

<b>Title</b>	District Councillors' Report to Thame Town Council
<b>Authors</b>	Clrs Pieter-Paul Barker, David Bretherton & Kate Gregory
<b>Date</b>	March 2025

## **Budget 2025-26**

Diligent financial management has ensured that South Oxfordshire District Council can deliver a balanced budget for 2025-26 and marks the first time in nine years that the council has not needed to transfer funds from reserves.

Major funding will be made available to support the purchase of more affordable housing across South Oxfordshire. Having already committed £10 million to provide more safe, secure and compliant housing, purchased under the Local Authority Housing Funding (LAHF) schemes, the district council has now committed to make a further £10 million available to support the council's long-term ambitions to meet local housing need.

The budget also includes funding to secure the future of the council's Community Hub on an ongoing basis. This valued service provides practical support and advice for those with cost-of-living concerns or who are finding life difficult.

Since launching in 2020, the Community Hub has supported thousands of residents across the district and provided more than £800,000 in vouchers and grants to households experiencing financial hardship. This has ensured people were able to pay vital energy bills and afford household essentials and food. A further £200,000 has been awarded to local voluntary and community organisations, helping them continue their invaluable support provided to residents.

The councillor grant budget will increase by 50%, to £7,500 per councillor while the Capital and Revenue grant schemes for voluntary organisations will continue.

The council will continue to fund an ongoing programme to improve leisure centres, including major decarbonisation & refurbishment projects at Thame Leisure Centre, such as solar panels, a sauna and gym equipment replacement. TLC opening hours will be maintained despite the high cost of energy, which renewables will help with.

Council tax for services provided by South Oxfordshire District Council will be set at £151.24 for a Band D property. This means just £2.91 per week for a wide range of services including waste and recycling collections, community support, leisure services, parks and play areas, housing and planning services, environmental health and licensing.

South Oxfordshire District Council receives 6% of the total council tax to be paid in Thame. The rest is divided between Oxfordshire County Council (75%), the Police Precept (11%) and Thame Town Council (8%).

Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property Assets at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "Despite significant economic uncertainty, we've shown resilience and responsibility in navigating the challenges facing local government and have worked hard to maintain our strong financial position."

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### Councillor Grants awarded

The SODC cllr grants for 2024-25 have now all been awarded. We made the decisions jointly with £5,000 each to award for a total of £15,000. The total applications were over £30,000, so tough choices had to be made. We are pleased to be able to fund 9 fantastic projects which will make a positive difference in Thame.

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Total Awarded</b>
Thame Players Theatre Company	Scaffolding and Tiling to Facilitate Solar Panels Installation	£ 4,500
MP Sports Development Trust	Badminton Tournament & Diving Catches in the Swimming Pool	£ 834
Citizens Advice South Oxfordshire	Specialised Training for Staff and Volunteers	£ 500
Thame Museum	Commemorative Blue Plaque for Johnny Smythe in Thame	£ 1,456
At The Bus	At the Bus	£ 1,800
Red Kite Family Centre	Thame ward - Accessibility equipment refurbishment.	£ 1,800
THAME COMMUNITY PRIDE	Thame Pride 2025	£ 1,500
Thame Youth Projects Group	TYP Takeover!	£ 1,800
21st Century Thame	Engaging and empowering children & youth on climate change	£ 800
<b>Totals</b>		<b>£ 15,000</b>

### Market House Refurbishment

The project started on 9<sup>th</sup> February and will take around 4 months to complete. The window frames of the listed building will be replaced and the old toilets will be completely replaced.

### Latest on new Local Plan 2026-2041

The new Local Plan has successfully completed all consultation stages and is now with a Planning Inspector. A list of 75 initial questions has been sent to SODC and later this year public hearings will be held.

### Local Government Reorganisation

The Government plans to abolish all county and district councils and replace them with new unitary councils. SODC is exploring two options – a single council for Oxfordshire and a combined council with Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire. The timing is unknown.