

Great Milton Parish Council

Clerk: Jacqueline Wren

Email: clerk@greatmilton-pc.gov.uk

Minutes of the Great Milton Parish Council (GMPC) Meeting held at the Pavilion on Monday the 17th November 2025 at 7:30pm

Present: Malcolm Horsley (Chair, MH), Bill Fox (Vice Chair, BF), Councillors Andrew Noble (AN), Sarah MacMahon (SM) and David Harms (DH).

In attendance: Judith Edwards (County Councillor, JE), Georgina Heritage (District Councillor, GH) and two members of the public.

106/25 Apologies for absence
None

107/25 Variation of order of business
None

108/25 Declarations of members' interests
None

109/25 Reports

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

County Councillor Judith Edwards noted that she has not produced a written report this month but gave a verbal update on the following issues; Chalgrove Airfield Development, Local Government Reorganisation, Devolution and a Mayoral Combined Authority, Oxford Congestion Charge, Fire Service Review. A summary is attached in [Attachment 1](#). With regard to the newly introduced Congestion Charge in Oxford DH noted that travel time into Oxford for school children from Wheatley has been significantly increased by 20-30minutes. Public buses are also being delayed by the system which is supposed to improve travel times on public transport. JE noted that she would definitely report this issue as it is a concern.

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)

The District Councillor's Report had not been received prior to the meeting but GH gave a verbal summary and the report was received afterwards - see [Attachment 2](#).

Councillor Heritage noted that SODC has backed the Ridgeway Council proposal – which combines South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse and West Berkshire. She noted that although different proposals have different strengths she feels a smaller unitary Council would be best for the area and does not think an Oxford-centred Council is the right thing. Councillor Noble noted that at the Oxford Green Belt Network meeting which he attended the main concern was that the government will choose the Greater Oxford option due to Labour leadership in the city.

GH noted that she has called two planning applications to committee both traveller sites in Tetsworth and Stadhampton. She is working with both parish councils regarding these applications. It was noted that a very similar application went to appeal approximately 5 years ago when residents raised around £65k to fight the application. GH is in full support of the community on this issue and happy to share the history of the site and the planning history.

GH noted that there is still availability for the Councillor's Community Capital Grant, up to £7500 but applications close on 5th December midday. The Clerk asked whether schools

or PTA could apply for renewal of playground equipment and surfaces. GH confirmed that PTAs are eligible and if there is community benefit for the project it may qualify. JE also noted that her fund may also have capacity but has a later deadline.

110/25 Haseley Trading Estate [P25/S1653/FUL](#)

The Chair updated the Council that although the community have pledged a substantial amount of money this was not quite sufficient to apply for a Judicial Review; concerns were therefore raised regarding spending Parish Council funds in combination with community donations, given the uncertainties that a JR would inevitably bring. It was noted that the response to the Environmental Information Regulations request suggested no particularly grounds for investigation. The ICO investigation regarding the last FOI will take place but will take a long time.

The Council voted and unanimously resolved to call a halt to legal proceedings and not pursue a judicial review.

It was noted that the best strategy from this point is to ensure that the District Council meet the conditions of the planning permissions to mitigate the negative impact of the development on the community.

111/25 Correspondence and Public Discussion

Correspondence was noted from the newly formed OCC Highways Asset Response Team (HART) requesting information on particular issues in our parish where the team may be able to focus their help. The Vice Chair suggested that each Councillor should review their ward and we can thus compile a list of problem areas to pass on to HART. In particular the team deal with the following things:

Street Furniture Cleaning	Cleansing signage and pedestrian refuge island bollards to ensure visibility and regulatory compliance.
Pedestrian Safety Enhancements	Removing damaged railings, street furniture, and footway plates, and addressing associated surface deterioration.
Vegetation Management	Clearing minor highway vegetation encroaching onto footways and cycleways to improve accessibility.
Surface Debris Clearance	Sweeping isolated areas of loose debris from footways and residential carriageways to maintain cleanliness and safety.
Visual Amenity Improvements	Removing outdated flyposting from street furniture to improve the overall streetscape.
Street Clutter Reduction	Collecting and removing redundant barriers and obsolete Chapter 8 signage to declutter public spaces.

