

District Councillor Update: Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers

Ward member for Goring and South Stoke

Jan 2026



Dear Goring and South Stoke parish councillors and residents,

Please see below my latest set of updates. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

1. SODC Budget Update

SODC has been busy with its budget preparations for 26/27 financial year. Under the Government's Fair Funding Review, the council is assessed as having a lower level of funding need than in previous years, which would normally result in a reduction in income. However, it is currently protected by the government 'funding floor', meaning transitional protection is applied so that core funding (government grant and council tax) does not fall below 2025/26 levels in the short term. This protection, alongside strong investment income, allows the council to set a balanced budget for now. Looking ahead, the position becomes more challenging: the funding floor is temporary, and the Medium-Term Financial Plan shows that once this protection ends the council becomes increasingly reliant on reserves from 2028/29 onwards.

For the upcoming FY it is fair to say that SODC is in an enviable position, with no proposed cuts. Councillors will consider a number of revenue and capital growth bids as part of upcoming sctutiy, cabinet and full council meetings.

2. Joint Local Plan Update

A procedural meeting will be held on **Thursday 12th February 2026 in Meeting Room 1 of Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE commencing at noon**. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the way forward for the Examination in light of recent announcements surrounding the Duty to Co-operate. The Inspectors have provided a Note and Agenda for the meeting ([ID14](#)). Participation will be limited to the Inspectors and the Councils although interested parties are welcome to attend and observe should they wish to do so. The room will be limited in capacity, however it is intended that the

meeting will be live streamed and these details will be released closer to the date on this Examination webpage.

3. Government proposed changes to planning processes

The Government is seeking views on proposals for a [revised National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\) and other changes to the planning system](#).

SODC will be running an event for Town and Parish Councils on **Tuesday 3 March, 6:00pm – 7:30pm at Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot, OX11 7NE**

In addition to an introduction about current planning reforms, JLP and an update about our new planning IT system, there will be workshop sessions based around the following topic areas:

- Commenting on planning applications
- Enforcement
- Biodiversity
- General planning queries / questions

4. SODC is officially Disability Confident!

Following an independent assessment and validation process with the Department for Work and Pensions, we are delighted to confirm that the councils have achieved the Level 3 Disability Confident Leader status! The Level 3 status is the highest available within the scheme, reflecting the councils' continued commitment to equality and our inclusive values.

This achievement also reflects the huge efforts of the People and Culture Team and SMT, who were praised by the external validator for their enthusiasm, commitment and high level of expertise. We've updated our website and letter headings to reflect this achievement.

5. Consultation: Private estate management arrangements

The UK Government consultation published on **18 December 2025** seeks views on how to reduce the prevalence of private estate management arrangements on housing estates in England, where communal infrastructure (like roads, green spaces and drainage) is maintained privately rather than being adopted by public authorities, leading to unfair charges and limited homeowner protections. It proposes measures to increase public adoption of estate amenities, introduce common standards, consider mandatory adoption for some infrastructure, remove financial incentives for non-adoption, and improve transparency and data on estate management arrangements, while inviting

evidence on impacts for homeowners, developers, local authorities and management companies; [the consultation is open until 11:59 pm on 12 March 2026](#).

Residents affected by private estate management charges are strongly encouraged to respond to this consultation, as it is a key opportunity to share real-world experiences and help shape reforms that could improve long-term protections for homeowners.

6. South Oxfordshire District Council withdraws from X over safeguarding concerns

SODC has decided to remove its profile from the social media platform X following recent incidents involving the platform's integrated AI tool, Grok, which has been used to generate and share harmful content considered unacceptable and inconsistent with the council's values. The council had already significantly reduced its use of X due to its declining effectiveness in engaging local communities, but safeguarding concerns, particularly for women and children, prompted a complete withdrawal. Residents will continue to receive council updates through alternative channels including Facebook, Instagram, Threads, BlueSky, Nextdoor and WhatsApp, as well as via the council's website, email newsletters and local press and broadcast media, while SODC continues to explore new and emerging ways to communicate important service information.

7. Statement by SODC on Fair Treatment and Community Cohesion

We condemn all intimidation, violence or harassment of minority groups in South Oxfordshire. We continue to stand in solidarity with everyone who has made South Oxfordshire their home. Misinformation and the fear, suspicion, and intolerance that it generates must be challenged. We are a cohesive and welcoming district, and we will use all our influence and power to challenge any attempts to intimidate any minority group in our district.

Building healthy, safe, and resilient communities are key priorities for our area. We will stand up to intolerant attitudes and behaviours - to stop their deeply harmful impact. Fair treatment is embedded in the design and delivery of our services. This is reflected in how we allocate social housing, support residents facing financial difficulties, include and enable people with disabilities, work to ensure the safety of everyone, value and support our LGBTQ+ community, and ensure that people of migrant background are treated equitably and with respect. We do this not only because we have a legal duty, but because we recognise our moral responsibility to treat all residents fairly.

Working closely with our partners, from our work as part of the Community Safety Partnership to address crime and protect vulnerable people, to our proactive role in the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership, we continue to mitigate the impact of increasing hostility toward individuals and families who are simply trying to live their lives. The

statement follows the passing of the [‘Fair treatment and cohesion’ motion](#) at Council on Thursday 23 October.

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council said:

“These are difficult times for many. When the cost of living is rising, access to basic services feels harder, and politics seems broken, it becomes easy to look for someone to blame. But punching down at vulnerable communities will not fix any of this.

