

Title:	District Cllrs Report	
Chinnor District:	Aston Rowant, Chinnor, Sydenham and Towersey	
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Date:	03 NOV 2024	

**Councillor Grant Scheme: URGENT – time is running out.**

The Councillor Grant Scheme is active until midday of the **29<sup>th</sup> November 2024**, so please get your applications in as soon as you can.

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**Director fined after waste found fly tipped in country park:**

The director of a company that runs a Persian restaurant has been fined after a load of rubbish was found fly tipped in Shotover Country Park. A load of construction waste, including packaging addressed to a Masood Khanloo, was found at the park.

At a hearing at Oxford Magistrates Court on 18 October 2024, Mr Khanloo, who is the sole director of Fine Persian Dishes Ltd, Greenhill House, Harrow, which operates the Shiraz restaurant in Cowley Road in Oxford, pleaded guilty to four charges under Section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, relating to the duty of care for waste.

The court heard how Mr Khanloo had led council officers on a wild goose chase with inconsistent accounts of how he disposed of his waste. Mr Khanloo was adamant that he disposed of the packaging found in the fly tip at recycling bins at Sainsburys Kidlington in early January, which Sainsburys confirmed had been taken away some three months earlier. He initially claimed the items delivered in the packaging had nothing to do with his business but for his home but were in fact for the restaurant his business operates. Just a few days before the hearing, he admitted he had in fact passed the waste to one of his staff because the staff member had said he had use of a skip that he could dispose of the waste in. In mitigation, the court heard how the restaurant was having some re-fitting done and Mr Khanloo had purchased the items, some of which were delivered to his home address, but the workmen left all the packaging to be disposed of. Magistrates heard how one of the chefs at the restaurant was eager to please Mr Khanloo and said he could use a skip to dump the waste. When Mr Khanloo was shown photographs of the fly tip, he questioned the chef who told him that when he went to use the skip it had gone and so he fly tipped it at Shotover. The court were told that Mr Khanloo didn't accept that all of the waste found in the fly tip was his. In sentencing, magistrates noted that this was the second time this had happened, with Fine Persian Dishes Limited previously prosecuted in August 2023 for similar waste offences. Taking the early guilty plea into account, magistrates imposed a fine of £5,000 and Mr Khanloo was ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £2,000 and costs of £1,521.96.

**Councillor Sam James-Lawrie**, South Oxfordshire District Council Cabinet Member for Environment, said: "Fly tipping is both anti-social and has a detrimental impact on the environment. I hope this case serves as a reminder that anyone who disposes of waste – even when using a third party - needs to ensure it is done so legally."

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**South Oxfordshire District Council calls for 'failing' Thames Water to be brought back under public control:**

South Oxfordshire District Council has issued a resounding vote of no confidence in Thames Water, unanimously calling for the 'failing' water provider to be brought back under public control. In a motion passed on 24 October 2024, council members highlighted widespread concerns over Thames Water's environmental and financial mismanagement and their inability to meet key operational standards affecting residents and local ecosystems. The council's motion, proposed by **Cllr Jo Robb** and seconded by **Cllr Andrea Powell**, emphasised the need for government intervention through the Water Industry Act 1991, which allows companies to be placed into Special Administration when they are in financial distress or fail to meet essential duties.

Thames Water's record in South Oxfordshire underscores the need for immediate action, council members said. So far in 2024, untreated sewage has been discharged into the River Thames or its tributaries from sewage treatment works operated by Thames Water for more than 15,500 hours. This pollution is symptomatic of deeper issues within the company, with nearly two-thirds of Thames Water's sewage treatment facilities reportedly out of compliance with regulatory permits. Beyond pollution concerns, Thames Water's infrastructure challenges are also significant. The company loses about a quarter of the region's public drinking water supply due to its leaks. It is also struggling to manage an £18 billion debt that has led credit agencies Standard & Poor's and Moody's to downgrade Thames Water's debt rating to "junk" status.