It was noted that the street gutters on Church Road still only seem to be cleared on one side and very irregularly, causing the road to flood after heavy rain. Residents in Oxen Piece have also reported that the Deep Clean team did not remove the moss from pavements after their visit in October.

The Council continue to receive correspondence from the Oxford Green Belt Network regarding their objections to the Greater Oxford Unitary proposal. AN reported that there was no particular outcome from the meeting held in October other than the concern that there is considerable favour being given to the Greater Oxford proposal for economic and political reasons, and that whichever option Oxford City are in favour of is likely to go ahead.

112/25 Parking on village green spaces

The Clerk summarised her findings with regard to the legalities of parking on common land in the village.

- It is the responsibility of the property owner to maintain and renew the surface over which they have a right of access, since it is their vehicle movements which are causing wear. (*Vehicular Access Across Common and Other Land (England) Regulations 2002*)
- The property owner may not lawfully make any permanent changes to the area, but they can replace or maintain the surface like for like, or where the surface has failed replace with a loose material such as gravel. (*Section 38 Commons Act 2006*).
- It is ambiguous in the legislation whether those with a right of access across common land may lawfully park on it.

The Council maintain their resolution that they will not grant permission for residents to park on common land.

113/25 Christmas Events

The following Christmas events are scheduled in the village:

Saturday 13th December – Christmas Fair in the Pavilion 10am - 2pm

Sunday 14th December – Carol Service 4pm at St Mary the Virgin, Great Milton

Wednesday 17th December – Carols on the Green – 6pm around the Christmas Tree

The Council resolved to order a Christmas tree for the village green from Christmas Trees Oxford – Clerk to action.

114/25 Casual Vacancies

A member of the public expressed interest in standing in an election but did not wish to be co-opted. The Chair noted that the next scheduled elections are due to take place in May 2027, at which time an Parish Council election poll will take place only if there are more candidates than positions.

Mr Richard Oliver was present and stated his wish to be considered for the current Councillor vacancy. He was then unanimously co-opted to the position of Parish Councillor. The Council welcomed Mr Oliver and agreed that they look forward to working with him to promote the interests of the Great Milton community. Clerk to liaise with RO to complete the necessary paperwork.

115/25 Planning Applications

[P25/S3171/HH](#)

1 Hillcrest, The Green, Great Milton OX44 7NS

Single storey side extension.

- Deadline extended to 18th November on request.

The Council were in agreement that these plans are in line with the applicant's intentions for local business which is beneficial to the village as a whole. The extension itself will be in keeping with the existing building and is likely to be executed to an excellent standard. The Council resolved to support this application.

The following **planning decisions** were noted:

[P25/S1653/FUL](#)

Former Ariens Factory Site, Haseley Trading Estate, Great Haseley OX44 7PF

Redevelopment of the site as a Vehicle Depot retaining one of the buildings as a workshop to contain offices and welfare. Works to include all associated external works. (Amended and additional plans and information received 28 August 2025).

- PERMISSION GRANTED

[P25/S3043/PIP](#)

Land south of Thame Road Great Milton Oxon

Erection of a minimum of five and maximum of nine residential dwellings (of which two would be self/custom build).

- PERMISSION GRANTED

The Chair noted that the applicant may be willing to attend a future PC meeting to discuss further planning permission for this site.

P25/S2845/HH

Fairway, The Green, Great Milton, OX44 7NP

Two storey rear extension. Rebuild of existing garage to create habitable space attached to main house using glazed link. Loft conversion.

- PERMISSION GRANTED

116/25 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the 13th October 2025 were approved and signed.

117/25 Finance

A The Bank Reconciliation, Statement of Accounts and Bank Statements up to 31st October 2025 were received and approved.

