

**South Stoke Annual Parish Meeting  
Thursday 6 April 2017  
Annual Reports**

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## St Andrew's Church

I am pleased to report that 2016 has seen development among the Christian community in South Stoke.

It was a delight to welcome Steve Johnson and his family to the benefice last July. Steve comes to complete his training with us over the next 3 to 4 years. He has had a significant involvement with the family service at 11:15am on the first Sunday of each month. South Stoke is well served having a main service at 11:15 every Sunday followed by refreshments, as well as the coffee morning on the third Wednesday of each month at 10:30am.



Another very significant development has been the launch of an Alpha course which gives people an opportunity to explore the Christian faith, to ask those questions that we might feel embarrassed to ask elsewhere and to meet others with whom we can explore faith together. The course is for the whole benefice and I am delighted that several South Stoke residents are participating.

We are indebted to Harry Hogg, who took on the role of church warden a year ago alongside Mike Codner and I am so grateful to them for the generous way in which they serve the village in this responsible role in such a reliable and unstinting way.

A mark of the development of the church is that our Bishop will be leading a service of adult confirmation at 11:15am on the 23 April. Do come to meet the Bishop and you may like to be there to support the candidates as well.

At the beginning of this year we were delighted to form a link with a young Christian man who is giving his life to work with street children in one of the poorest parts of Honduras. His name is Steve Poulson. Do look out for information about Steve and you might like to look at his website: <https://www.churchmissionsociety.org/people-in-mission/steve-poulson>.

I am so pleased to see that our parish council and the Diocese of Oxford are working so constructively to explore future possibilities for the Glebe field and am grateful to Roy McMillan and others for their work on this matter which led to the excellent recent consultation.

In days when we are so often encouraged to follow our dream, Jesus reminds us that to find the best in life and eternal life, the best we can do is to follow Him. Of course, helping each other to re-connect with God, is the business of your parish church, and we would be pleased to hear how you think we can make it easier for you to do just that.

Your clergy,  
Paul, Liz and Steve



## Amenities Committee

### **Who are we?**

We are a charity made up of villagers representing, as far as we can, activities and groups within the village. Currently we have representatives from the WI, regular hall users, the PC, the bell ringers, the PA, the Recreation ground. All members are trustees of the charity.

### **What we do**

The Amenities Charity is responsible for maintaining the village amenities; that is the Village Hall, the Recreation Ground and White Hill Quarry.

### **This year**

**Finances:** Happily we continue to be in the black, see 200 Club under fund raising. Many thanks to Mark for his continued hard work as our Treasurer.

**Secretary:** We welcome Sally Woodall as our new secretary and would like to thank Sharron for all her work as our previous secretary.

### **The Village Hall**

This year has been decision time; we had hoped to be able to work with the Village Hall Committee on a project to renovate and make beautiful our current Village Hall. We have taken a lot of advice from structural engineers and historic conservators. We were full of enthusiasm when we were advised by these groups that while the hall will stand for some more years, it is not financially sensible to spend the money necessary to conserve our 'tin hut'. Having visited a number of beautifully conserved village halls we were disappointed by this news. However, moving on, we advised the Shop and Village Hall Group and work is going forward with new developments to be decided. In the meantime we will continue with our primary role of maintaining what we have.

In March a new table tennis table arrived at the hall: very many thanks to Nigel and the gang for raising the funds for this.

Many thanks to Robert for continuing doing such a great job with the hall and to Lyn for always keeping the hall spotless.

### **Recreation Ground**

The Receptions Ground continues to be well used. However, we have had a major problem with moles. These have proved very intractable. Whilst I like moles the damage they have done around the shop and play equipment has been somewhat devastating. Rabbits continue to be a problem and we are finding it very hard to find solutions to these problems. Chris has contacted and spoken to many experts because of the proximity of housing and the use by children it is not easily solvable. We continue to work on it.

As you will know there were various trees planted when the lovely playground was developed. The apples seem to be ok but some of the trees have made no growth since planting. The main reason seems to be very poor and very well draining soil so lack of nutrients and water. We will be making decisions about these in the near future.

Many thanks to Chris and other helpers for their hard work on the rec.

### **White Hill Quarry**

Here the trees are fairing much better and we are hoping to plant some more trees here. Do pop up and see the view.

### **Fund Raising**

Many thanks to Mark Taylor for his hard work with the 200 Club. The money we raise is so important in maintaining our funds in the black and enabling us to keep our hire prices low.

Mark has also negotiated a 'Give you life' portal for buying on the internet. Please see Mark about using this as it all helps.

As mentioned we have had villagers fund raising for us, as well as the table tennis table we have bought enough wine glasses for all village events so no more renting.

### **Village Hall Bookings**

Our project for this year is to get out bookings timetable on to the village website. Ann will continue to take the bookings but renters will have an overview of availability. We continue to have regular bookings every weekday. It's great to see the hall being used by such a wide cross section of the village.

Many thanks to Ann for all her great work as bookings secretary.

Finally, we are looking forward to the future of our village amenities and would like to thank all those working so hard to ensure we have a brilliant shop and hall.

**Jacqui Bertrand**

### **South Stoke Primary School**

Once again another amazing year has gone past at lightning speed we reach the middle of the academic year!

