

## BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Binfield Heath Parish Council Meeting held on Monday January 25<sup>th</sup> 2021 at 6.30pm by Zoom

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Meeting of the Recreation Ground Charities & Allotment for the Labouring Poor Charity  
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#### **01/21 Recreation Ground**

26.01/21 The monthly inspection has been carried out. There were no issues to report.

23.02/21 Blue bags have been purchased and are being collected.

**02/21 Allotments** Nothing to report.

**03/21 Public Forum** No public questions.

#### **The meeting of the Parish Council**

**Present** Cllr P Rollason, Cllr L Ransom, Cllr S Summerland, Cllr H Lacey, Cllr Sarah Fulton-Urry and Cllr K Maher. Cllr D Bartholomew (OCC), Cllr L Rawlins (SODC), four members of the public and Robyn Tobutt from SODC to talk about a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Chairman welcomed Robyn Tobutt and the residents present to the meeting.

**001/21 Neighbourhood Plan** The Chairman explained to Robyn the need for some advice as to the best way to engage interest from the residents in producing a Neighbourhood Plan. He explained that the Councillors wished to send out a carefully prepared questionnaire to all village residents. The PC felt that they needed about 10 committed residents to form a steering group. Robyn agreed that that number was reasonable and that one or two Councillors would need to be on board as the PC is the body ultimately responsible. She was asked how much of the parish are expected to respond to the referendum. There is no threshold or minimum number. There is no model questionnaire available but help is available. The Village already has a Community Led Plan and Robyn agreed that it would be a good starting point but might need extending and bringing up to date. She concluded by saying that a Neighbourhood Plan can just involve one policy and not everything. She will forward a link to some examples to the Clerk.

**002/21 Public Forum** There was discussion about the design aspect being a possible idea to take forward to avoid the character of the village being changed. A Character Assessment would assist with this. It was also pointed out that one of the features of Binfield Heath is the green spaces that exist and need to be preserved. As Binfield Heath is a smaller village there is no need to allocate sites for development.

Robyn was thanked for joining the meeting and for her contribution. She left the meeting.

**003/21 County Councillor's report** Cllr Bartholomew's full report is attached to the minutes. On some local matters he said that he had concerns about the suggested banning of HGVs from Henley leading to lorries going through local villages. A flood risk assessment is now expected for the Thames Farm application. Light pollution outside Bremont may be a concern to Councillors.

**004/21 District Councillor's report** Cllr Rawlins introduced his report. His full report is attached to these minutes.

**005/21 Apologies for absence** None

**006/21 Declarations of Interest** None

**007/21 Minutes of the meeting held on** Monday November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020. Cllr Summerland proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Fulton-Urry. All agreed.

**008/21 Matters Arising** None

**009/21 Financial Situation**

009.01/21 The financial position was circulated.

009.02/21 The January accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £767.90 were authorised for payment mostly by BACS. These payments were proposed by Cllr Summerland and seconded by Cllr Fulton-Urry. All agreed. **(Clerk to action)**

009.03/21 Councillor expenses None this month

## **010/21 Planning Matters**

***New Applications*** None

***Applications Granted***

P20/S3092/FUL Erection of a new detached cottage with garage accommodation. (As amended by plans received 12 October 2020 to move the property further east and north and reduce size) (Revised by plans received 11 November 2020 to correct exact locations of trees on site and to more accurately show the existing access to The Willows) The Willows Kiln Lane Binfield Heath RG9 4EJ  
P20/S3828/FUL Proposed demolition of existing single storey dwelling and adjoining store and erection of a replacement three-bedroom dwelling house with associated amenity space and parking provision. The Log Cabin, Kiln House Kiln Lane Binfield Heath RG9 4ES  
The Clerk was asked about the Oak House application submitted last summer. **(Clerk to action)**

## **011/21 Community Matters**

011.01/21 Simon Beddows is very concerned about the incorrect use of footpaths by the public who have been walking over farmland avoiding the mud that has accumulated through frequent use. Footpaths have been widened and crops have been damaged. A message has been placed on the website.