**A Call for Public Control;** The council's motion specifically calls on the government to end water industry privatisation, citing it as a "failed experiment" that has led to increased financial and environmental risks. In addition to calling for Thames Water to be brought back under public ownership, South Oxfordshire District Council is backing amendments to the Water (Special Measures) Bill, now progressing through Parliament. These amendments include:

- Halting any public bailouts for the water industry as proposed under Section 10 of the Bill;
- Restructuring Ofwat's duties to prioritise public and environmental interests;
- Re-democratising water company boards to include employees, bill payers, and council representatives.

**Councillor Jo Robb** said: "The performance and priorities of Thames Water have clearly failed our residents, our environment and our trust. There is significant public and political sentiment for reform of the country's water supplies and bringing Thames Water back under public control is essential if we truly wish to protect water supplies in the South East and restore accountability."

**Councillor Andrea Powell** added: "Privatisation of water services has not delivered on its promises and it's vital that we stop putting shareholders before the environment and public health and place this resource back into the hands of the public. We need real change to ensure our rivers and other water courses are safe and allow wildlife to flourish for future generations and we call on other local authorities and campaign organisations to join the movement to bring water services back under public control."

At the meeting the councils also resolved a motion on supporting communities in their efforts to retain pubs; a motion on the need for an urgent review of local government funding; and a motion on the importance of local government in delivering Net Zero.

For full details of the motions, visit [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 24 October 2024, 6.00 pm](#)

Both of the councils have approved a new joint Waste Resources and Street Cleansing strategy. People can view the strategy and find out more about rethinking waste and our plans to keep our streets clean and tidy at: [www.southoxfordshire.gov.uk/rethinkingwaste](http://www.southoxfordshire.gov.uk/rethinkingwaste). Residents in the districts have consistently been among the very best recyclers in England for well over a decade. The two councils are now striving to take things to the next level and are encouraging everyone to rethink their approach to waste.

A key part of the new strategy is to encourage and enable people to reduce, reuse, repair, refill and rehome items, instead of throwing them away.

**Cllr Sam James-Lawrie, South Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, said:** "We've developed a strategy for how we can rethink waste – to help us all do more to protect our environment and keep it clean for ourselves and future generations. This is a total community effort, which needs councils, residents, visitors and businesses to all play a part. We are harking back to the make do and mend ethos so admirably embraced by our parents' and grandparents' generations. If you'd like to find out more, come along to the Eco Fair on 2 November at Cornerstone in Didcot where the councils' waste team will have a stand."

**Cllr Mark Coleman said of the strategy:** "We are looking to the future and our wider waste strategy to take us into the years to come. As well as doing our bit to improve our service, we want to encourage and enable people to reuse, repair, refill and rehome items, instead of throwing them away. Together we can make the most of what we already have.

"We all need to maximise the lifespan we get from our goods and where items have to be disposed of, we look and see if the item can be collected under the comprehensive recycling collection service, rather than simply throwing it in the refuse bin."

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### **Biodiversity at Towersey:**

South Oxfordshire District Council is proud to announce it has helped create the first habitat bank in the district aiming to increase biodiversity and reduce river pollution while also allowing necessary development. The council has worked with the environmental charity Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) and a local landowner on plans to transform 16.5 acres off Windmill Lane, Towersey from intensively farmed arable land to a biodiverse mosaic of grassland, scrub, and woodland habitats. This will provide a haven for pollinators such as bees and butterflies, mammals including water voles and birds such as curlews and barn owls. The new habitat bank will provide a stable income for the landowner through [biodiversity net gain](#), making the rest of their farm business more resilient in the face of a changing climate. The owner of the land at Towersey first heard about biodiversity net gain – where developers buy biodiversity credits from habitat banks to offset building works – when they attended the farm innovation show in 2022. They then worked with TOE to develop the project and liaise with the council as the local planning authority. The site is next to the Thame Valley Conservation Target Area, a strategically valuable area for nature recovery. Over the coming decades, the land will be managed to allow wildflowers to bloom and set seed in the summer, with an annual hay cut in the autumn. This will create habitat and food for a host of wildlife species in an arable-dominated landscape.

