and the 2025 round is now live with the closing date on **5th September**. Applicants must show how their projects meet the following community values and priorities, fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable performing arts scene in South Oxfordshire:
 - Increase the range of arts opportunities available to local communities.
 - Support inclusive practice and celebrate diversity
 - Develop local artistic talent
 - Promote innovation and excellence
 - Develop new audiences and participants in performing arts initiativesOrganisations eligible to apply are non-for-profit groups, arts, or community groups, town and parish councils, and Schools (for non-core curriculum activities). Please spread the word, and find more information here: [Performing Arts Grant Fund - now open - South Oxfordshire District Council](#). SODC's Councillor Community Grant scheme is also now open, and there are more details about this below.

Land SW of London Road, Tetsworth OX9 7AZ

Over the Bank Holiday weekend I've been involved in corresponding with residents and SODC officers regarding unauthorised use of this land, which appeared to begin on Friday 22nd August. SODC officers worked to obtain a temporary stop notice on Friday night, which was served to the site on Saturday 23rd. The TSN relates to the following activity:

- (1) The importation and laying of hardcore;
- (2) The formation of an access;
- (3) The laying of utility pipes and cables;
- (4) The use of the land as a residential caravan site.

Tetsworth parish council has been and continue to be working hard on this matter and is liaising with SODC regarding the next steps. I understand residents' concern about this and, while some details of enforcement matters can't always be shared with the public (or councillors) by the planning enforcement team, I will continue to assist where I can and help answer as many questions as possible.

July's Full Council meeting

Up to ten million pounds for investment in homes to meet local housing need, as well as over half a million pounds worth of extra funding for community organisations, were part of the full council meeting on 17th July.

Council approved recommendations to inject an additional of £521,000 funding over two years for the voluntary and charitable sector under the Revenue Grants scheme, following an underspend on the previous year's revenue budget. This means additional funding for a further fifteen organisations this year and next, ranging from family and community centres to youth services and charities, which will now receive 100 per cent of the funding they have identified as needing.

[Up to ten million pounds](#) was also approved towards approximately thirty homes for use as social housing, through an addition to the council's approved capital programme. This funding was made available through money that had originally been earmarked for the proposed new building at the Gateway site in Didcot. Council approved the financial transfer and decision to cease to further work on this project in light of impending Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), other than for work in progress crucial to future proofing the site for longer term development, for the benefit of the wider Didcot area.

Speaking in the debate, our Council Leader David Rouane said: "It was enormously disappointing that the Government's decision to enforce a LGR had put a stop to the redevelopment of this key site which is the Gateway to Didcot for the many people arriving at the railway station. The council was right to take the development to this stage before halting the project; securing planning permission for an office and installing an energy supply to the site mean that the money spent so far has not been wasted and the new council will be able to develop the site as it sees fit."

In his [Leader's Report](#), Cllr Rouane reflected on the council's recent challenges with a major IT overhaul to bring services back inhouse; on the successful public engagement to date for LGR and the council's preferred option for a proposed two-unitary council arrangement – rounding off with a

celebration of the news that South Oxfordshire is ranked in the top ten performing district councils in the country for taking action on climate and nature recovery.

Other items on the agenda included a review of the scrutiny function and partner committee updates.

A revised motion on encouraging community energy benefit options in large renewable projects was passed, and several topics were covered by questions, which you can find details of here: [Agenda item - Questions on notice](#)

Councillor Community Grant now open

More funding has been made available for SODC members to award community projects through the Councillor Community Grant Scheme... Councillors previously had £5,000 to award community and voluntary organisations in their wards, but this has been increased to **£7,500**, which was approved in our budget earlier this year.

The grant scheme launched on 18th August and is open to not-for-profit community organisations whose primary purpose is to benefit the residents of South Oxfordshire, including town and parish councils.

Organisations can apply for grants from £250 up to a maximum of £7,500 from each councillor (budget permitting). For wards with multiple councillors, applications may be considered by all ward members together to determine funding and organisations can apply to multiple councillors/ wards should their project benefit a wider area.

As cabinet member for communities I've seen the wide range of community projects benefitting in South Oxon including many in the Haseley Brook ward. It's a great opportunity for our councillors to directly support community projects in their area.

The council is particularly keen to hear from projects that have a big impact for residents, such as activities that protect and restore our natural world, promote action on the climate emergency and improve economic and community well-being.

The Councillor Community Grant Scheme closes at midday on the 5 December. Organisations will hear if they have been successful from February next year.

This isn't the only grant from South Oxfordshire District Council that has had a boost this year, council members also approved an **increase in funding for the 2025–2027 Revenue Grant recipients**. An additional £521,000 has been added to the two-year funding bringing the total to £1,188,951, which will be used to support 17 organisations across the district over the next two years.

More details about this and our other grant schemes can be found here: [Community Grants for 2025/26 - South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

Council's lettings service helps hundreds of people stay local

A long-standing lettings service run as not-for-profit in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse has helped over a thousand people find affordable homes locally so far, and many landlords find new tenants. White Horse Lettings has created around 50 new tenancies each year since it began in 2007. Run by Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire district councils, the service connects private landlords with potential tenants in need of housing, matching people with a suitable, affordable property.