“Let us recognise that we’re actually on the same team. It will take all of us to ensure we have services and a district that works for everyone. One that supports opportunity, dignity and fairness for every person who calls this place home. This is the South Oxfordshire I believe in, the Britain that I love.

“As this council’s first leader of migrant background, I know firsthand the damaging impact that misinformation and intolerance have on individuals and communities, and it must stop. Each and every one of us who has made South Oxfordshire our home is welcome here and valued. We cannot, and must not, allow bad-faith actors to divide us.”

8. Waste and Recycling Guides

New easy-to-read guides are available to help residents with waste and recycling, including bin usage, missed collections, and waste reduction. Paper copies will be provided to new homes. Guides are available for [houses with wheelie bins](#) and [flats/communal bins](#).

9. Town and Parish Council Support

South Oxfordshire District Council is highlighting the growing role of town and parish councils in local climate and nature action, pointing to tools such as a free carbon-emissions calculator, thermal-imaging camera loans, grant funding for community projects, and guidance on improving energy efficiency and managing green spaces. The council notes that many local bodies are already reducing their own emissions, preparing for extreme weather, and developing neighbourhood and nature-recovery plans, reflecting a wider shift toward community-led responses to environmental challenges.

See new [resource pages](#)

10. Energy Saving Measures

Updated [energy saving leaflets](#) provide guidance on insulation, air source heat pumps, and funding options including the Warm Homes Grant. For more information please visit our [website](#).

11. Pollutant levels fall by half at a site previously identified as having air quality issues

Air quality has improved significantly at several former pollution hotspots in South Oxfordshire, with nitrogen dioxide levels **falling by around 54% in Watlington** and **31% in Henley** since they were first identified as problem areas, and **Wallingford** already seeing its Air Quality Management Area revoked in December 2024. Monitoring over the past five years shows steady reductions in traffic-related pollution across all three locations, meaning Henley and Watlington have now also met national air quality targets and will have their AQMAs removed in line with government guidance. The improvements reflect cleaner vehicle technologies and more electric cars on the road, and the council will continue to keep a close eye on air quality while encouraging walking, cycling, public transport and low-emission vehicles.

Air quality throughout the districts will continue to be monitored by the council's Environmental Protection Team through the existing diffusion tubes and analysers and the results will be available on the Oxfordshire-wide air quality website [oxonair.uk](https://www.oxonair.uk)

12. Election Timetable Clarification

South Oxfordshire District Council elections **are not** affected by the election postponements set out in the [Written Ministerial Statement](#), and will still take place in 2027, in line with the normal elections timetable.

The 2027 elections will be for the new shadow authority, which will operate alongside the existing district and county councils during the one year transition period. **In 2028**, once the new unitary authority (or authorities) formally goes live, the current district and county councils will be dissolved.

13. Jan Casework

Date	Description	Action Taken	Response	Status
08/12/2025	Flooding South Stoke (Facebook)	OCC contacted, SODC contacted	Meeting with SODC drainage engineers 20 th Jan. The meeting has result in various activities. The flooding by the junction has been helped by drain clearance, but more needs to be done to restore a functional drainage in the village	Ongoing
03/12/2025	Concerns about Booking System raised by several residents	Asked for an FAQ to be produced, pushed for a review after Redbridge reopening	FAQ produced, review will take place. SODC will monitor fly tipping rates	Resolved

22/01/26	Dog Fouling Problem, Goring	Requested info from Cab member	Information on penalties sent to resident	Resolved
17/01/26	Street Cleaning-Ikneild Road	Requested info from officer and cab member	Street Cleaning form sent to resident	Resolved
06/01/26	Conflicting social housing advice, Goring	Requested clarification and support from housing team		Ongoing
10/01/26	Additional Funding for Goring Library	Support with request	In proposed Budget, pending approval on 10 th Feb	Ongoing
22/01/26	Additional funding for Goring Toilets	Support with request	In proposed budget, pending approval 12 th Feb	Ongoing
06/01/26	Enforcement Issues arising from Whitehills G&T site	Correspondance with residents and officers	In discussion with SODC officers to clarify the function to T&P and see if it can be reviewed following NPPF changes on intetional unauthorised developments	Ongoing
23/01/26	Councillor Grant Final list of eligible apps	Chased grants officers with the final list of apps so that I can approve	Waiting to hear back	Ongoing
19/01/26	Noise Complaint from building works on a weekend, Goring	Checked planning approval, and encouraged resident to make a complaint via EH	Information sent to residents	Resolved
14/01/26	Complaint about SOHA	Asked officers to check if SODC can help residents	Advice Sent to resident	Resolved
13/01/26	SS Burial Ground Planning App	Supported applicants with an extension to address EA objections	Extension granted	Resolved
13/01/26	Goring Nature Trails	Supported PC with request	Walkaround being organised SODC active communities	Ongoing
05/01/26	Travel Hospital for disabled residents	Signposting to support		Resolved
06/01/26	Election Clarification	Several residents reached out to request clarification, Info provided, added to socials and DC update	No change to SO election timetable, the next local elections will take place in 2027 as per the normal schedule	Resolved

Useful South Links

- [Calendar of South committee meetings](#)
- [Recent planning applications lodged](#)
- [Planning appeals lodged](#)
- [Planning appeals decided](#)
- [Tree works](#)