

Title	District Councillors' Report to Thame Town Council
Authors	Clrs Pieter-Paul Barker, David Bretherton & Kate Gregory
Date	March 2024

Budget 2024-25

Quality, cost-effective local services, significant support for community projects and investment in local facilities are guaranteed in South Oxfordshire after members voted to approve the 2024-2025 district council budget.

£500,000 will be made available to support community projects, such as to help improve people's quality of life, improve local facilities and increase action on climate change. £60,000 will be made available to support the arts across South Oxfordshire and £405,000 to improve the facilities at Cornerstone Arts Centre.

Thanks to the careful budgeting work and targeted investment in council operations in recent years, the district's financial position remains positive and the council has not made any reductions to services.

This means funding will continue for the council's Community Hub which provides vital support for residents. There is increased funding for homelessness prevention, an expansion of the housing team and continued support for active communities.

The council's capital budget includes significant planned investment in social housing and decarbonisation of leisure centres to reduce energy usage and ongoing costs.

The council tax for 2024/25 has been set at £146.24 for the year for a Band D property. This means residents in South Oxfordshire will continue to pay one of the lowest rates in the country for services provided by a district council, ensuring they receive good value for their money.

Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property Assets at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "Despite the major challenges we continue to face, such as high inflation, the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing economic and political uncertainty, we continue to maintain positive finances and provide quality local services and support for our communities.'

"Following approval of the 2024/25 budget, we can now build on our successes of the last year and help even more people to lead active lives and continue to help those who are struggling financially. We will also continue to work with our partners towards delivering more affordable housing, improved local infrastructure and on local projects that help to reduce emissions and tackle climate change."

"SODC is in a much more positive financial position than many other authorities but we will remain extra vigilant and stay focused on our goal of achieving long-term financial stability."

Title	District Councillors' Report to Thame Town Council
Authors	Clrs Pieter-Paul Barker, David Bretherton & Kate Gregory
Date	March 2024

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Grant Fund

South Oxfordshire District Council has launched a new grant scheme called the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Grant Fund. Town and parish councils and not for profit community groups and organisations can bid for between £75,000 to £250,000 for a wide range of infrastructure needed as a result of population growth in the district.

The council collects CIL funding from developers in order to deliver infrastructure. The pilot scheme helps to fund local organisations to deliver infrastructure for their community required as a result of development.

- The fund is available to town and parish councils and not for profit community groups and organisations only.
- Proposed projects need to have a genuine focus on providing the infrastructure needed as a result of development and must be delivered in the South Oxfordshire District Council area.
- Proposed projects must support the delivery of physical infrastructure. It can be new infrastructure or improve or expand the reach of existing infrastructure. It is not able to cover costs for scoping or pre-planning of projects.
- We will prioritise projects that support our corporate priorities and other key criteria to ensure deliverability, sustainability, inclusivity and climate and ecological impacts.

How to apply: Submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) from week commencing 19 February 2024. The EOI stage will be open for six weeks. Following the EOI process, applicants whose projects meet the funding requirements will be invited to submit a full application.

If you have any questions, please contact infrastructureobligations@southandvale.gov.uk.

Top Recyclers in the Country

Congratulations to our residents in South Oxfordshire, who are officially the best recyclers in the country, according to a government league table published yesterday.

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) officially published the [recycling performance league table](#) on Wednesday 31 January. South Oxfordshire has been in the top 5 for the last five years.

Alongside the high performing collection rates, a recent waste satisfaction survey has yielded encouraging results for the councils' household waste collections, indicating a high level of resident approval with this side of the service. An impressive 82% of respondents expressed satisfaction, or high satisfaction, with the overall quality of the waste and recycling services provided.

Title	District Councillors' Report to Thame Town Council
Authors	Clrs Pieter-Paul Barker, David Bretherton & Kate Gregory
Date	March 2024

Homes for Ukraine Motion

The recent council meeting passed the following motion.

Council notes that:

- South Oxfordshire is a welcoming place for all, including people seeking sanctuary.
- The council is committed to playing its part in supporting people displaced by war and persecution of any background, evidenced by the key role officers and councillors play in coordinating and delivering support in Oxfordshire for people from across the various government schemes.
- South Oxfordshire is home to around 400 Ukrainian refugees who have arrived under the Home for Ukraine, Family and the Ukraine Extension schemes.
- These schemes are temporary for 3 years, sit outside immigration rules, and do not provide a route to settlement.
- Russia's war on Ukraine sadly continues and people's ability to return remains uncertain.
- Thousands of temporary visas are set to expire in 2025 which is already causing problems in terms of securing employment and tenancies. Ukrainian refugees are also unable to plan for the future of their children in terms of education and other commitments, significantly impeding their quality of life and future prospects.

Council Believes that:

- Government needs to urgently remove uncertainty around Ukrainian's ability to make the UK their home
- Ukrainians that come to the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme, Homes for Ukraine, and Ukraine Extension scheme should be able extend their stay and apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (in line with other refugee schemes) with minimum cost and bureaucratic burden on families, hosts and support agencies.

Council resolves to:

- Ask the leader of South Oxfordshire District Council to write to the Minister of State for Immigration to request that Ukrainian refugees are provided with a route to settlement.
- Make information accessible to Ukrainian refugees who are considering their options on the services and support available, and signpost to appropriate (legal) advice.
- Continue to collaborate with Oxfordshire councils, statutory and voluntary sector partners in the development of a strategic approach for supporting people seeking sanctuary from any background which is coherent, effective, and compassionate.