By removing the land from intensive agricultural production, fewer chemicals from pesticides and fertiliser and less sediment will run into the Cuttle Brook that runs on the northern border of the site, improving the health of one of the River Thame's main tributaries. **Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson**, South Oxfordshire District Council cabinet member for planning, said: "Increasing biodiversity and promoting nature recovery are council priorities. The creation of new habitat banks benefits the natural world, the landowners and our residents. By securing

this habitat bank through a legal agreement we will ensure that biodiversity gains generated by development in South Oxfordshire will stay in our district, contributing to nature's recovery. We're delighted that this land is to be transformed at Towersey and hope it is the first of many." The landowner said, "Turning some land over to biodiversity net gain helps the environment and creates a steady income that is not as dependent on weather conditions and price fluctuations, which have affected the farm business recently. "High input prices (from fertiliser, pesticides, and machinery costs) and low grain prices have made farming very volatile in recent years and things needed to change. The farm has tried to become more regenerative recently by incorporating livestock within the arable rotation to reduce its need for inorganic fertilisers and chemicals. The habitat bank will reduce our need for labour and machinery on the farm and will hopefully improve water quality in the area and increase wildlife populations." Ben Heaven Taylor from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment said: "This project is an important step towards nature recovery in Oxfordshire and towards the government's '30-by-30' biodiversity target\*. It's also a great example of an effective partnership between public and charitable bodies and a pioneering local landowner. This site will provide developers with local options to meet their planning obligations, which has multiple benefits for all parties, keeping the biodiversity gains within the planning authority, contributing to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and providing income to land managers; keeping sustainable land management front and centre in the county."

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### **Rethink waste with a trip to a local repair café!**

As part of a big drive to rethink waste, residents are encouraged to check out the range of repair cafés, libraries of things, community larders, clothes swaps and other great reuse initiatives happening in their local area. With reduce and reuse top of the agenda, last weekend, representatives from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils popped along to check out the great work happening at two local initiatives.

In South, Cllr **David Rouane**, Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, visited [Sustainable Didcot's Repair Café](#), which runs on the third Saturday of every month, 2pm to 5pm in The Green Hub in the SOHA building. The friendly repair café, run entirely by dedicated volunteers, will try their best to fix broken household items for free, ranging from repairs of household electrical items (including computers), broken toys, clocks and watches, sharpening blunt knives – even sprucing up old bicycles. They are particularly interested in repairing electrical items and they will PAT test them to make sure they are safe. Cllr Rouane took along a faulty iron and was incredibly impressed by the warm welcome he received, as well as the handy fix on his iron. He said: "The Sustainable Didcot Repair Café is a wonderful place. I'm delighted to have my iron fixed. I'd urge everyone to rethink what they throw out – is there life in it yet? Can it be fixed with a little TLC? Not only will this help save the planet you'll save yourself a few pounds by not having to buy new. Visit the Didcot Repair Café or find one near you."

Di Chesterman, Chair of Sustainable Didcot, said: "We're running these repair cafes once a month on the third Saturday of the month from 2 till 5. We usually fix about 50 to 80 objects at every repair cafe that we do and we have a fix rate of about 76 per cent. So - we're keeping a huge amount of weight out of the rubbish and giving new life to lots and lots of objects!" View a You Tube video of [David's visit with Sustainable Didcot](#) here.

In Vale, Cllr Mark Coleman, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Waste, went to Sustainable Wantage's Clothes Swap at Wantage Methodist Church Hall. To take part in the swap – which also includes toys and books - people just need to bring with them at least one clean and presentable item to swap. People can take away as many items as they bring in,

extras can be taken for a donation. Any items leftover are donated or recycled. Cllr Coleman brought along a selection of books and a jumper and swapped for some new reads. He said: "This just goes to show – you don't need to spend a fortune on the high street to update your wardrobe or your bookshelf! I thoroughly enjoyed my trip to the clothes and book swap – I'd encourage everyone to take a look at the amazing range of initiatives run by Sustainable Wantage - like this clothes swap event, or their regular Repair Café – or look out a sustainable initiative near you."