B The following payments were authorised:

Payee	Element	Amount	Date	Minute Ref Order Agreed	Power to Spend
Shield Maintenance Ltd.	Dog waste – Nov 2025	£100.10	18/11/25		OSA s10
Bibby Financial Servies Ltd.	Tactical Facilities Management Ltd. Nov 25	£581.60	18/11/25	150/24	OSA s10
Jonathan Dudley	Bulletin - Nov	£332.08	18/11/25		LGA 1972 s142
Gillett & Johnston	Church Clock Service & Parts	£453.00	18/11/25		PCA 1957 s2
Castle Water	Allotments Water	£29.04	18/11/25		SHAA 1908

C The following monthly DD payments were noted;

Clerk's salary	£480.00	30/10/25
Scribe Accounts	£37.20	01/11/25
Bank Charges	£6.00	31/10/25
BT plc	£27.65	31/10/25

D Receipts – none.

E Budget for 2026-27

The first draft of the budget was discussed. It was agreed that the precept should be increased in line with inflation. The budget for maintenance fees such as grass cutting and dog bins was also increased to allow for price increases. The clerk to make the discussed amendments and circulate prior to the next meeting.

F To discuss the **Reserves** and the drafting of a Reserves Policy.

A first version of a breakdown of ear-marked reserves was reviewed and the Council resolved to formalise this list and a Reserves Policy. Clerk to draft and circulate prior to the next meeting.

G To following **donations** were discussed and approved;
The Howe Trust - £100
Citizens Advice Oxfordshire - £50

118/25 Training: The following training opportunities were discussed:
Councillor Fundamentals – Online 7th January 18:30
Leading your Council – Saturday 17th January 10:00

119/25 Actions: all actions from the previous meeting were reviewed.

120/25 Security in the village: The Council were not aware of any security issues to discuss.

121/25 Items for next agenda or information only
The Clerk noted that the new email distribution list has now been used to circulate information about village events. If recipients do not wish to receive emails from GMPC they are able to unsubscribe by contacting the Clerk or clicking the link at the bottom of the email.

Meeting closed at 21.20.

***The next meeting of Great Milton Parish Council will be held on
Monday 15th December starting at 7.30pm in The Pavilion.***

***Agenda items for the December meeting are due to the Clerk by
Wednesday, 3rd December 2025***

Attachment 1 – Oxford County Councillors Report

Chalgrove airfield development – the exhibition in Chalgrove by Homes England at the end of October indicates that we should expect a planning application for the site in the next few weeks, but probably not until next year (my guess, I have no facts on this). The proposals look very similar to last time, and from a county council perspective, there remains a huge issue about the amount of traffic this proposal will generate on all the surrounding roads. The company James-Martin which uses the airfield for testing their ejector seats is clear that the proposals will not suit them and they will fight both the planning application and the compulsory purchase of their lease.

Local Government Reorganisation – Oxfordshire and other authorities have submitted their proposals for unitary authorities to the government, so we now have 3 proposals on the table. We are awaiting the Secretary of State's response. The next step will be a formal consultation on the favoured option. The county, along with other neighbouring councils, is also going to be expressing an interest for a mayoral combined authority. At this point, all we're doing is exploring this option and thinking about what this would look like, but in principle it seems positive as it would have the potential of bringing more investment into the area, as well as better coordination of transport and housing policy planning.

Devolution and a Mayoral Combined Authority – Leaders in the Thames Valley are pushing ahead to express interest in being in the next phase of setting up an MCA. The boundaries aren't sorted but it does feel worthwhile exploring what this would mean for our area. There's good evidence that it will bring in additional funding for the area and give more scope to join up services. There's concerns as well, as Georgina pointed out, but definitely an area worth keeping an eye on. Here's the link to the press release: [Thames Valley leaders to pursue devolution deal](#)

Oxford Congestion Charge – so far the early indications are that the scheme is starting to make a difference to congestion in the city, but it's very early days. Residents are encouraged to apply for their free 25 passes and of course there are exemptions for those with a blue badge or regular hospital patients. I will follow up the feedback passed on about delays to school bus journeys.

Fire Service Review – The Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue service is undergoing a major review of its fire cover, and some significant changes are proposed which includes the closure of Henley fire station. Overall, the intention is to increase the amount of cover available during to peak times and improve the response times in rural areas. Please do let me know if there are any issues arising that affect your parish that you'd like me to raise. [Consultation on proposals to improve Oxfordshire's Fire and Rescue Service | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#)

Best wishes,

Judith

Cllr Judith Edwards

County Councillor for the Chalgrove and Thame West Division
(representing Chalgrove, Berrick Salome & Roke, Brightwell Baldwin, the Haseleys, the Miltons, Newington, Stadhampton, Tetsworth, Tiddington and the western side of Thame)

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Attachment 2 – SODC Councillor’s Report

District Councillor Report

Haseley Brook ward

5th November 2025

Clr Georgina Heritage



What I’ve been doing - Meetings and Council Activity

- The **Haseley Industrial Estate** planning application was heard at planning committee on Wednesday 8th October, and you can find the agenda and draft minutes here: [Agenda for Planning Committee on Wednesday, 8 October 2025, 6.00 pm](#). This item was questioned and debated for approximately two hours before the application was approved with a list of strenuous conditions to address the concerns of surrounding villages.

I was pleased that all the nearby parish councils were given a full 5 minutes each to speak (as opposed to the usual slot of 5 minutes in total). As ward member my intention was to focus on Little Milton/A329 in my own speech. However I noticed on the speakers’ list that no residents had registered to speak so I also listed as many other concerns as possible that people had raised with me in correspondence. I appreciate I didn’t have time in my allotted slot to go into extended detail on every point, and the various parish council speakers went into further detail on their respective villages’ behalf. However I hope I covered the main objections for residents. I think it’s important to note that there is always a dedicated slot available for resident(s) objections at planning committee meetings should anyone wish to speak, though there is of course no obligation to do so. This is mentioned in the planning committee notice to those who have commented on an application, and residents are always very welcome to get in touch with me if they’d like any advice or support about speaking at council meetings.

As mentioned above, my own focus was on the unsuitability of the A329 through Little Milton. I had worked closely with County Councillor Judith Edwards and Freddie van Mierlo MP on this, which included meetings with both OCC Highways and SODC officers prior to the committee date as well as research into local freight policy. Freddie van Mierlo MP also spoke at the committee meeting to support Little Milton and surrounding villages in this concern. We were relieved that our collaborative work (alongside of course that of the diligent parish councils) bore fruit in terms of traffic conditions. A traffic plan has not yet been created but I will be watching this closely with SODC planning committee members, County Councillor and MP, all of whom agree that local village roads and communities must be protected in the plan.

You can read the draft minutes via my link above, and I’d like to draw attention particularly to the amended conditions covering **foul drainage**, **lighting** and **vehicle routing management plan** on page 5.

- The unauthorised **traveller site** in **Tetsworth** is now subject to a planning application which is live on SODC’s website. I have requested that the application is called in to a planning committee hearing, should the planning officer be minded to approve it. My initial reasons for calling it to committee are

the lack of flood risk assessment, the destruction of wildlife habitat / harm to the countryside, and unsuitability of the site as referenced in the previous appeal on the same site. If you would like to submit a comment on the application, the reference is P25/S2747/FUL, and the link is here: [Planning Application P25/S2747/FUL](#)

I attended Tetsworth Parish Council's extraordinary meeting on this planning application and will continue to support Tetsworth's community.

