

## District Councillor Report

Haseley Brook ward

1<sup>st</sup> April 2026

Cllr Georgina Heritage

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On **local planning matters**, planning application P25/S2747/FUL - **traveller site in Tetsworth** – has been refused. Emma Turner (Enforcement) has confirmed the matter will now be addressed by her team. They need to undertake a site visit to assess the current state of play so that all aspects are covered by any notice served. Once a notice is served there will be a short period of time for the applicants/owner to lodge an appeal. If the appeal is dismissed the clock will start on their compliance with the enforcement notice. Further info can be found on the .Gov website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-effective-enforcement>

An appeal has been lodged against the refusal of planning application P25/S1430/O - **land at Watlington Road Lewknor** (up to 25 homes). I approached the case officer at SODC regarding this appeal for more information. He confirmed the hearing session is likely to take place in Abingdon, and the Inspector for the appeal will have read all the consultation responses submitted as part of the application. They will only require further representations if a consultee has new or further information to submit, or if they have not commented previously.

At the hearing there is likely to be the opportunity to speak, though this is left to the Inspector's discretion. The links below are for guidance, and please get in touch if you have any queries that I might be able to assist with.

- [Procedural Guide for Planning Appeals](#) (Chapters 8 and 10 are most relevant)
- [Guide to taking part in planning appeals proceeding by hearing](#)

Still on planning, further to the recent planning sessions for town and parish councils, there will be an **online forum** on **Tuesday, 21 April 2026, 6pm - 7pm**. The forum will provide an overview of the upcoming changes to the council's Planning and Land Charges systems. I believe the Planning team's sessions are very useful to our town and parish councils, and I hope the online platform might make attendance easier for parish councillors in our part of the district, as I know it's not always easy to get to Didcot or Abingdon, especially for parish councillors with work commitments.

Meetings I've taken part in as part of my cabinet work over the past month have included the Health & Wellbeing Board and the **Southern Oxfordshire Heritage, Culture, and Creative Industries Symposium**. The symposium event was possible through funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England grants. Over 30 people from local museums, theatres, arts groups, heritage organisations, educational institutions and other partner organisations across South and Vale came together to share ideas on improving the arts scene in the districts.

The symposium focused on sharing best practice in audience development and inclusion (presented by guest speakers) and collaboration and partnership working, explored through interactive workshops. Delegates discussed the needs of the sector, shared practical examples from their organisations, and reflected on ways to strengthen cultural partnerships across the districts. It was wonderful to see people coming together again from across the districts. The workshops sparked some really insightful discussions, and it's great to see our creative and cultural community collaborating and supporting one another.

For any organisations interested in learning more about this initiative, the next symposium is likely to be in June, and I would be very happy to be approached with questions and expressions of interest regarding our events.

A little less glamorous but of great importance - March also saw the introduction of 2026's Great British Spring Clean. Like many residents in our ward, I joined a weekend morning **litter pick**, organised by Lewknor Parish Council. In fact as a result of that (fortunately sunny) morning of litter picking, my husband and my District colleague Cllr Ed Sadler were inspired to start meeting regularly to carry out various tidying-up jobs in and around the village (and incidentally, they would love to be joined by other interested residents!). If you'd like to carry out some community litter picking in any of our villages at any time of the year, SODC can provide all the equipment you need and will collect the litter afterwards. You can find out more here:

[Community litter picking – how we can help - South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

On grants, the **Everyone Active Grant** is now open until the budget has been spent, or at midday on Friday 22 May - whichever is sooner. There is £50,000 available, and organisations can apply for grants of up to **£1000** to support projects that make a difference to the physical and mental wellbeing of residents in the district.

Applicants need to show that their projects will help communities to become more active or sustain activity, and the funding can be used in a variety of ways including:

- Buying new leisure or playground equipment
- Projects to introduce or improve physical activity
- Running training courses for volunteers or staff to help improve physical and mental wellbeing
- Setting up a community garden to share the physical and health benefits of growing fruit and vegetables

The scheme is open to not-for-profit groups (including sports clubs and pre-schools), town and parish councils, PTAs, and other local authority run schools or academies for non-statutory elements of the education programme.

More information can be found on the [council's website](#) or organisations can contact the Community Enablement team on 01235 422405 or email [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk) with any questions about the grant and application process.

The consultation on **Local Government Reorganisation** has now closed, and South and Vale's responses were submitted on 26<sup>th</sup> March. The process now moves firmly into the hands of Government, which will consider the responses for all three Oxfordshire proposals before making a decision on the way forward. We expect to hear the outcome in the summer – most likely in July before the parliamentary summer recess.

Finally, SODC and Vale have been working with owners of **empty properties** to understand why their properties are empty and to offer support. Some of these homes are unoccupied for a good reason – such as undergoing major refurbishment or awaiting sale. The councils' work targets those properties that may need some extra help in being brought back into use. The councils offer homeowners information, advice and support to bring their empty properties back into use, including:

- Help to make the property more energy efficient
- Refurbishing the property including VAT reduction for renovation and alteration works
- Additional revenue by renting the property to a tenant in housing need, alongside financial assistance if the property requires minor refurbishment works before being let
- Additional revenue by letting privately
- Selling the property privately, through an estate agent or through auction

Property owners can find out more about the help available and how to report an empty property on the council websites [southoxon.gov.uk/empty-homes](http://southoxon.gov.uk/empty-homes) and [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/empty-homes](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/empty-homes)