

District Councillor Update: Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers

Ward member for Goring and South Stoke

Dec 23/Jan 2024



Dear Goring and South Stoke parish councillors and residents,

I hope you have all managed to have a restful and joyful Christmas and New Years celebrations. 2023 was a tough year for many with Covid very much still around, with significant inflationary pressures on household and businesses, with rising mortgages and rents, and higher demand for public services. Sadly, the start of 2024 has also been difficult with many impacted by the ongoing widespread flooding. I do hope that river levels will start to recede soon, but in the meantime please stay safe and let me know if I can support in any way.

Contact details for support and further information:

The main helpline for people to call for advice, guidance and support related to flooding is: 0345 988 1188. This is the Environment Agency's 24/7 flooding support line.

If it's an emergency and somebody is in danger, residents should **call 999**.

Full details of flooding advice and guidance:

- [The county council's regularly updated flooding information page](#) – this contains all the links and advice residents should need.
- [The county council's Flooding Toolkit](#) (which our districts part-funded)
 - [What to do if you're flooding](#)
- The Environment Agency's flooding helpline (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
 - Telephone: 0345 988 1188
 - Textphone: 0345 602 6340
- If it's a flooding emergency you should focus on the safety of yourself and your family. **Dial 999 if it is an emergency** and you or someone else is in danger.

Please see below my latest set of updates.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

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Preparation is underway for the next stage of South & Vale's Joint Local Plan

A preview of the Joint Local Plan consultation materials is available on both the [South Oxfordshire District Council website](#) and the [Vale of White Horse District Council website](#)

Innovative new planning policies to help South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse reach full potential and address challenges we face, are on the local agenda – and you'll soon be able to have your say.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are preparing to launch a second round of consultation early this year to develop our new Joint Local Plan to 2041.

The Joint Local Plan will help the councils determine planning applications, set out how and where new housing developments should take place, set standards for developments such as carbon and energy efficiency requirements, and guide what infrastructure is needed across the districts.

The next public consultation will ask for people's thoughts on proposed approaches across various policy areas, from reducing carbon emissions and nature recovery, to protecting and enhancing local heritage, meeting community infrastructure and transport needs, affordable housing, jobs and economic opportunities, and more. New policy areas which previous local plans haven't covered include policies to protect valued landscapes, tranquil places and dark skies.

Backed by extensive feedback gathered in 2022, as well as a suite of new studies and the latest industry research, the councils are proposing to reduce the number of new houses needed each year, improve minimum standards for water and energy efficiency, increase biodiversity and the number of affordable houses developments need to deliver, and more.

The first Joint Local Plan consultation received over 2,500 responses through a new interactive platform, for which the councils were announced a finalist in a national award for creating an interactive, digital-first approach in planning.

This innovation will continue in the new consultation, where the councils will be using a new digital engagement platform for people to read easy-to-understand summaries and share their feedback, or delve into the details of the draft policies. This will be as well as holding events and providing paper copies in libraries for those who prefer to get involved in more traditional formats.

The next consultation is scheduled to launch to the public in January 2024.

A direct link to the Joint Local Plan Consultation document is <https://jlp.southandvale.gov.uk/>

A direct link to the Emerging Policies Map is <https://jlp.southandvale.gov.uk/pages/policies-map>

Neighbourhood planning resources

Last year we delivered an online presentation on neighbourhood planning for Town and Parish councils. If you have missed the presentation, it is available to watch [here](#), alongside further useful information on the value of neighbourhood planning and what support is available

Do you know of local businesses aiming to go green?

We've teamed up with Oxford Brookes Business School to better understand the challenges faced by organisations in becoming more environmentally friendly. They have developed a short survey aimed at businesses to gather information on this subject. The council has been allocated UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) for 2024/25 to help businesses become more sustainable, so feedback from this survey will be important in allowing the team to target that funding where it's most needed. [Please take part or share the survey](#) (it takes around 15 minute to complete).

Grants available now to help look after local green spaces

If you know a local volunteer group or organisation helping nature, they could be eligible for funding from us. We've teamed up with [Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment](#) (TOE) to help communities protect and enhance their local green spaces and improve access for residents to benefit from being in nature. The next grant application deadline is midday 8 January 2024. If you've got an idea and want to give your project a boost, we recommend you have a quick chat with TOE before applying. Contact Rachel on admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk The grant will open quarterly so don't worry if you don't manage the Jan deadline.

Grant scheme for people without gas boilers

Do you know of residents in properties without gas boilers? The good news is that they may be eligible for energy efficiency upgrades for their home, such as insulation, solar panels and heat pumps, all funded by the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2). These upgrades can help to reduce energy bills and make homes easier to keep warm. **The grants are available to homeowners and**

landlords whose properties are not heated by gas boilers, with a household income of less than £39,000 and with a low energy rating (D-G). Spread the word and ask people to visit welcomethewarmth.org.uk to find out more.

Cost of Living Support for residents via the SODC Community Hub

Support is available through the councils' Community Hub. If you need support, call our friendly Community Hub Team during office hours on 01235 422600 (option 3) or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

Affordable housing grant to help address urgent need

More affordable, energy efficient homes will be built in South Oxfordshire thanks to a new improved grant process. As part of the district council's work to help meet the urgent need for genuinely affordable housing in the region, local developers, Community Land Trusts and self-builders can apply for a Section 106 **affordable housing grant to build affordable homes that meet the councils' climate criteria.**

The council approved an improvement to the existing affordable housing policy to enable funds from Section 106 developer contributions to be used as a grant to build affordable homes that are energy efficient and cheaper for residents to live in and heat. The policy includes a revamped application process which includes clear evaluation guidelines and free expert consultation services for applicants who would like additional guidance.

The new application form now includes questions which determine how projects will minimise energy use and carbon emissions, as well as how they have identified locally appropriate species and set up long term management plans if they are adding tree planting and biodiversity improvements.

For more information and the application forms, please visit – [the South Oxfordshire affordable housing page](#).

Police and Crime Commissioner Tax Survey

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley is asking residents about which areas they would like the policing element of council tax to be focused on in the 2024/25 budget. Please do share [this survey with residents](#) . By completing it residents will also have the opportunity to share their experiences and have a say in how policing services are shaped across the Thames Valley.

Free carbon Emissions calculator tool

We've launched a free simple-to-use carbon emissions calculator tool for town and parish councils to measure their current carbon emissions using energy and fuel bills. It makes it easy to work out where carbon and cost savings can be made.

For more information, email climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk