

District Councillor Update: **Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers**

Ward member for Goring and South Stoke

**July/August 2024**



Dear Goring and South Stoke residents,

I am thrilled that **Freddie Van Mierlo** has been elected as your Member of Parliament during the recent general election. Some of you know Freddie as a district and county councillor for Watlington and may have read his reports. He is currently in the process of induction and will be setting up his constituency office very soon. If you have any case work for him please contact him at [freddie.vanmierlo.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:freddie.vanmierlo.mp@parliament.uk). Join me in wishing him all the very best in his new role!

### **1. New Government Plans**

With a new government come many changes, many of which will have an impact on Local Authorities. There are currently 2 key changes that SODC is busy digesting.

- Devolution
- Planning Changes

I will make sure to keep you up to date with impact and how we are planning to respond.

### **2. SODC become a Social Landlord for the first time in decades**

As Cabinet member for Housing I am thrilled to share with you that SODC is now a registered provider of social homes for the first time since 1997.

Thanks to a significant amount of hard work and dedication, a major project led by our Housing team we can provide genuinely affordable, high-quality, and energy efficient homes to people in need. We're launching 27 refurbished homes ready for people living in South Oxfordshire who need them most. A mixture of houses and flats, including new combi-boilers and double glazing to make these homes as energy efficient as possible. The homes are part of our wider work to support the council Housing Delivery Strategy. Take a look at these [infographics](#) that highlight some of the key achievements and plans our teams have put in place to provide affordable, sustainable homes and

prevent homelessness in the districts. You can find out more in the campaign [press release](#). Watch the videos of two of the [new homes](#).

### **3. Climate community energy projects grant scheme**

Energy company Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) is inviting applications to its new Powering Communities to Net Zero fund before 5pm on Saturday 31 August 2024.

There are two categories – grants of up to £15,000 to enable communities to bolster physical and environmental resilience measures and grants of up to £20,000 for low carbon technology projects such as EV chargers, solar panels, battery storage, low carbon heating systems, smart heating controls, or other general energy efficiency measures. Please share this news as the deadline is the end of this month.

### **4. Councillor Grant Scheme**

A reminder that the 2024/25 Councillor Community Grant Scheme will be opening on the 14<sup>th</sup> August. Funds can be used to support local 'not for profit' organisations whose work benefits residents, including town and parish councils. **Please let me know if you are hoping to submit an application.**

The funding is ideal for projects which are relatively low in costs and are expected to be completed within a year. They start at £250 with a £5,000 upper limit per ward member. The total project cost of applications for capital projects must be £15,000 or less, (eligible revenue projects have no such maximum).

For more information, please look at the [Councillor Community Grant Scheme policy](#) to familiarise yourself following the recent policy updates.

If you have any questions email [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk).

### **5. New safer cycling map**

Cycling UK Oxfordshire has recently launched the Oxfordshire [Online Cycling Map](#) - showing the best routes for new or inexperienced cyclists.

The map was created by campaign groups and experienced cyclists including South Oxfordshire's cycling champion, Cllr Andrea Powell, aiming to encourage less confident, novice, and young cyclists to understand how they can cycle safely around their towns, villages, and communities, and to give more experienced cyclists new routes to try.

### **6. New Energy Saver App**

Residents can reduce their energy bills with help from the [Energy Saver App](#) from Oxfordshire County Council. This free mobile app uses technology to analyse individual home energy usage data and the app provides personalised insights to help people use less energy, save money on bills and reduce emissions. Please help spread the word.

## **7. Grants to support decarbonisation of businesses and organizations to launch in Sept**

This scheme will provide capital funding to:

- Support implementation of decarbonisation activities, including purchase of equipment, premises adaptations and establishment of net-zero infrastructure
- Support businesses to lower greenhouse gas emissions and adopt new processes and / or technologies.

Projects must take place in South Oxfordshire and must be completed by 31 March 2025. Projects must evidence how funding would be used to help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to what extent emissions would be reduced (by kilo, or tonne) Applicants can apply online through the [council's website](#), where full guidance is available to help the applicant submit the best possible application

## **8. SODC Capital Grants Scheme- Closes midday 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept**

Voluntary and community organisations can now apply for up to £75,000 in funding for projects that help improve people's quality of life. We've opened the 2024/25 round of the Capital Grant scheme with a total budget available of £320,000 to award for capital projects that:

- improve economic and community well-being
- provide infrastructure that meets local need
- protect and restore our natural world
- take action on the climate emergency

Organisations can request a minimum of £5,000 and a maximum of £75,000 but no more than 50 per cent of their total project costs – with a total project value of at least £10,000. Please do help share our social media messages with your voluntary sector and community contacts. [See our grants web page](#) for full details and application information.

## **9. OCC Climate Action Survey: Knowledge, Attitude and Practices**

Oxfordshire County Council has devised a survey to determine people's attitudes towards all things related to climate. They want to know what people think, what actions they have taken (if any) and what they plan to do (or not). They want to hear from individuals, businesses, organisations, community groups and town and parish councils. Please [take part in the survey](#) and help share: Climate survey: Knowledge, Attitude and Practices

## **10. Visitor economy research and support**

We have been working with Tourism South-East (TSE) on a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funded project to update our understanding of the local visitor economy. You can view the baseline evidence [report here](#).

Across South and Vale districts, the sector supports over 7,000 jobs, hosts more than 600 “products” (from museums to restaurants to vineyards) and generates over £419m for the wider economy.

Based on the research findings, we are using additional UKSPF funding to support the visitor economy over the remainder of the programme (to 31 March 2025), through the delivery of a series of workshops for businesses in the sector and reinvigorating the Visit Southern Oxfordshire brand to improve promotion of local events around the districts.

### **11. Digital Infrastructure Oxfordshire county Council**

Oxfordshire County Council’s Digital Infrastructure website has recently undergone a significant upgrade. The website now includes fresh content and an enhanced user experience. It showcases the varied and exciting work the Digital Infrastructure Programme team do to improve digital infrastructure for residents and businesses across the county.

You can view the Digital Infrastructure Oxfordshire website [here](#).

### **12. Small & Mighty Enterprise Programme**

Small Business Britain is delivering the Small & Mighty Enterprise Programme to help grow small businesses, with expert guidance and mentoring starting on 25 September. This CPD certified six-week programme will be delivered entirely online, concluding with a growth plan to support the next year of business opportunity.

The course includes:

- Live weekly sessions recorded and available on a private Small Business Britain website
- Weekly worksheets to embed learning outcomes, accessible on the private website hub
- Development of an Action Plan: a twelve-month plan to grow and flourish, with support of expert mentors
- 1 hour of 1-2-1 and group mentoring over the six weeks from expert mentors around the UK
- An exclusive, supportive community to ask and answer questions, access experts and teachers, share experiences and network with other small businesses.

The programme will begin on 25 September and conclude on 30 October 2024. Register for the programme via the [dedicated webpage](#).

### **13. Oxfordshire County Council Tree and woodland project**

Oxfordshire County Council wants to hear your ideas for turning local land into a community orchard or other tree planting projects. Your project doesn’t have to be large or complex, it could just be a few trees to enhance your local area – as long it has clear benefits to people and nature.

The county council can help with funding and provide support to get it off the ground. So, if you have an idea, tell them about it!

For more information, visit the [Climate Action Oxfordshire website](#)

Sincerely,

CLlr Maggie Filipova-Rivers