"Did you know there are more than [3,000 repair cafes](#) across the world now with around 50,000 volunteers and 50,000 items repaired each month! The movement started about 15 years ago – and I'm delighted to say a new repair café was recently announced in Appleton thanks to our Climate Action Fund." The Community Action Group, [Sustainable Wantage](#), run a huge range of initiatives – including a [repair café](#) on the first Saturday of each month between 10am– 1pm at The Mix, a '[Library of Things](#)' – where you can borrow a huge range of items such as a sewing machine or a pasta maker, and a [community fridge](#) to share surplus food. Jo Harvey from Sustainable Wantage, said: "Sustainable Wantage offers a whole host of different projects - from looking after our green spaces to helping people reuse and repair stuff so that things don't go to waste. "We have repair cafes, we have a refill station down at our hub - The Mix, and a library of things, where people can borrow something rather than having to own their own. If you only use it once a year - a pressure washer, for example, you could just borrow it when you need it. We're really aiming for people to be able to reduce what they spend and less stuff being needed to be made." View a [video of Cllr Mark Coleman's visit](#) to the Sustainable Wantage Clothes Swap here. People can find their nearest repair café and a range of other reuse initiatives by searching on the CAG Oxfordshire website: [www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk) or visit the Repair Café Oxfordshire website <https://repaircafeoxfordshire.org>

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### **Councils prevent rise in local homelessness despite an increase in demand on services:**

Eviction by family and friends' top reason for home loss in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. As global attention turns to World Homeless Day, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district councils have managed to keep local homeless levels low despite an increase in demand on services. Whilst national homeless figures rose by 8 per cent in 2023/24, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse experienced an increased demand on their homeless services this year. There was a 34 per cent rise in homeless assessments carried out in the Vale and a 12 per cent rise in South Oxfordshire. Despite this, the councils' continued focus on early homelessness prevention, working closely with every individual at risk of homelessness to help them find sustainable accommodation has yielded high prevention rates. The number of households in emergency hotel accommodation in South Oxfordshire fell by 18 per cent from last year and in the Vale of White Horse there was no increase from last year:[i]

- South Oxfordshire: 17 (reduced to 14) households needing emergency hotel accommodation in 2023/24, an overall reduction of 18 per cent since 2022/23
- Vale of White Horse: 15 households needing emergency hotel accommodation in 2023/24, no increase from 2022/23

Looking at the complex reasons for homelessness, which helps the councils' housing team plan where to target their work, stats show the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the districts. Eviction by family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate someone is again the main reason for homelessness this year, accounting for 31 per cent of cases in South Oxfordshire and 28 per cent in the Vale of White Horse.\*



Landlords ending a private rented tenancy is the second reason for homelessness in both districts (20 per cent in South Oxfordshire, 25 per cent in Vale), and escaping the threat of domestic abuse is the third highest cause (9 per cent in South Oxfordshire, 10 per cent in Vale). **Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers** Cabinet Member for Housing, South Oxfordshire District Council said: "Whilst the causes of someone becoming homeless are consistently the same over the last year, aligned with what's happening nationally - we've experienced an increased demand on our homeless services. It's an ongoing challenge and we continue to do all we can to help people have somewhere they feel safe and secure that they can call home. "Our housing needs team identifies individuals who are at risk of homelessness and then works closely with them to ensure they can either stay safely in their current home or find appropriate alternative accommodation. As well as continuing our proactive homelessness prevention work, our recent purchase and renovation of properties and close partnership working with registered housing providers all contribute to our plan to meet the current and future housing needs of local people." Cllr Sue Caul, Cabinet Member for Housing, Vale of White Horse District Council said: "The large rise this year in demand on our homeless services has added significant pressure. However, our housing team continues to work very effectively to support every individual at risk of homelessness, with hugely encouraging results as the latest figures show. "Evictions by family or friends we think is a result of the cost-of-living crisis with hosts simply no longer able to afford to accommodate their loved ones and friends. Private landlords pulling out of renting homes is also a real issue in the district, and we're doing all we can to encourage more landlords to work with us."