011.02/21 The Clerk was asked to contact Shiplake School to ask if the Parish Council could give any financial assistance with 'electronic devices' for children who have no access to the internet. **(Clerk to action)**

**012/21 Highways/Transport and General Maintenance** Nothing to report

**013/21 Insurance Renewal assessment** There were some questions from the Insurance Company that needed confirmation. The goal posts need to be added as Sports Equipment. The Councillors also discussed whether there was enough cover for the street furniture that included Keeps Well. The Clerk was asked to check all this with Came & Co. **(Clerk to action)**

**014/21 Standing Orders** The model standing orders had been sent to Clerks to adapt for their PC's. The Clerk had made some corrections and selected the applicable options. Cllr Lacey had made various suggestions and these had been followed. The Councillors had read the document prior to the meeting. Cllr Lacey proposed its adoption. This was seconded by Cllr Rollason. All agreed. The Clerk will add one copy to the files and send a copy to each of the Councillors. **(Clerk to action)**

**015/21 Neighbourhood Watch** Nothing to report

**016/21 Website Compliance** The website needs to become compliant with regulations. The Clerk was asked to check with Mark Dodson to see if he is able to undertake the task. **(Clerk to action)**

**017/21 Matters for future consideration** Neighbourhood Plan; defibrillator.

The meeting finished at 8.16pm

**Date of next meeting: Monday February 21<sup>st</sup> 2021**

## **REPORT TO BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL JAN 2021**

### **FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW**

#### **GENERAL OCC REPORT**

#### **KEEP TO TIER 4 DISCIPLINES IN 2021 AS CASES CONTINUE TO RISE**

Steep rises in COVID-19 cases in Oxfordshire have continued with people being strongly urged enter the New Year strictly abiding by the new tier 4 level of restrictions that came in to force on Boxing Day. Tier 4 is the highest alert level in the national four-tier system, and it means that Oxfordshire residents must stay at home, except for a limited number of purposes. These include essential work that cannot be done from home, buying food, taking exercise, or getting medical treatment. In tier 4, you cannot meet other people socially indoors, unless you live with them or are part of a support bubble. The latest data shows that the virus is continuing to spread rapidly in the county. The weekly rate currently stands at 338.2 per 100,000. The rise is particularly concerning among the over 60s, where cases are continuing to rise in all parts of the county. Hospital admissions are increasing rapidly as a result.

#### **RIVER LEVELS IN OXFORDSHIRE AND GRITTING UPDATES**

Heavy rain over Christmas means that high river levels remain in Oxfordshire even though drier and much colder weather has predominated since December 27. Motorists are advised not to attempt to drive through any remaining floodwater as they run the risk of becoming stranded. There is also

advice to take care on roads in freezing temperatures and when there is fog. Flood water is not clean and not suitable for children to play in. There might be hidden hazards under the water such as manhole covers that have lifted. Anyone who has been in flood water should wash their hands at the soonest opportunity. OCC has produced a [flooding toolkit](#) which provides advice and support for residents and businesses. It gives information on preparing for instances of flooding. If members of the public need sandbags, they should dial 101 or if a life-threatening situation arises dial 999.

### **SCAMMERS TARGET RESIDENTS WITH PROMISE OF COVID VACCINE**

Residents are urged to be on their guard against scammers using the promise of a coronavirus vaccine to con them out of money. Criminals across the country are contacting people out of the blue with offers of a coronavirus vaccination. These approaches have been made by text or from a recorded voice message on the telephone. In each case the recipient is required to respond by clicking a link in the text message or by pressing 1 when receiving the call. They are then asked to give personal information, as well as financial details to book their vaccination. However, these are scams, with criminals exploiting the pandemic to attempt to steal personal details and people's money.