Our year 6 children left in July 2016 and have settled well into their respective secondary schools. Most of the children went to Langtree, our feeder school, and others went further afield to Didcot Boys School, Wallingford Academy and Cranford House. We get regular updates on how everyone is doing from parents and siblings as well as visits from the pupils themselves!

The school was over subscribed in September and 8 new children started with us in Foundation. All of the new children were featured in the Henley Standard as part of the 'new starter' photographs and we were all suitably proud.

Christmas came and went in a flurry of nativity chaos; costumes everywhere, singing carols in the corridors, angel feathers floating in the classroom! Despite the weather, tiredness and over excitement the nativity was again a huge success. We now use the village hall for the production as our audience numbers swell year on year. Once again it was great to see some villagers were able to attend.

The new year brought new beginnings and challenges. In January the juniors visited a school in Canary Wharf and we saw what it is like to go to an inner city school. Plans for the future include class swaps, combined teacher professional development and building relationships with another community.

Maypole dancing has started in preparation for the St George's Day celebrations in Wallingford and, of course, for the May Fayre. The May Fayre is in preparation and the excitement is building. Naimh Reynolds Hall will be our May Queen and we are looking forward to entertaining you all on the day.

With Easter fast approaching and the scent of summer very close; we are looking forward to the completion of the playground works; a trip to the Look Out; art week; Autism Awareness Day, Carers Day; transition days for Year 6 and hopefully a great deal of summer sunshine to end the year.

We have always had an 'open door' policy should anyone wish to visit the school and we would like to say a special thank you to everyone from the village who volunteers in school and/or just pops in to say hello occasionally.

**Amanda Rogers, Head Teacher**

### **South Stoke Parents' Association**

**No Report**

### **South Stoke & Woodcote Charities**

#### **The Dr Griffith Higgs South Stoke Education Charity**

This Charity benefits children who attend one of the two village primary schools, and who live in the ancient ecclesiastical parish of South Stoke cum Woodcote, and later supports students as they proceed in the education through the State system.

For the benefit of those new to our two villages, the Rev. Dr Higgs was born in South Stoke, and in his will bequeathed various sums of money to the village and church of South Stoke. From these bequests the Educational Charity was gradually formed. Land was purchased in Woodcote, known as the School Piece, for which we receive an annual rent of £1,350. Other money was invested with the Charity Commissioners, and now has the value of £12,469. This year it gave the good return of £438. In November we received the generous gift of £600 from the Woodcote Charitable Trust, as part of the proceeds from the Steam Rally.

2016/17 has been a successful year, and we have been able to make 65 awards, for a total of £2,430. We gave 22 Book Tokens for the value of £25 to all those students leaving their Primary School at either South Stoke or Woodcote, 22 Book Tokens for £35 to those students reach sixth form standard, 6 cheques for the value of £60 to all first year college students, and 15 cheques for the value of £50 to all second, third and fourth years students. We are always very grateful to received 'thank you' letters from students of all ages. I am particularly interested in the list of books, with graphic details, some of the Primary school children recommend I read!

We understand the Steam Rally may be running down; certainly this year it will be for a shorter period, so we must not expect such a generous donation from the Woodcote Charitable trust. In November we will be discussing how we might augment our funds, as we are reluctant to decrease the amount of the awards.

The Trustees of the Charity are the Revd. Paul Boughton ex officio as our Vicar, Dr Geoffrey Botting representing Reading University, Mrs Patricia Solomons for Woodcote PC, Mrs Lucinda Phipps for Oxfordshire County Council and Mrs Maureen Palmer.

### **The Smaller Charities**

These are very small, so we are only able to make awards every three to four years. The last awards were made in 2014. We hope to make further awards in November of this year. The Trustees of these small charities are the Rend Paul Boughton and Mrs Maureen Palmer.

**Maureen Palmer**

### **Women's Institute**

The past year has been another busy one for South Stoke WI with a packed programme of speakers, and events. We meet in the Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month. We are pleased to welcome two new members and our membership now stands at 39.

We have had a variety of speakers during the last twelve months on various subject, including, 'Medical Detection Dogs', 'Trust me I am an Estate agent', 'Burma just Opening up', 'The Four Queens of Crime', and an interesting talk from the High Sheriff of Berkshire on the 'History of Shrievalty and the Work of the High Sheriff'. In March several members attended the OFWI Annual Council Meeting at the Oxford Town Hall. Members have supported various county events throughout the year including trips to Mottisfont Abbey, Breamore House and Museum, Dyrham Park and Tetbury, The Literary Lunch and the Music Taster Day's at Benson. Also, the Christmas decoration workshop at Tackley, and a visit to the Christmas Market at Winchester. Eleven members joined with Woodcote WI on their Midsummer Murder Trip around the Chilterns.

Once again the weather forced us indoors for the President's Lunch. We had changed the lunch to June this year in the hope that the weather would be kinder to us, but, unfortunately this was not the case, and we had to hold our President's Lunch in the Village Hall, this still proved to be a very enjoyable afternoon with a delicious lunch provided by the members.

In August we held a coffee morning for the Denman Appeal, this was well supported and we were able to send £300 to the appeal. Also in August we once again supplied teas at the South Stoke Open Gardens. This event was well supported and a number of people came to visit the South Stoke Open Gardens and enjoy tea in the Village hall, we were able to make donations to the Village Hall and various charities. On a beautiful sunny day in September, we held a very enjoyable 'afternoon tea party' in a member's garden.