Number of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless in 2023/24:

- South Oxfordshire: 357 households including 291 children
- Vale of White Horse: 343 households including 253 children

Percentage of households at risk of homelessness which were successfully prevented from becoming homeless in 2023/24:

- South East England: 53 per cent
- South Oxfordshire: 78 per cent
- Vale of White Horse: 76 per cent

To help support residents at risk of homelessness, the councils recently purchased 45 homes for those in the highest level of housing need in [South](#) and [Vale](#). This will help tackle the immediate and urgent need to find homes for people fleeing conflict, and the long-term need to provide members of our local communities with a supply of good quality, genuinely affordable homes.

See our housing delivery strategy and action plan on our website ([South / Vale](#)) for details on how we are bringing more genuinely affordable, energy efficient homes to the districts.

Anyone in need of help with housing, who is homeless or is at risk of being homeless can call our housing team on 01235 422452.

Our Community Hub can also provide wider support or advice for people, call 01235 422600 or email [communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk)

\*The top 3 reasons for homelessness in both South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse remain the same in 2023/24 as in 2022/23:

- Eviction by family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate people
- Landlord ends the private rented tenancy
- Domestic abuse

These same causes are reflected in national homeless figures, but in a different order with landlords ending a tenancy as the top reason, eviction by friends and family as second and domestic abuse as the third most common cause.

**Draft plan on future development and infrastructure published:**

We've reached the next stage of creating a plan for future development and infrastructure across our districts. After receiving unanimous support from both Councils, the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan draft document has now been published ahead of being submitted to the government for examination later in the year. The plan will remain published for a six-week period, during which you can submit comments on the plan's soundness and legal compliance and whether it meets the duty to cooperate. After the six-week publication period has come to an end, the plan and the comments received will be submitted to the government in December to be examined by a planning inspector.

[JLP - Join the conversation - South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse - Citizen Space](#)

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**Public Survey on "Council Tax plan for empty properties"**

Currently, we allow a maximum duration of up to two years for a domestic property to remain unoccupied and substantially unfurnished before an additional, council tax 'premium' charge is incurred, on top of the normal full 100 per cent charge.

Recent changes in legislation now allow councils to reduce this minimum timeframe. from two years to just one year and we're keen to hear what you think of us doing that in our district.

[Proposed changes to the additional Council Tax charge for long-term empty properties - South Oxfordshire District Council - Join the conversation - South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse - Citizen Space](#)

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**New policy to boost street trading and cut plastic waste**

Calling all traders, venues and foodies! We're updating our street trading policy and we're hungry for your feedback - to find out more, just visit [Review of Street Trading Policy Survey - Join the conversation - South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse - Citizen Space](#).

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**What are your priorities for Oxfordshire's wildlife and nature?**

Oxfordshire's local nature recovery strategy is nearly ready, but no one knows better which natural spaces could be improved, restored, or created than the people who are around them every day. That's where you come in. Are the priorities right? Has anything been missed? [Oxfordshire's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) consultation - phase 3 | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#)

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**Extra garden waste weeks**

If you are subscribed to our brown bin garden waste service you can have extra garden waste collected on your normal collection day **between 28 October and 8 November**.

You will be able to put out a maximum of up to four additional sacks of garden waste, per brown bin subscription, next to your brown bin. To be eligible for collection, the extra waste must go in standard sized (60L) black refuse style sacks and should only contain natural garden waste such as cut grass, plants or branches. You can also place it in small boxes

/containers totalling no more than a standard bin full. Please **do not** leave out rubble or builders' waste bags alongside your brown bins as these won't be collected.

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**Finally!**

**Please eat your pumpkin!**

Every year, 12 million pumpkins are just thrown away after Halloween! What a waste! To help cut food waste, why not make a delicious pumpkin recipe instead, there's lots you can try, including pies, soups, hummus and more. For some great pumpkin recipes and more advice on Halloween waste, visit our Halloween page - at [Halloween waste - South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

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