### **WINTER SUPPORT ROLLED OUT FOR STRUGGLING FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS**

Families and individuals struggling with finances or needing help because of COVID-19 this winter can now access support provided by Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, district councils and voluntary and community organisations. Oxfordshire councils have received £1.37 million from the government's new [COVID-19 Winter Grant Scheme](#) to run local support schemes for those in greatest need. They are working closely together to identify residents requiring urgent assistance within the rules of the scheme and the most effective ways of delivering support. This includes working with local Citizens Advice services to continue and expand support already put in place during the autumn. For anyone needing support this winter, Good Food Oxford's [food map](#) provides practical information to help find and access information about services such as foodbanks, community kitchens and food surplus cafes. It covers the whole of Oxfordshire.

### **SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH**

#### **HENLEY HGV BAN**

Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak, Henley's representative at OCC, is campaigning for an HGV ban in Henley. I have much sympathy with his objectives but my concern is that HGVs will simply be deflected along the B481 or through Binfield Heath and elsewhere if this occurs. Councillor Gawrysiak has acknowledged this concern. I have seen his virtual presentation and am somewhat reassured, although I still have questions about the feasibility of his ANPR/HGV register proposals; I therefore abstained on his motion at SODC Full Council meeting in December. I will do the same if it comes to OCC Full Council before my concerns are fully assuaged.

### **THIRD READING BRIDGE**

The Berkshire parties continue to press for funding for the Outline Business Case to support the bridge. In order to be involved in the discussion, OCC has agreed to be a party to a 'joint statement of agreement' to investigate all options for improving cross Thames travel. However, SODC has withdrawn from this joint statement and, as a result of this, DfT has now expressed reluctance to consider the bid.

### **IMPACT OF ROAD WIDENING ON A4155 AT THAMES FARM**

The results of the speed survey are now in. Contrary to expectations and subjective observations, average speeds at the A4155 Thames Farm section are lower than they were at the same location before the road widening and resurfacing. This speed reduction may indicate: a) On the north-bound side, the success of the speed limit change at the now 40mph section which facilitated the large 30 signs; b) On the south-bound side, the impact of the kink in the road where old joins new, and the presence of the traffic island. Notwithstanding the above, the figures remain higher than

OCC would like for compliance within a 30mph speed limit and officers will make Thames Valley Police aware of this current data. Officers have also observed that as the new road junction is yet to become operational, they consider it too early to be able to assess the effect on road safety.

### **SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH**

#### **THAMES FARM: P20/S2808/DIS (DRAINAGE)**

As previously advised, this drainage proposal from Taylor Wimpey (TW) has major implications for the village. Residents are now well aware of the details and around 150 objections were lodged on the SODC website. There was incredulity that TW had not been asked to undertake a revised Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). TW has now agreed to do this and an updated FRA had been promised for November but my understanding is that it has been delayed until the New Year. I am in ongoing contact with planning officers in relation to this and associated matters.

#### **ILLUMINATED SIGNAGE AT BREMONT FACTORY ON A4155: P20/S4884/A**

The PC has previously expressed concern about rural light pollution and I therefore wanted to draw attention to Bremont's planning application for illuminated signage outside their new factory on the A4155.

