

## **South Oxfordshire District Council report 2010/2011**

It has been another busy year negotiating further shared services with the Vale of White Horse District Council enabling reduced management and staffing costs of £500,000. The efficiency work delivered by 'fit for the future' work has given us a saving of £1.3m. These savings have enabled the council to again have no increase in council tax.

### **Delivering homes**

- Great Western Park development in Didcot has had at long last started which means 3,300 new homes and much needed community facilities in the next ten years.
- Fairmile hospital Cholsey development with 354 homes have commenced
- Chinnor cement works 174 new homes have commenced
- The number of homeless people in temporary accommodation is falling with just sixteen, well below the government target.

We need to continue to protect the environment that makes South Oxfordshire a special place to live and work.

The building of new homes is a very sensitive issue as we all realised when carrying out the work on the core strategy. There is a need for houses and it is important that where they are built is decided through the core strategy and not where developers make planning applications.

The core strategy also includes how to create new jobs and the necessary infrastructure.

### **Funding**

This year we have funded three part-time market town coordinators to promote the distinctiveness of the three market towns, Henley, Wallingford and Thame working with the business organisations and town councils.

Car park charges were not increased and free parking at Christmas to encourage shoppers. It really is important to support all our local shops and local producers where ever possible.

Didcot should see a new station forecourt working with Oxfordshire County Council and network rail. This project has taken years of negotiation but work will start this year.

Phase II of the Orchard Shopping Centre should also be confirmed by late Spring.

Ladygrove Loop project has had £395,000 for four kilometres of continuous green walking and cycle route plus outdoor gym equipment.

### **Feeling safer**

We have continued to support PCSO's which are now seen by residents in both towns and villages on a regular basis helping residents making them aware of problem areas. We have continued with town councils and police to fund 61 CCTV cameras which have been used to detect criminals.

### **Opportunities for young people**

- We are most fortunate to have a grant system that has enabled £12,300 to be awarded to 51 young people for their achievement in sports, arts and citizenship.
- A young peoples Xchange was launched giving young people the opportunity to speak directly with councillors on issues close to their hearts.
- We gave £500,000 to charity, voluntary not-for-profit organisations to help them with projects.
- 41 communities have been drawn up or completed and have selected implementation of their plans which we have been able help either by grant aid or officer time.
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### **Concessionary fares**

These have been transferred to Oxfordshire County Council from April 2011. The county council have requested that we carry out a one year contract for delivery of the service for which they will pay.

The county council made a decision not to continue the tokens for the 70 and over disabled carers. However they have honoured the use of the bus passes on community buses. South Oxfordshire District Council will continue to grant aid Handibus (Henley), Fish (Sonning Common) and Readibus. We are in discussions with Oxfordshire County Council regarding Dial a ride.

### **Leisure**

Nexus Leisure have introduced the leisure pass enabling residents to use any of the centres in South Oxfordshire. They have also held many new courses for all ages which have proved very popular especially as we all need exercise. The council has continued to invest in the centres to make sure that the equipment is what users require.

### **Recycling**

You will have read and heard many times but it is worth saying again we are now the top district council at recycling and have won three national awards. This is truly a great success thanks to you all and it means less landfill, less carbon footprint plus money for the council

### **Finance**

The council's finances are healthy because we have been taking efficiency steps for more than two years. The bad publicity regarding high salaries and high councillors allowances simply do not apply. Salaries are now shared between two councils. Councillors allowances are one of the lowest in the country as we have not accepted the independent panels recommendation for the last eight years. Interest rates being so low have meant a reduction of nearly £3m per year. The government grant will be £1.2m lower but no front line services will be cut.

We have many challenges ahead with new bills coming from the coalition government. The most exciting will be working with communities and organisations who may wish to run some services. We will no longer be target driven from on high.

We are fortunate that already many organisations in South Oxfordshire do wonderful work.

The council will continue to work with communities to carry out efficient services residents have told us are important

The council website [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk) is easy to use and gives full details of all the services

Your ward member thanks the Parish Councillors for their co-operation during the year.

Cllr Patrick Greene – Hagbourne Ward – South Oxfordshire District Council – March 2011