- I have also called planning application P/25/S2784/FUL (Stadhampton) to committee. It is similar in nature to the Tetsworth situation in that it's a retrospective application in Stadhampton for a number of mobile home plots on privately owned land, and my reasons for calling it to committee are similar to those cited above. The link for this application is [Planning Application P25/S2784/FUL](#) and I will of course work with Stadhampton parish council and residents on this matter.
- I chaired the **Community Safety Partnership**, which is a statutory committee made up of a number of agencies to address crime and protect vulnerable people in our districts. We received updates from partners on domestic abuse, modern slavery and exploitation, serious violence and antisocial behaviour. I think it's important to comment that some forms of crime, violence and exploitation are more likely to hide under the radar in rural areas. If you know of someone who you think needs help, you are always welcome to get in touch with your local councillor for discreet and sensitive support.
- I represented SODC at a **Health & Wellbeing Board** workshop, which was the first step to discussing the priorities for Oxfordshire in light of the government's NHS 10 Year Plan.
- I attended **full council** on 23rd October which had a packed agenda, including three motions (all of which were passed). Due to the long agenda for this meeting, I will detail it separately below:

SODC Full Council Meeting

- There was excellent news for Thame, with an approval of funding of £779,246 for Thame Town Council towards creating a new community and youth building and changing room at Southern Road Recreation Ground, funded through section 106 developer contributions.
- In [his Leader's Report](#), Cllr David Rouane reflected on the recent disappointing setback for the Joint Local Plan in light of the Inspectors asking the councils to consider withdrawing the plan in relation to our Duty to Cooperate with Oxford City Council.

Cllr Rouane offered a more reassuring perspective on what the current situation means for the district: "At this stage the plan has not been withdrawn and as such it still has some weight in determining planning applications, and there are no immediate changes to South Oxfordshire's Five Year Housing Land Supply position. We continue to have a valid adopted Local Plan with policies consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. Of course, developers may try their hand with speculative applications (there is nothing to stop them doing so) but their position is no different now than it was one month ago."

"Interestingly, the Minister responsible for Housing and Planning has recently written to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate to ask them to consider being more flexible in how they approach 'Duty to Cooperate' issues, and we are actively investigating how this might apply to our Joint Local Plan."

Cllr Rouane also praised the significant work has been undertaken by officers and councillors, including a recent meeting of the five council leaders and their chief executives, to develop the proposal for a two unitary model covering the area of Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. The Leader also highlighted the work carried out at the council to ensure everyone has the opportunity for a safe, stable, and secure home – recently underpinned by a new Joint Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025–2028 which builds on South and Vale's strong record in preventing homelessness.

Read the [full Leader's report on the council's news pages](#).

- Other agenda items included updates on the management of our investments, audit functions and partner committees. The award of the Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Contract were considered in confidential sessions due to commercial and legal sensitivities.
- [Three motions](#) were considered and all were passed.

The first motion, proposed by Councillor Giles, focussed on protecting public privacy in light of the Government's proposed Digital ID scheme for all UK residents. The motion called for the Council to formally oppose any Government mandatory Digital ID scheme and for the Leader to write to the Home Secretary and the Minister for Digital Infrastructure expressing our opposition. The council's use of CCTV was also discussed and I requested that it was noted that the council currently uses it in a limited and appropriate way to assist the police in community safety and prevent antisocial behaviour.

Cllr Tim Bearder proposed a motion, raised the issue of a persistent problem of vehicles being left on double yellow lines and obstructing the carriageway on rural roads. The motion urged the council to apply to adopt powers from the DVLA and become a Devolved Power Partner (DPP), allowing it to take enforcement action against untaxed vehicles – working alongside Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police to share intelligence and coordinate enforcement.

Councillor Filipova-Rivers proposed a motion reaffirming the council's commitment to fair treatment for all residents. The council unanimously resolved to condemn intimidation, violence or harassment of minority groups who have made South Oxfordshire their home. Council also agreed to challenge misinformation and the fear, suspicion, intolerance and discrimination it generates, alongside continuing to work with partners and support for the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership.

It was encouraging that this particular motion received a round of applause and unanimous cross-party support. I spoke in support of the motion during debate.