### **SODC WARD COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – BINFIELD HEATH – 25TH JANUARY 2021**

For completeness I will cover reporting for December and January separately:-

#### **December 2020**

**Covid-19** Covid cases had been reduced as a result of the national lockdown that ended on 2nd December. However, the concern now is that they are resuming fast growth going into and through the Christmas holiday season. At 16/12, Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 256 per 100k population. By comparison Cherwell DC was 256, West Oxon DC at 157, SODC at 158 and Vale of WH DC at 161. Reading BC (to 8th Dec) was at 373 – rather higher. These numbers have been rising rapidly after the end of the national lockdown. (By comparison in November report I noted: Covid cases have been growing in Oxfordshire and Reading; the virus is showing strong resurgence. As at 6th November, Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 155 per 100k population. By comparison Cherwell DC was 154, West Oxon DC at 157, SODC at 121 and Vale of WH DC at 110. Reading BC was at 142. Note that that was virtually at the start of the lockdown - which did cause the numbers to reduce. However now they are rocketing - such that they are, locally, already above those pre-lockdown levels!) There have been positive announcements on the progress of potential vaccines – notably from Pfizer, Moderna and Oxford/AstraZeneca. However, a full roll-out of a vaccination programme through the UK population is likely to take a considerable time – perhaps to autumn of 2021, albeit that the summer period is less conducive to the spread of infection. On 19th December the Government acknowledged not only that there was a significant mutation of the Covid virus in the South East of England, as had been noted previously, but also that scientific analysis had now suggested that it might be 70% more infectious than the original version. Cases in Kent, London and Essex were showing a dramatic surge - even in November. It is presently believed that the new mutation originated in Kent, but then rapidly spread to London and Essex – reflecting commuting patterns. The new mutation was first seen in genome sampling tests from September – but analysis of these was not complete until mid-October. There have been a number of mutations as is quite normal for viruses – but whilst it does not appear to be more deadly, the significant thing about this new virus variant is that it spreads much more rapidly. It is thus likely to add a substantial amount to the R-rate. In view of this, all of the areas in the South East which were previously tier 3 were moved into a new and much stricter tier 4. Only on the 16th of December was London itself moved into tier 3 and the Slough tier 3 categorisation extended to all of Berkshire, along with Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. The effect of all this is that whilst South Oxfordshire – with the rest of Oxfordshire - remains in tier 2, our district is largely surrounded by the tier 4 areas of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Moreover, even within Oxfordshire our district's northern neighbours – Oxford City and Cherwell District are suffering a higher incidence of Covid than us. Locally, we must note the linkage to London and the related high incidence rate in Reading. Page 2 of 7 Part of the Government's announcement on Saturday 19th was also to radically revise and tighten legal relaxations over the

Christmas period. It is likely that family travel and gatherings at Christmas would add fuel to the new Covid variant and risk the swamping of NHS capacity at the very time of year when, traditionally, it is most stretched by flu and other seasonal pressures. Thus, despite promising news on vaccines, it remains important to minimise the number of infections and to continue to apply firm and responsible restraint. Whatever the legal restrictions regarding Christmas, the advice must now be to proceed with the utmost caution – especially with regards to vulnerable friends and family members. In my personal view, it is now very likely that the eye of the Covid storm is likely to extend into our locality - in a way that it never has done to date. Unfortunately, a difficult start to 2021 seems likely? Happily, it is believed that the new Covid variant will still be successfully addressed by the vaccines now beginning to come through.

**Local Plan Latest** The consultation on the Main Modifications closed on 2nd November, and there were several hundred responses, all of which have been sent to the Inspector for his consideration. The largest number of responses related to one of the strategic sites – Land North of Bayswater Brook – currently situated in the Oxford Greenbelt. Chalgrove Airfield also received many individual comments, and we now await the Inspector’s final report around the end of the month. According to the Direction of the Secretary of State, the plan had to be adopted by the end of the year. At the end of November, the final report was received from the Inspector. This confirmed the many improvements made in the final plan over the one that was submitted; these included policies on density, Climate Change and the environment/biodiversity together with a lot of important clarifications and redrafting. There was also some helpful recognition on the subject of housing mix – which has been going badly wrong previously. These improvements are very significant. However, sadly, the Inspector insisted on confirming the very high housing requirements level submitted. This despite evidence that the 2014 SHMA was out of date – using as it did data from 2011/2012, despite evidence of much lower household numbers and projections from ONS than previously assumed and based on overtly ignoring radically different and less propitious economic factors arising from Covid in particular amongst others. The housing requirement from April 2011 to March 2035 was thus set at 23,550 – including 4,950 in respect of “unmet housing need” from Oxford City. This requirement assumed a need for 775 homes per annum for our district. Ironically on the 16th December the Government confirmed the new Standard Method for local housing needs – which calculates South Oxfordshire’s requirement at only 608 per annum. That in itself would have reduced the requirement for our district by some 4,008 homes! Moreover, it would have set the Oxford City need at only 603 homes per annum – instead of 1,400 that the SHMA suggested! If that had applied it would have slashed the share of unmet housing need of from the City of 4,950. Strange times! Once the housing requirement is set it is normal for an Inspector to include about 10% of extra supply to provide some headroom against any slippage. In our case, a lot of the supply has either been built or committed in terms of permissions and previous allocations for some time. Evidence was also put forward that the strategic sites may offer more housing numbers than those set and that windfalls were understated. However, despite all of that, the Inspector decided to allow a formal supply which was 27% higher than the housing requirements that he had set. This is quite exceptional. On that basis the stated supply was 30,056 new dwellings by 2035. Accordingly, the Inspector decided to leave in the controversial and flawed strategic sites at Bayswater Brook and Chalgrove Airfield. Bayswater is Green Belt, has two SSSIs at close quarters and has hydrology risks and other sensitivities; it faces challenges to provide good access to Oxford and it came out Page 3 of 7 worst in SODC’s evaluations. Chalgrove is isolated without much local employment and with poor transport links. It has water run-off challenges, a long-term lease to Martin Baker (jet ejector seats) and runway safety challenges. Unexpectedly the Inspector went to some lengths to include them. My personal opinion is that these make no sense and are not even terribly helpful in supporting supply - since the sites are problematic and are highly unlikely to come on-stream anytime soon – if ever. However, the Chalgrove site is ex MOD land, now transferred by the government to Homes England and Bayswater Brook has ownership interests from Christ Church college in Oxford; thus they are popular with certain interest groups. A huge and rather absurd set of threats were made that if councillors did not adopt this local Plan then reprisals might be made against the council and against councillors personally. (The Direction could require “consideration” of adoption by the council, but could not itself enforce a yes vote – hence the application of other pressures.) Finally on 10th December Local Plan 2035 was adopted at full council. My concerns are the influences at play and the likelihood that these vast numbers agreed in LP2035 presage further top-down pressures in the upcoming strategic plan to 2050. Milton Keynes is set to double and there are growth zealots who wish to see Oxford and Oxfordshire follow suit. Given that a number of areas in our district have been heavily hit by LP2035

developments the risks are then that new areas will now be at risk of becoming targeted if future numbers are excessive.

**Oxford-Cambridge Arc and a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire** A recent public webinar on the Ox-Cam Arc gives a really good overview of the Arc (a strategic priority for the Government), what it actually is and what it hopes to achieve. Well worth a watch, if you have the time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZeO-MKy0CA&t=1219s> There is (yet) another consultation underway on the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, this time on behalf of the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB). The Vision focuses very strongly on nature and biodiversity recovery, as well as on carbon neutrality, green innovation and digital connectivity. The consultation can be found at

<https://www.oxfordshireopenthought.org/strategic-vision> and it closes on Sunday 3rd January.

