

Title	District Councillors' Report
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The next steps for our Joint Local Plan

Following two hugely successful public consultations which saw the councils (South and Vale) receiving a Highly Commended award at the Planning Resource Awards 2024, we're pleased to set out the next steps for our Joint Local Plan (JLP).

Over the past three years, we've been working positively on a plan that meets the needs for homes and infrastructure for our communities and delivers on our commitment to tackling the climate emergency and recovery of nature. We've had a hugely positive response from our communities and local businesses to our proposals and we're nearly ready to submit our plan to be examined – in fact we anticipate being ready to submit in December 2024, four months earlier than we previously thought.

Updated Local Development Scheme

In line with the delegation from Full Council meetings in March 2021, officers have therefore updated a document known as our Local Development Scheme that sets out the timetable we will follow for this work, which is now published: [South LDS](#)

Council Plan timelines (formerly the Corporate Plan)

We have also been in the process of developing our new corporate plans for SODC, which is renewed and updated every 4 years. This work is now likely to extend into early 2025 and will therefore be better aligned with budget setting.

Market House update

The refurbishment works at Market House (toilets replacement and window frames) have been pushed to next year due to building survey concerns about a cracked pillar in the basement. Additional investigation was required and fortunately has concluded that the pillar is sound.

Funding available for community projects in South Oxfordshire

Community groups in South Oxfordshire are invited to apply for funding in the new round of Community Grants. We have a budget of £15,000 to award to projects in Thame. Those eligible to apply include town councils, not for profit preschools and PTAs and local not for profit organisations.

The minimum grant that can be applied for is £250 and the maximum is £5,000 for each councillor. Applicants can apply to a maximum of five wards.

Applicants are asked to consider the Council's key priorities and how their projects would support them. For example: "Protect and restore our natural world and improve economic and community wellbeing".

The deadline for applications is **midday Friday 29 November 2024**.

There are more details about who is eligible to apply, what kind of projects can be funded and the decision process on [the grants pages of the South Oxfordshire District Council website](#) or organisations can contact the Community Enablement team grants@southandvale.gov.uk.

Councils purchase 45 Homes for people in need

A new era for genuinely affordable, high-quality, council-owned housing has begun in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse. It is over 20 years since the last council houses were sold in the districts, and house prices and rents have since spiralled. Now South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are tackling the problem head-on.

The first of 45 homes being purchased and refurbished for those in the highest level of housing need are now ready for people to move in as phase one of the councils' drive to become long-term social landlords for local residents.

Once purchases are completed on the homes (27 in South Oxfordshire, 18 in the Vale) they are then renovated and furnished ready to become a stable home for as long as people need them.

This move has been largely funded by immediately available grants that are intended to initially support those in high housing need, including families fleeing conflict in places such as Ukraine and Afghanistan, and can then be used to support long-term housing need in the local community.

In the longer-term, these properties will support the councils' Housing Delivery Strategy to provide access to suitable, affordable homes for local people. This will help the councils address a long-term issue of the availability of affordable housing for people in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse – which are expensive places to rent or buy on the open market.

You can view a video of one of the new homes here:

- [South Oxfordshire Housing](#)

SODC joins UK100

SODC's ambitious plans to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions took a step forward after the council joined UK100 – the network of local authorities committed to taking progressive climate action. Members of UK100 share best practice and details of successful projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards net zero.

The council is determined in its plans to tackle climate change and has already made great strides, as it...

- buys electricity for its buildings (such as council offices and its arts centre) that is from 100 per cent renewable energy sources;
- has a programme of installing solar panels and air source heat pumps at its leisure centres in Didcot, Thame and Wheatley and its arts centre, Cornerstone, enabled by various funding sources including the council's budget, the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and Swimming Pool Support Fund;
- had 62 EV chargers installed at its car parks;
- has ordered an electric food truck for the waste collections fleet;
- has given grants for many community climate projects through its [grants programme](#);
- has supported cultural organisations with their climate change ambitions by supporting Green Arts Oxfordshire and its carbon literacy training programme.