- Topics covered by questions included:
 - Exploring the potential to live-streaming and record Council meetings to aid Participation, Accessibility and Accountability;
 - Community Land Trusts – future funding for Community First Oxfordshire;
 - A call for the Cabinet Member for Finance to write to The Secretary of State at MHCLG to request a review of the way in which local government Treasury Management decisions are made.

Joint Local Plan

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have written an open letter in which they have stated the Planning Inspectors' conclusions on their Joint Local Plan were unwarranted and lacking coherent explanation.

The open letter is in reply to a Planning Inspectors' letter, which recommended the councils withdraw their Joint Local Plan from the examination process based on a single issue – the 'duty to co-operate' with Oxford city.

In their response, the councils have defended the processes carried out to develop the plan. They go on to explain to the Inspectors that any decision on whether to withdraw the plan from examination would need to be taken at full Council meetings, in December at the earliest.

Here are some of the key issues the councils have raised in their response to the Inspectors:

- The letter contains errors, for example, the Inspectors referred to South and Vale being in the “Oxfordshire Housing Market Area” when deciding if there were strategic matters to engage with neighbours on. But housing market areas are no longer part of how housing need is calculated and haven’t been for some years.
- The Inspectors said things that “could affect Oxford” count as a Strategic Matter. The law says a strategic matter that requires cooperation must have (or would have) a significant impact on two or more planning areas. The Inspectors did not explain what those significant impacts actually are (not just ‘could’ be) on Oxford and the areas of South and/or Vale arising from what the joint local plan proposes.
- The Inspectors relied on Oxford’s (now withdrawn) Local Plan 2040, which had claimed there was a shortfall in housing supply. But that was before taking into account the 6,780 homes committed in the Joint Local Plan in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse for Oxford’s unmet need. Using the government’s Standard Method for calculating housing numbers – which the Inspectors of Oxford’s plan instructed Oxford to do – Oxford’s need was already covered.
- The Inspectors appear to have misunderstood the housing numbers, saying "it should have been obvious" that there was a reasonable prospect of additional Oxford unmet need in later years. But the evidence showed the Joint Local Plan (and partners’ plans) fully accommodated Oxford’s unmet needs up to 2040.
- The Inspectors downplayed work led by Oxfordshire County Council in 2023 showing that Oxford’s unmet need was fully addressed, favouring a note by Oxford City Council which said it wasn’t.

Despite the significant concerns with the Inspectors’ conclusions, the councils’ leaders have both committed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that future development in the areas remains sustainable, appropriate and well-planned.

Cllr David Rouane, SODC leader, said “I’m dismayed that after several years of diligent, careful and collaborative hard work, our positive, innovative Joint Local Plan that works towards genuinely sustainable growth, could be undone by Inspectors’ conclusions based on out-of-date policy and misinterpreted legislation. I am not aware of another emerging local plan in Oxfordshire that so encompasses and embraces the vision set out in the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, which all our councils signed up to, as our Joint Local Plan.”

the Councils issued a joint Press Release, available here: [South Oxfordshire](#) and [Vale of White Horse](#).

On 6 October the Councils wrote to the Planning Inspectors about their letter - the [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

Councillor Community Grant

Don’t forget there’s still time for non-profit groups to apply for funding to support community projects in South Oxfordshire! Each South Oxfordshire District Councillor has £7,500 with their Councillor Community Grant Scheme, and organisations can apply to multiple councillors or up to five wards should their project benefit a wider area in the district.

Our Councillor Community Grant goes to the heart of our towns and villages benefitting the people and environment in South Oxfordshire.

The deadline for applications is **midday Friday 5 December** and organisations can find out more on the [Council's website](#) or by contacting their local ward councillor directly. They can also contact the Council’s

Community Engagement team to ask any questions or get support with their application by emailing grants@southandvale.gov.uk.

Breaking the cycle of homelessness

Homelessness extends far beyond rough sleeping and can impact anyone and it is frequently hidden, such as sofa surfing, encompassing individuals living in insecure, inadequate, or unsanitary housing, as well as those affected by domestic abuse.