### **January 2021**

**Covid-19** On 19th December, the Government acknowledged not only that there was a significant mutation of the Covid virus in the South East of England, as had been noted previously, but also that scientific analysis had now suggested that it might be 50-70% more infectious than the original version. Cases in Kent, London and Essex were showing a dramatic surge - even in November. It is presently believed that the new mutation originated in Kent, but then rapidly spread to London and Essex – reflecting commuting patterns. The new mutation was first seen in genome sampling tests from September – but analysis of these was not complete until mid-October. There have been a number of mutations as is quite normal for viruses – but whilst it is not clear if it is any more deadly, the significant thing about this new virus variant is that it spreads much more rapidly. It is thus likely to add a substantial amount to the R-rate. Locally, we must note the linkage to London and a pattern whereby the increase in infections has been moving west quite rapidly. In part due to the new variant, Covid cases have surged nationally and locally such that South Oxfordshire has moved from Tier 2 to Tier 4 and on to a 3rd National Lockdown. Although steps were belatedly taken to limit traveling and social mixing at Christmas it is clear that this current surge is very serious and at real risk of overwhelming the capacity of the NHS in the weeks ahead. This is the very time of year when the NHS is most stretched by flu and other seasonal pressures and the very worst time to lose control of the spread of the virus. There is pressure on NHS staff resources, beds and supplies (incl oxygen. CPAP ventilators use more than the more traditional and invasive ones but work well and have helped, although the traditional type are necessary for the most severe of ICU cases.) Happily having zoomed up there are now signs that cases have now reduced somewhat locally more recently. At 19/1 Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 472 per 100k population (12/1 was 548 and 5/1 was 571). By comparison Cherwell DC was 477 (12/1 was 548 and 5/1 was 997), West Oxon DC at 193 (12/1 was 314 and 5/1 was 428), SODC at 247 (12/1 was 320 and 5/1 was 520) and Vale of WH DC at 284 (12/1 was 299 and 5/1 was 442). Reading BC to 19/1 was at 616 (12/1 was 735). These numbers had been surging, but have now edged back following the impact of the 3rd lockdown. (By comparison in December I noted: At 16/12, Oxford City was at a weekly rate of 256 per 100k population. By comparison Cherwell DC was 256, West Oxon DC at 157, SODC at 158 and Vale of WH DC at 161. Reading BC (to 8th Dec) was at 373 – rather higher. These numbers have been rising rapidly after the end of the national lockdown.) I should mention that SODC and BIFFA have had to temporarily suspend Brown Bin collections of garden waste – because of the effect of Covid on Biffa's staff – both by way of infections and needs to self-isolate. There has continued to be progress with vaccines although a full roll-out of a 2-jab vaccination programme through the whole UK population is likely to take a considerable time – perhaps to autumn of 2021, albeit that the summer period is less conducive to the spread of infection. To accelerate initial progress – especially with regards to the elderly, key health and care workers and those with health risks – priority is to be given to the first jabs – delaying the second vaccine dose by up to 12 weeks. Page 5 of 7 One uncertainty, as yet, is how long (effective) antibody immunity from a vaccine might last. A year? Six months? We don't yet know. This complicates forecasting. Thus, despite promising news on vaccines, it remains absolutely critical to minimise the number of infections and to continue to apply firm and responsible restraint. Whilst legal restrictions have been increased, the advice must now be to proceed with the utmost caution – especially with regards to vulnerable friends and family members. In my personal view, it now seems that the eye of the Covid storm has now extended into our locality – to a degree that it never has done to date. Unfortunately, a difficult start to 2021 seems likely? Happily, it is believed that the new Covid variant will still be successfully addressed by the vaccines now beginning to come through.

**Plans for Mass Testing and Mass Vaccination** SODC officers are working intensively with other

public sector colleagues from the County Council, Public Health England and the NHS to plan for and execute mass testing and mass vaccination of the local population. The situation remains fluid with news about vaccines hitting our screens every day, but there is no scenario which does NOT involve local Council staff playing a key role. Venues are being identified and secured, supply chain logistics resolved and resources engaged in order to carry out this huge effort if we are to meet the Government's targets. This includes the support of council staff in ancillary roles at vaccination centres. When this preparatory work is added to the responsibilities of the Community Hub (see below), it is inevitable that some of the "business as usual" activities of the Council will be compromised. All these new tasks are being absorbed by the existing staff at SODC, so we ask for your patience, please, if you have a query or a problem to discuss with the Council as it may take longer than usual to respond or resolve. The key messages to all local residents are as follows: - • The vaccination programme is being phased in across the county following the national guidance on prioritising patients. Some people have already been vaccinated and others are waiting to be invited. • Please do not contact your GP or another NHS service to seek a vaccine – GP practices are still open for providing care to patients and their phones could become swamped, so please wait until the NHS contacts you. • When the NHS does contact you, please be ready and attend your booked appointments. • Please continue to follow all the public health guidance to control the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives. Unfortunately, the largely outsourced test and trace system has been impacted by the surge of cases and is presently providing materially slower results. This does not help supplementary efforts by councils' public health endeavours to track down more of the contacts missed by the national system as time is of the essence. Covid-19 support for individuals and families A reminder that the message to residents is to contact the Community Hub if as result of Covid-19, they or their neighbours need help with access to food, or need to claim the £500 grant if they are instructed to self-isolate. The SODC Community Hub team is available from: • 8.30am-5pm Monday to Thursday Page 6 of 7 • 8.30am-4.30pm on Fridays Call our Community Hub on 01235 422600 or email [communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk).

**Covid-19 business grants support** The national schemes to support business have been evolving and changing as the pandemic and restrictions change. As regards business grants, businesses that need help and guidance should go to [svbs.co.uk](http://svbs.co.uk) Business can register an e-mail address at [svbs.co.uk](http://svbs.co.uk) that will enable them to receive e-mail updates as new grant schemes become available from Government to and via SODC.

**District Councillor Grants** The individual Councillor Grant programme has now opened, with a deadline of early February (I suggest think end January! HOWEVER I should note that an extension to that date is being considered.), and a key adjustment to the scheme is that it no longer excludes Parish Councils with their own grant-giving programmes. As last year, each councillor has £5k to allocate within our ward to projects which need a bit of seed funding or complete financing and which can be completed within a year. David and I will work together on this area and between us can offer up to £1,100 to Binfield Heath. Just to re-emphasize, happily the complications over grant-awarding parishes have now been set aside this year. This year the grants have a linkage to the SODC Corporate Plan, so any applications should align with the priority objectives described here: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/counciloutlines-priorities-in-new-plan/> Application forms and guidelines can be found here:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/communitysupport/grants/councillor-community-grants/>

**Town and Parish Forum** The SODC Communications Team sends very regular updates to Town & Parish Clerks, but there is also much to be gained by meeting together to discuss issues of common interest or concern. The next Forum, which will inevitably have to be a virtual affair, is planned for the early Spring of 2021, so look out for an announcement in the New Year.

**Brexit Preparations** The Brexit trading deal was completed before the end of December. It provided for quota and tariff free arrangements on goods. The UK has to respect a level playing pitch of regulation and state aid with the EU are regards goods. However, it is not part of the Single Market or indeed the Customs Union – to imports and exports need much more paperwork. There will be support and advice for businesses and residents on Brexit. This will include a campaign to remind EU citizens wishing to stay in the UK that they need to register for settled status by the end of June 2021. The trade deal largely excluded consideration of trade in services. The EU did not give passporting or protection to services activities around banking, investment services, financial services and dealing Page 7 of 7 and other areas where the UK presently has significant market share and competitive strengths. Regulation of services and reduction of barriers to trade in services is an evolving area.

**Civil Parking Enforcement** SODC's Council meeting approved a recommendation at a special meeting on 22nd December to move ahead with taking responsibility for managing on-street civil parking enforcement in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council. We now expect this to move forward without undue delay and for powers to be transferred during 2021. This will work alongside our existing off-street parking enforcement powers.

**New CIL Spending Strategy** Cabinet also approved a new CIL and s106 spending strategy last month, which will take effect from April 2021. Most of the changes affect how SODC and OCC can spend their allocation of CIL funds; the Parish allocation will remain at 25% (with a Neighbourhood Plan; or 15% without – as now). This should enable more projects to be approved for each part of the district. The new, more flexible, rules should release funds more rapidly and enable larger projects to be commissioned across the District.

Happy New Year all. Let's hope to see a successful vaccine roll-out and better times.

**Leigh Rawlins District Councillor**