The councils offer ongoing support to both tenants and private landlords – with the aim of providing a stable home for the tenant and a steady income for the landlord throughout the tenancy.

Landlords who use the service have support with tenancy agreements, inventories, property inspections and safety and legal guidance. Services are free of charge for landlords – and landlords retain 100 per cent of the rental income.

More information about the free service White Horse Lettings offers to landlords is on our website: southoxon.gov.uk/whitehorselettings

SO Charitable Lottery

I'm delighted that an excellent charity in the Haseley Brook ward, the Oxfordshire Animal Sanctuary is one of eight local charities to benefit from an extra £7,000 of unrestricted funding thanks to the SO Charitable Lottery.

Since its launch in 2018, the SO Charitable Lottery, run by SODC, has raised £167,595 to help local organisations, voluntary and charitable groups who are committed to supporting local communities and the natural environment.

Players of the lottery can choose a good cause they wish to support including the SO Charitable Community Fund, which distributes funding to good causes selling 20 tickets or more a week.

The Oxfordshire Animal Sanctuary, who care for around 70 to 100 animals daily, including dogs, cats, rabbits and goats, and reunite hundreds with loving homes each year received £1,595.

Iain Atkin, Sanctuary Manager, said: "We would encourage all residents of South Oxfordshire to consider signing up to the SO Charitable Lottery. Not only do participants have the chance to win prizes, but they also know that their contribution is making a real, tangible difference to local animals and the community organisations working tirelessly to help them.

"Thanks to the generosity of SO Lottery supporters, we can continue our mission of giving every animal that comes through our doors the medical care they deserve and the best possible chance of finding their forever home."

Residents who take part in the lottery, can either support a charity or group of their choice or donate to the SO Charitable Community Fund, these funds are distributed to local organisations and community initiatives which have a beneficial impact on the local community.

- Tickets cost £1 a week and give you a 1 in 50 chance of winning a prize each week!
- For each £1 ticket sold 60p will go to good causes in South Oxfordshire

I'm grateful to everyone who plays a part in supporting our local good causes through the lottery. It's fantastic to see local groups getting the boost they need to help even more people. A big thank you to everyone who's bought a ticket – you are making a real difference in our communities.

You can go to the website www.southoxon.gov.uk/lottery/ for more information on how organisations can join the lottery and how residents can support good causes in the district.

Recycling advice

Up to 70% of the things put in public litter bins could be recycled if taken home, so South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are calling on residents to change the way they deal with litter on the go. Unfortunately, once recyclables are mixed with food waste and other rubbish in litter bins they can't be recycled and must be thrown away.

The "Take It Home" campaign is to encourage people to take empty bottles and cans home for recycling, instead of placing them into public litter bins. The advice is as follows:

If you want to recycle, please take these items home and put them in your green bin instead:

- Empty cans and bottles*
- Plastic food containers*
- Newspapers and magazines

(*please just give them a rinse first to ensure no mess gets in your recycling bin)

What's suitable for public litter bins:

- Sandwich packaging – please ignore the label, these can be messy or include a mix of different materials which may not be recyclable
- empty crisp packets and chocolate wrappers
- fast food packaging
- disposable coffee cups
- film lids from food packaging
- bagged dog waste

The campaign supports the councils' new [Rethinking Waste strategy](#), which focuses on reducing waste overall, improving recycling and supporting residents to make more sustainable choices.

To support the 'Take it home' campaign, the council already provides some street recycling bins in the towns and larger villages. However, they are often contaminated by food waste, liquids and dog mess bags which means that items cannot be recycled. So to make sure your empty bottles, cans and plastics are recycled – please take them home, give them a rinse and then put them in your recycling bin.

For more information, please visit southandvale.gov.uk/litterbins

Auditions for young stars and pantomime pooches to join Beauty and the Beast at Cornerstone!

Local young performers and talented pets are being invited to audition for roles in this year's magical family pantomime Beauty and the Beast, coming to Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot this Christmas.

Award-winning producers Polka Dot Pantomimes are on the lookout for a sensational chorus of young dancers (ages 9–18) bursting with energy, personality and sparkle to take to the stage alongside the professional cast. The young ensemble will support characters including Belle, Dolly Doughnut and the dastardly Grimalkin in this spectacular production of the much-loved tale.

Open dance auditions will take place on Saturday 13 September, 1pm–4pm at Cornerstone Arts Centre, and hopefuls must be at least 9 years old by 1 September 2025 to take part. To take part, applicants must complete and bring a printed audition form, which can be downloaded from the Polka Dot Pantomime's or Cornerstone Arts Centre's website*.

The audition will involve some short games and learning a basic dance routine. Polka Dot Pantomimes are looking for potential and personality, so applicants are encouraged to do their best and have fun!

The search isn't just for budding stars on two feet. Polka Dot Pantomimes are also looking for local pooches to join the fun, casting a Pantomime Pooch to play the Beast's mischievous sidekick.

Dogs with obedience or agility experience who can sit, roll, bark or show off other tricks are encouraged to audition. The successful canine star(s) must be available between Wednesday 18 and Thursday 31 December and prepared for a busy panto schedule.

Owners of local dogs interested in performing on stage are invited to register their interest with more information on Cornerstone's website.

Tickets for the pantomime are on sale now via the website or in person at the Box Office.