Proactive work to break the cycle of homelessness for vulnerable people and ensure support is accessible, effective and timely is the focus of a new council strategy. Following a public consultation held in May and June, a new Joint Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been put in place by South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse district councils.

Despite the demand for homeless services increasing locally and nationally, the South Oxfordshire and Vale councils manage to keep homelessness levels low through working closely with every individual at risk of homelessness to help them find sustainable accommodation. Homeless prevention rates are currently at 79 per cent in South Oxfordshire and 70 per cent in the Vale compared to 52 per cent in the South East.

The councils continue to purchase property to be used as temporary accommodation, and this will lead to a reduction in the need for B&Bs. Latest figures (Q1 April – June 2025) show that in the South East more than 50 per cent of people registered as homeless stayed in nightly paid or B&B accommodation, whereas in South Oxfordshire the figure was 16 per cent and the Vale 12 per cent.

The strategy includes identifying issues early on such as ‘hidden homelessness’ and sofa surfing – as eviction by family and friends is the top reason for home loss in the districts.

The continued focus on early homelessness prevention, working closely with every individual at risk of homelessness to help them find sustainable accommodation has yielded high prevention rates. The councils’ outreach service will continue to proactively identify any rough sleepers without delay, ensuring that they receive specialist advice and support.

Please see the council’s website for the new strategy and help with homelessness – www.southoxon.gov.uk/housing

Decarbonisation Update

Preparations are under way at Park Sports Centre in Wheatley for construction work to install sustainable energy efficiency measures at the site which could make savings on energy bills and carbon emissions.

Work began on site in October, and part of the centre’s car park was fenced off for construction traffic and plant to be stored there. As the sports centre shares its car park with neighbouring Wheatley Park School it was decided to put the fencing in place ahead of the start of the school term as a safety precaution.

Last year South Oxfordshire District Council successfully bid for government funding of nearly £1.5m towards installing solar panels and air source heat pumps to replace end of life gas-fired boilers at the leisure centre in Wheatley and at Didcot Wave. Park Sports Centre will also benefit from new insulation and roof replacement work, to improve energy efficiency.

Both South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council – which has a joint use agreement at Parks Sports Centre – will put in the additional £1.5m to complete the required works by spring 2026.

When all the new renewable energy measures are added to both Park and Didcot Wave it is estimated it will save more than 200 tonnes in carbon emissions each year, which will reduce SODC's overall emissions by 6.9 per cent.

Summer at Riverside

Over 22,000 visitors enjoyed the facilities at Riverside Park and Pools in Wallingford this summer! SODC and leisure provider GLL (who manage the site at Riverside Park and Pools on behalf of the council) saw a 45 per cent increase in visitors compared to 2024.

The pool remained a vibrant hub of activity throughout the summer, with a strong community of regular swimmers keeping the energy high even on rainy days and the splash pad, which was refurbished in 2023, was as popular as ever with young families.

Earlier this year a range of accessible improvements were made to the site, including the installation of Changes Places facilities and work was carried out on the existing access path, roadway, ramp and moorings to provide easy access for people with disabilities and to enhance the whole riverside site for visitors use and enjoy.

The summer season featured a variety of activities, including aqua aerobics and Summer Solstice Swim. Thanks to the dedication of staff and the enthusiasm of local residents, the pool was rarely empty, proving its value as a cherished community asset. The Better Leisure team hosted a First Aid and Water Safety Day, handing out information on water safety to raise awareness on the hidden dangers of swimming in the river.

The end of the season also saw the return of the very popular Dog Swims, building on last year's success.

The campsite also had another successful season, with consistently positive feedback from guests praising the cleanliness of the facilities and the smooth operation of the site. Occupancy remained strong throughout the summer, with most weekends fully booked.

A key highlight this year was the introduction of an additional camping plot, which allowed more visitors to use the site, while enhancing the overall layout and atmosphere.

As cabinet member for communities I'm delighted to see that this fabulous community hub continues to be such a success and now features better accessibility too.