There have been two Thames Valley Group Meetings this year which members from South Stoke have attended and enjoyed. The first at Woodcote when Mike Payne gave a very interesting talk on The History of Pinewood Studios, and the second in October at Aston Tirrold when once again we were entertained by Patricia Purcelle with 'Takes from the Opera'

This year we were pleased to have given donations to three local charities, Oxsar, The Footstep Foundation and The Thames Valley Air Ambulance, as well as ACWW Pennies for Friendship.

We continue to enjoy our WI and look forward to another interesting year.

**Rita Mann**

## **Bell Ringers**

2016 had been a very bad year for us with regards to ringing either for Sunday services or practice nights, we only had a limited number of ringers therefore both events were often cancelled.

Then shortly before Xmas I had an email from a villager wishing to learn to ring and over the festive season that rose to five, so 2017 has started off very well. As I write this in mid March all five are progressing to the point where they are ringing with others and I hope to have them ringing in rounds at the Easter Sunday service, so things are looking up.

We hosted the Reading Branch of Ringers for their AGM on Saturday 11th February where the usual format prevailed, branch ringing, church service followed by tea and then the AGM. The attendance was between 35 and 40 people for what was a bitterly cold day.

**Robert Small**  
[robandsue1975@btinternet.com](mailto:robandsue1975@btinternet.com)

## **South Stoke Historical Society**

After a gap of 20 years, the South Stoke Historical Society has been revived, with two of the original members, Linda Gatto and Sarah Phipps as Chairman and President respectively. Our aims include encouraging interest in local history, conducting research, arranging lectures and visits and collecting items of local interest. We are aware that in the past a lot of valuable information has been lost, so we have set up a strict process to catalogue, record and archive anything we are loaned or given. At present we have 29 members who receive regular information about talks and visits, and we have organised visits to both the Streatley and South Stoke Dovecotes, which were well supported. We are hoping to expand and formalise membership in the next few months. We know that people who have lived in the village for a long time have amazing memories of life in the past, and in order to capture these before they are lost we have set up an Oral History Project where residents are interviewed and their memories recorded. Three residents have been interviewed so far, with some fascinating results. On Friday 7 April we have arranged to have another showing of Martin Bullock's wonderful films of past events in our village and are planning further talks and visits later in the year. We are also looking at how best to record some of our information digitally to preserve it for the future.

We welcome anyone who is interested in local history to join us and are always very grateful for any old photographs or documents relating to South Stoke to add to our archives.

Janet Brown

## **South Stoke Players**

The first pantomime in 2002, Snow White, was produced on a shoestring with a small loan from the Amenities Committee. Annual pantomimes followed increasing in ambition and drawing crowds from as far away as Goring and Streatley. In 2008 a summer Talent Show was held at The Malt House courtesy of Neil and Amanda Proctor, and the Players participated in the Tenor Bell Weekend celebrations in 2009. In February 2012 a Review of village talent was produced with a musical event for the Jubilee in June of the same year. More recently there was an Evening of Light Entertainment held in the Church.

Great fun was had both by the performers and by the audiences but it involved a lot of hard work and commitment from villagers past and present. Thanks must be paid to them all (too numerous to mention by name but you know who you are!) for helping back stage with directing, music, props, costumes, lighting and scenery as well as to those brave enough to tread the boards, but not least to Becky Garrett (nee Payne) whose idea it was to revive the Players in the autumn of 2001.

At every annual production a raffle was held in aid of local charities and to help fund the next production. Over the years donations have been made to the Sue Ryder Hospice Nettlebed, MacMillan Cancer Care, Thames Valley Air Ambulance, South Stoke School, St Andrews church, the Parish Council and the Amenities Charity. More recently funds were donated towards the shop floor and towards the village hall radiators.

After 15 years South Stoke Players have decided to bring down the final curtain and close their bank account. The remaining funds have been distributed to the Sue Ryder Hospice Nettlebed and the Thames Valley Air Ambulance with the bulk of the money (£1200) donated to the Parish Council to be used towards the new hall and shop.

**Jan Connors**

### **Angling Club**

The 2016/2017 season was the best to date we had in terms of achievements.

We held a 2 leg match with Goring Angling and won both matches, also we raised £716.21 for certain charities. One special match for our much loved friend and supporter Sarah-Larkin-Smith and all proceeds went to Epilipsy Research UK.

I wish to thank all my kind hearted fishermen for the dedication and support along with many local villagers for making this so worthwhile. It has although been noted that we are 25% down on village support from last year and wondering if we should continue as we are, (its done to protect something we have in our village) rather than a big outside club taking it on. Thankfully a number from outside the village kept our numbers up, (so I thank them also). Some thinking will be done to see what we do for the 2017/2018 season.

Lastly I held a pub quiz in our local Perch and Pike Pub (which has supported us throughout the years) and I thank Neil, Alex and now Simon for this. The quiz was a huge success and proves what we can do.

**Paul Stevens**

### **South Stoke Community Shop**

While trading has been difficult during the year, we have experienced pressure on both prices and margins, the shop has enjoyed another busy year. Once again, we are grateful for the continued commitment of the small army of volunteers who continue to support our enterprise and without whom the venture would not be possible. Inevitably, there have been changes as people leave the village but also as others join and fill the gaps.

The manager's hours have been increased slightly to reflect the increased demands of the business and recently opening hours have been slightly changed to better reflect trading traffic flows.

As already mentioned, trading has been a challenge with takings down about 4% on the previous year. Villager footfall has decreased noticeably but, while very weather and recreation ground related, could be more than positively reversed if every adult in the village bought just £5.00 of goods from the shop each week. We exist to support the village but depend totally on the village's support! Full results for the year will be published in May and we are hoping for something close to a breakeven outcome.

As ever, a full maintenance programme was undertaken during the year and this included refurbishment work to the toilet, resurfacing of the car park and replacement of the outside furniture. Most recently we updated and replaced our entire till system. The old system was no longer supported by the provider and, after some research, the board committed to the purchase of a brand new system; this has proved to be a major undertaking. Despite suffering our fair share of bugs and teething problems, the new system is in and working and provides us with a wide range of features and benefits including contactless card payments and fully electronic stock control.

Events like Pizza on the Park, the Christmas Fair and England rugby match coverage in the village hall have remained popular contributions by the shop to the community; these events also generate small but welcome additional revenues to the business. In May the shop is organising a Vintage themed car boot sale on the recreation ground – we hope the village will strongly support this event and that the weather is kind to us.

Finally, while the business is rightly concerned with the anticipated expiry of the planning permission for its temporary accommodation in March 2019, we are also excited by the project currently under consideration by the Parish Council together with the Amenities Committee and ourselves. The Parish Council has asked the shop board to work collaboratively to develop options for a joint shop and community hall project. A decision on the path forward is anticipated within the next months.

In all, the business has enjoyed a solid year with much to look forward to in 2017.

**David Kennedy**

## **RAG – Rail Electrification in the Goring Gap**

The electrification of the Great Western Mainline continued last year with further installation of portal structures along the line. The section from Reading to Didcot ie the test track, was completed and made live in July 2016, when testing of the new Hitachi Class 800 Intercity Express Trains began. Indefinite delays to some parts of the GWML were announced in Nov 2016 due to budget over-runs, including the section from Didcot to Oxford.

RAG held several meetings with Network Rail (NR) throughout the year with a view to ensuring that NR maintained their stated intention to retrofit the section of the track through the AONBs with new designs (subject to itemised funds being approved). Other actions included;

- the sending of several legal letters to NR challenging their Permitted Development Rights and their adherence to the laws protecting AONBs
- a review of NR's Balfour Beatty contracted new designs report and the LVIA work that was conducted in parallel – this resulted in the original 80 or so designs first considered being reduced to 10 in August and then 4 in January

- the engagement of several other Parish Councils along the AONB section and their attendance at key meetings
- having two questions asked in the Houses of Parliament by local MPs regarding the visual impact of the electrification work on the landscape
- the continued engagement with the Design Advisory Group (DAG - which includes the Chilterns Conservation Board, the North Wessex Downs Conservation Board, Natural England and SODC)
- maintaining and updating the AG web-site and Facebook page
- supporting NR in a plan to hold Public Event meetings in several parishes to show their new designs as part of the belated Consultation Plan

The consultation events were due to be held in late January and February, however at a RAG/NR meeting held on 12 January 2017, DAG - together with RAG - told NR that the designs that they had chosen to present at the Public Events and the process to choose those designs were flawed and could not be supported by the group. DAG also stated that they had not been properly informed or consulted during the latter stages of the process. It was suggested that NR should revisit the report and the design options in order that further designs and more imaginative options were included (including wire-headspans), there was a clearer indication of where the designs might be deployed (as part of a mixed design approach) and there was better integration with the visual impact work. NR subsequently postponed the Public Events at short notice stating that it would conduct the work suggested and would report back in a few months.

Although negotiations with NR appear to be progressing towards a better solution for the AONB section, there is still a significant risk that Network Rail is simply conducting this new design work and consultation exercise in order to fulfil their statutory duties with regards to AONB legislation, and that subsequently they will renege on implementing a retrofit project arguing that the overall project is too far over budget and that funding for retrofitting the AONB section is simply not available. RAG is fully aware of this and is capturing evidence, including NR statements to the media, minuted promises, statements of intent etc, in order that there is the basis for legal action to be taken resulting in a judicial review should NR back-track on their promises.

**Ian Haslam**

### **Shop and Village Hall Consultation**

We have had a good level of response to our consultation event on 10<sup>th</sup> February. We had 115 responses to the questionnaire, 34 at the event and 81 after the event.

We had a good level of response from Chapel Close, The Street, and Cross Keys Road. There was a poor level of response from The Gardens, and South Bank.

84 responses (73%) were in favour of a combined hall and shop building while 29 responses (25.2%) favoured separate buildings.

Responses regarding the siting of the hall was as follows

<b>Location</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Recreation Ground near the Shop	51	43.2%
Recreation Ground near Railway	10	8.5%
The Glebe	45	38.1%
The Park	4	3.4%
Existing Hall site	8	6.8%

**Total**

**118**

**100.0%**

## **1. Conclusions from the Responses**

The majority of respondents favoured a combined Hall and Shop building.

Over 50% of respondents favoured the Hall being on the Recreation Ground with the majority favouring a site near the existing shop.

There was good support for the building being on The Glebe.

There would be sufficient support for a combined building on either the Recreation Ground or on The Glebe.

## **2. Recommendations**

The village shop derives significant revenue from people visiting the playground that significantly helps to keep the shop self-funding. We have flagged that moving the shop and the playground to the Glebe would leave the Recreation Ground under utilised.

We don't know whether a hall and shop on The Glebe is viable as that is dependent on the landowner and on housing development plans.

The Hall and Shop on the Recreation Ground would only work if the planning authorities accept the width of the access road and if there is additional parking on The Glebe.

We await decisions from the Parish Council and then still have lots more work to do engaging an architect, agreeing designs, finalising costs, identifying funds etc.

**Geoff Ward**

## **Housing Development in South Stoke**

Following on from the guidance given by Parishioners, in the first housing development questionnaire/consultation in Autumn 2015, as to where best to build, and what sort of housing was needed, the South Stoke Housing Development Project (SSHDP) Steering Group, has been working all year, developing a plan for new housing that will meet these choices over the next two decades, as well as satisfying the local authority's likely house-building targets for a small village over the same period.

This work has involved frequent meetings with large local land-owners, and the owner of the Glebe field in particular as well as with officers from the District Council's Planning department and Community First Oxfordshire.

The outcome of these efforts has been the creation of a presentation by the Steering Group containing three potential options, majoring on how the Glebe field could be planned for the future.

This presentation, contained in a series of 15 large wall-charts, and supplemented by several short verbal explanations by Steering Group members, was the subject of an Open Day in the Village Hall on Saturday 4 March. Approximately 150 parishioners attended during the day and approximately 130 of these completed and handed in an Exit Poll document, indicating their preference for one or other of the three options, or for none of the given options.

Although there was a clear majority out of the 130 responses in favour of the largest option of 25 houses on the field, the Steering Group (SG) has decided to keep this second

consultation open until the 14 April, and is currently seeking responses from any 16 year-old or over parishioner, who has not already registered their opinion.

When the consultation is closed and the final results and comments analysed the SG will then make first recommendations as to the way forward to the Parish Council and to the land-owner of the field. The results will be reported on in the May edition of the SS Newsletter.

If anyone attending this Annual Parish Meeting this evening has not already completed an Exit Poll questionnaire, a copy can be obtained from Sue Gill, the Parish Clerk, and details of where to return the completed form will also be available. We value your input.

Details of the presentation and related material can be found online at:

[https://gallery.mailchimp.com/72315946643342f9ecb283630/files/f81222a8-ce1a-443c-b648-9baecabc3ed1/SS\\_Housing\\_Development\\_Consultation\\_excerpt\\_from\\_April\\_2017\\_Newslatter\\_.pdf](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/72315946643342f9ecb283630/files/f81222a8-ce1a-443c-b648-9baecabc3ed1/SS_Housing_Development_Consultation_excerpt_from_April_2017_Newslatter_.pdf)

Roy McMillan,  
Chairman, SSHDP SG

## **Parish Council**

The following are reports from each of the Councillors

### **Cllr Roy McMillan – Chairman**

#### **Governance & Development**

The Parish Council which routinely meets on the third Monday of each month, has been busy over the last year with both mundane matters and several important development projects, each of which you will have heard more about from earlier speakers. These are:

- 1 The Hall n' Shop project
- 2 The Housing Development project

The PC and I are very grateful to all who have been involved in the two sub-committees and especially to Geoff for leading the former, and to Ian Haslam who has been of enormous assistance to me on the latter.

Some of the other matters with which we have been actively involved during the year are as follows:

- The School Playground issue was finally put to bed, by the acceptance of SODC Planning in July last year, of a compromise solution, which saw the school agree to introduce several softer infrastructure measures. The actual implementation of some of these changes are still in progress, but should be finished by the end of this month (weather permitting).
- The future of the local bus service hung in the balance for several months, after Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) withdrew all its rural bus route subsidies in July 2016. Messrs Go Ride fortunately did not pull the plug on the 134 route, but instead opted to introduce a much reduced trial commercial timetable as of 22 July. However this trial only lasted until the end of January, when Go Ride decided it could not continue with any of its Oxfordshire routes as they were continuing to lose money. Fortunately they gave us some three months notice of this termination, and thanks to the courageous intervention of Mike Ward, a

Goring resident – with whom I have collaborated for several years on bus service matters – we now have Going Forward Buses CIC operating a significantly improved service on our route. More power to his elbow .... and please do support/use this new operator's service wherever possible!

- Various OCC and SODC Consultations and Forums - including several from both of these organisations on their proposals for a Unitary Oxfordshire.
  - Possible uses for the Park, which culminated in a decision in principle to install two hard Tennis Courts, subject to grant availability. Unfortunately this project had to be postponed until the outcome of the Hall n' Shop project had been established .... as The Park was seen as one of the possible locations for a new joint-facility Hall & Shop. As a different location has now been recommended for this facility, the PC will shortly be able to recommence work on the Tennis Courts proposal.
  - The PC organised and paid for the repair of the access lane to the Recreation Ground, including the installation of speed bumps
  - Working with OCC to:
    - repair pot-holes
    - keep the growth of verges under control, especially where it affects sight lines at road junctions within the village
    - have dangerous overhanging trees cut-back
    - maintain highway storm water drainage systems
- It should be noted that the amount of work that OCC will now fund in many areas, including some of the above, has been seriously reduced over the last two years, and in some cases in which we have requested work to be done, they now refuse due to lack of budget, e.g., footpath repair!
- We organised the successful Queens 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations on 12<sup>th</sup> June
  - Consideration of BT's offer to sell the village telephone box to the PC
  - Many planning applications. The PC is required to consider each PA for house extensions and new house building in the Parish, and to submit its views to SODC Planning
  - Although the PC does not own the Slipway, it does fund ground maintenance in the immediate area and also is required to pay an annual slipway fee to the Thames Conservancy

My thanks to my Councillor colleagues for all their work on the above and the many other unreported tasks with which we get involved. My thanks also to Sue Gill our Clerk, for all her support over the year, and for attempting to keeping us all on the straight and narrow.

Finally my thanks to Chris Bertrand for his several years of work as a Councillor, laterly as my Vice-Chairman. Amongst many other interests Chris has shown a dedication to the appearance of the village, and is frequently to be seen walking the various footpaths and Rights of Way around the Parish, and always reports back to the PC on any unsatisfactory and dangerous aspects – frequently ending-up by remedying matters by himself. Thanks for all your help Chris, we will be sorry to lose you from the PC next month.

**Councillor Roy McMillan, Chairman**

## **Cllr Chris Bertrand**

### **Environment**

- Perhaps the most significant item that I have been involved with this year is the final realisation that the Village Hall is not sufficiently stable to justify spending large sums of money on a renovation project. It is not about to fall down but work has now begun to consider the best way to replace it with a new building and much consultation has taken place.
- We have kept the ditch by Cross Keys Road clear and functioning this year and flooding has been significantly decreased. It is however an on going problem and at some point a long term solution will have to be considered.
- Many thanks to those villagers who responded positively to our request to clear ditches and drainage channels. Keeping the channels open does help to prevent properties from flooding.
- We had intended to take over responsibility for the verge-cutting from OCC but in the event it did not prove viable. OCC will only be doing one cut a year however unless they are requested to do extra work because of road hazards. The Parish Council will be keeping an eye on this and are prepared to intervene if OCC do not respond quickly enough.
- Many thanks to those villagers who maintain the verges outside their properties
- Although not in the direct ownership of the Parish Council we have continued to maintain the slipway for village and public use. Bollards have been installed to protect the grass.
- Ferry Lane is a highway and as such is the responsibility of OCC who have dealt with fallen trees reasonably swiftly. Thanks to Michael Saunders for introducing us to Green Gym who removed much of the ivy that was weighing these trees down.
- Moles and rabbits have been a considerable nuisance on the Recreation Ground this year and despite several attempts by different people and organisations they continue to pose a challenge to the users of the park. The rabbits dig holes everywhere that create trip hazards and nibble the bark of the young trees while the molehills turn the grass into a muddy quagmire. Any expert advice to help with this problem is very welcome
- We responded to complaints and observations from a number of villagers about the dangers on the access road to the Recreation Ground by installing a new curb and traffic calming.
- Thanks to Jamie Turner for assisting in our maintenance of the Recreation ground where tree pruning and chipping is concerned.
- Thanks to Robert Small for continuing efforts to maintain the Bier Path

**Councillor Chris Bertrand, Vice Chairman**

## **Cllr John Verrill**

### **Legal - No Report**

## **Cllr Bryan Urbick**

### **Finance**

The Parish Council has several powers, though most powers are not typically used. A requirement – and one that cannot be delegated - is that the budget and precept be determined each year. The precept is part of the Council Tax for all who live in South Stoke Parish, and it is a designated line item on the Council Tax Notice. This year the budget and precept was approved in our December Parish Council meeting.

The precept this year was set at £20,503.35, an increase of 7.5% from the previous year. The increase in Council Tax is about £0.50/month for a Band D dwelling, so in real terms is not significant. This increase is because of the decision of the Parish Council to cover additional costs for road safety investigations, as well as the support of two sub-committees leading large projects for the Parish: Shop & Hall project and the Development in South Stoke project. There are also likely to be increased costs for tree surveying and maintenance, a Parish Council responsibility. We also continue to see the services of OCC and SODC erode because of their own budget restrictions, and the Parish Council believes it needs to be ready to take on some of these. It remains a tough time for local authorities and budgets. The decision to increase the precept was not a decision taken lightly, and we maintain our intent to continue to invest in our parish life and support our local community.

The detail of the finance by our Clerk can be found further on in the report – but if there are questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

### **Communication**

The Newsletter continues to thrive, with the steady advertising revenue being channelled to provide additional content, and as many colour editions/part colour editions as possible – with almost all issues having at least front and back covers in colour. We started the year with issues being about 16 pages, with 6 or 7 pages of adverts. We are now up to 20 – 24 pages, with 7 or 8 pages of adverts.

Catherine Rohll does a really great job in managing the advertising, keeping track of and chasing through renewals as well as encouraging new advertisers – lots of thanks to Catherine for this. I encourage all Parishioners to support our advertisers, and please let them know when you do use their services that you saw their advert in the South Stoke Parish Newsletter. (If you are aware of businesses or individuals that would like to advertise in our newsletter, please have them contact Catherine Rohll at [catherine.rohll@tesco.net](mailto:catherine.rohll@tesco.net).)

Sian Rasmussen and her family, as well as Trudy Scarratt continue to deliver each issue to all households in the Parish. This is a monthly task, taking several hours. Abel Westerhof picks up the newsletter from the printer and delivers it each month to Sian, as well as distributing a few copies. Big thanks!

The newsletter wouldn't thrive without the content provided each month. Thank you to those who submit articles each month. It is fun to see the interests of the groups and individuals in the Parish, and to read each month about a range of topics. If anyone wants to submit an article, or has an idea for a recurring feature, do not hesitate to contact me at [editor@southstoke.org.uk](mailto:editor@southstoke.org.uk)).

The new website continues to be more manageable and less costly than two years ago (so I guess the 'new' website isn't really 'new' any longer). Do have a look at <http://www.southstoke.org.uk/> when you have a chance. Both the Shop & Hall Consultation as well as the Development in South Stoke Consultation are available, as

well as the usual information and document archives. If you have ideas for different or more information or pages, let me know. We have a contact list local businesses and South Stoke Parishioners who have businesses in the area, so please help me keep this up-to-date and let me know if any listing is obsolete, or more importantly, if anything is missing. I look forward to helping to keep the website up-to-date and hopefully it is a useful, continuing resource for the Parish.

**Councillor Bryan Urbick**

## **Cllr Andrew Scrivener**

### **Planning**

Since the last village meeting in April 2016, we have received 22 new planning applications. This compares to 20 last year.

The three new houses consented last year (two on Wallingford Road and one behind Freedom Cottages have now been built). No new houses have been consented this year although we have two live applications which if consented, would provide a pair of semi-detached houses in Cross Keys Road in place of an existing bungalow and a replacement dwelling in Ferry Lane.

The key change with regard to Planning Applications this year has been the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This provides a standard charge on new development where:

- the development was granted planning permission after 1 April 2016 and,
- it adds at least 100sqm additional floorspace to an existing building, or
- it is less than 100sqm but creates a new building, or
- it is a large supermarket, superstore or retail warehouse.

Hopefully the last category will not apply to us in South Stoke!

The cost of CIL is £156 per sqm of applicable floor space of which 15% comes direct to the Parish to spend on Infrastructure projects. These projects can include a variety of initiatives from road improvements to community facilities. A full list can be found at SODC website under the title of 'Regulation 123 List'.

To date no CIL applicable applications have been consented in South Stoke but the new dwellings mentioned above which are currently under consideration would have to make a CIL payment if consented and subsequently constructed.

By way of example, a 120 sqm house (typical 3 bed house) would generate a total CIL payment of £18,700 of which South Stoke would receive £2,800. This would increase to £4,680 if we had a Neighbourhood Plan in place.

Lastly but most importantly, we understand at the Parish Council that some applications are contentious. We always aim to listen and support the views of our parishioners within the guidelines set by SODC. We would therefore encourage all parishioners to make their thoughts known to the Parish Council on Applications as they are received so that your views can be taken into consideration.

**Councillor Andrew Scrivener**

### **Parish Council Insurance**

As the Parish Councillor responsible for the Parish Council and Amenities Charity annual insurance, as at 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016, we had come to the end of a 3 year agreement with Aviva Insurance which had provided excellent coverage, and stable premium since 2013.

A market exercise was carried out via the specialist Parish Council Insurance Brokers Came & Company, who has access to specialist policies with three different insurers, including Aviva, plus an approach to Zurich was made directly for comparison.

Of the three alternatives suggested by Came and Company, Hiscox came out as the best value alternative; the Direct Zurich option was dismissed as they were unable to offer a joint named policy which we prefer for economy of scale, so a decision was made to move cover at renewal from Aviva Insurance to Hiscox from Oct 2016.

Hiscox are a strong brand insurer, with a fair claims philosophy, and with a 3y deal we have managed to achieve around £400 per year saving on a like for like cover basis, on last year's premium.

### **Traffic Calming South Stoke**

It has been a long hard slog to get there, but parishioners may have noticed some traffic monitoring equipment placed strategically around the village in February, for 1 week to monitor traffic speeds along the B4009, on Ferry Road, and along the Street near to the school. This was funded by the Parish Council after months of trying to get Oxfordshire County Council interested.

The intention following on from the 2015 village plan meeting, is to firstly ascertain which if any areas are suffering from speeding traffic, then work with Oxfordshire County Council to see what calming measures are available based on the layout of the roads, the street lighting situation in the village, and what, if any, funding is available.

At the time of writing this report, we are still awaiting the data from OCC, but a private survey carried out on the B4009 in 2016, did show a high number of speeding vehicles at certain parts of the day, with the highest recorded speed of 57mph, on more than one occasion.

Once we have the data, we will also try to work with the Police, who carry out speed checks roughly a few hours per month, to compare results and look for the best way forward.

### **Pavement issues, Glebe Cottages and South Bank**

Following some concerns raised by some residents of Glebe Cottages, I met with Mr Keith Stenning of Oxfordshire County Council, and fellow Councillor Roy McMillan, to discuss the deteriorating state of the pavement, high undulation of the path at drive access points, and the inability for a powered wheelchair user to access the pavement at the 'Goring' end of the path.

At the meeting it was agreed that the tarmac would be patched to enable safe walking, but the layout of the path at the 'Goring' end could not be safely altered to allow a powered wheelchair access, due to the width of the pavement at that point, and in respect of the undulations, although it sounds unlikely as the pavements drop at each drive access point, OCC were not prepared to reduce the average height of the pavement to soften the undulations, as they perceive this height to be critical to prevent flooding of the cottages from surface water coming in from the field opposite.

The only solution by OCC would be to increase the pavement height to a uniform level the whole way across, thus making vehicle access to drives impossible, which is obviously not a route we wanted to pursue.

**Councillor Mick Walsh**

## Financial Summary

Please note that these are indicative figures only as we have not yet received the final bank statement and the finances are not finalised for the year. They will be audited in June.

<b>Receipts</b>	<b>2015/2016 (£)</b>	<b>2016/2017 (£)</b>	
Precept	14,869.00	19,081.00	
Grants/donations/advertising/grazing	3020.00	4032.16	
Fund raising for Village Hall Heaters	3,541.10		
Insurance share from Amenities Charity	714.32	880.82	
Bank interest	1.80	1.79	
Reimbursement Amenity Charity utilities		1360.00	
VAT	1,780.01		
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>23,926.23</b>	<b>25355.77</b>	
<b>Payments</b>			
Administration – General & Newsletter	4,644.87	5968.25	
Administration – Salaries	2,362.24	2273.76	
Memberships, rents and licences	470.43	534.93	
Regular maintenances	691.66	2408.81	
Grants	5,700.00	3505.00	
<b>Additional items and Section 137</b> 2016/2017 Reception Ground/Shop car park £4847.10, Village Hall heaters - £3390, The Park legal costs - £343 and S137 - £500	9,080.10	2195.00 170.27 360.27 1360	AC grasscutting The Park QB Party AC Utilities
VAT	1,760.41	936.46	
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>24,709.61</b>	<b>19712.75</b>	
<b>Surplus/deficit receipts over payments</b>	<b>783.48</b>	<b>5643.02</b>	
<b>Closing Bank Balance End of last fiscal year</b>	£17,243.74	£19,128.15	
<b>Memo: uncleared cheques</b>	426.50	281.95	
<b>Memo: uncleared invoices</b>			
<b>Memo: End of year 'true' bank balance</b>	<b>£16987.24</b>	<b>£18,846.20</b>	

Sue Gill, Clerk

## **South Oxfordshire District Council**

### **Better Oxfordshire unitary bid officially submitted to government**

Joint statement by Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, Cllr Matthew Barber, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council and Cllr John Cotton, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council:

“We have submitted proposals for a single council for Oxfordshire to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government today.

Visit the Better Oxfordshire website to read the full proposal.

“Our three councils have listened to the views of residents, businesses and other organisations across Oxfordshire and worked hard to address any concerns in the final bid - and with seventy percent of those surveyed showing support for a single unitary, we know we are on the right track.

“This is a significant moment for us and for the communities of Oxfordshire, who under a new single council will receive better, simpler joined up services, saving taxpayers millions of pounds each year and ensuring good quality services for generations to come.

“We believe local government reorganisation is vital to protect council services as central government funding is reduced, and to secure the investment in infrastructure needed to support sustainable economic growth in Oxfordshire.

“It is expected that the government will make a final decision on our proposal later this year, but work is already underway to ensure all six councils work together effectively on delivering a new council for Oxfordshire in 2019.”

### **South Local Plan 2033**

The Second Preferred Options consultation is scheduled to commence at the end of March 2017. The slight delay from the last update is to ensure we have the most robust evidence available to support the consultation – particularly for infrastructure. It will take the form of a full Draft Local Plan to include development management.

Some of the evidence studies and their progress:

- Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA): Final draft received. Will form an appendix to overarching SHEELA document
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP): Draft ‘baseline’ report received mid-Feb. officers are currently reviewing
- Evaluation of Transport Impacts (ETI): Draft interim report received Mid-Feb. Officers are reviewing.
- Green Infrastructure Strategy: Received first detailed ‘pilot’ (for Abingdon) and expecting similar settlement level assessments for all towns and larger villages through the first half of 2017. Settlement level assessments received and comments returned.
- Sustainable transport study: Consultants (Steer Davies Gleave) appointed. Technical note received and comments returned. Stakeholder workshops to be held Spring.
- Leisure Strategy: Consultants appointed Nortoft. Inception meeting to be scheduled.
- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment: Consultants ORS appointed.

- Cherwell to join study.
- Sustainability Appraisal. AMEC Foster Wheeler appointed. Inception meeting scheduled March.

### **Council tax frozen and more than a million to support community projects**

- Council tax frozen for the second year running
- More than £1,000,000 in grants available to support community projects
- New local lottery scheme to provide further funds for local causes

On 16 February South Oxfordshire District Council agreed to freeze its council tax rate for the second year running. With these freezes, and having also reduced its council tax in previous years, South Oxfordshire remains one of the most cost effective and efficient local authorities in the country.

In setting its budget the council included significant additional investment in car parking, support for the regeneration of Berinsfield and funding to help provide accommodation for rough sleepers.

More than £1,000,000 in grants is being made available to support community projects, such as improvements to village halls and providing new sports areas.

The district council will also invest a further £500,000 over the next two years to help deliver Superfast Broadband to more communities across the district.

To help raise further funds for local voluntary and community groups the council will introduce a new local lottery scheme during 2017 giving residents the opportunity to win while raising money for a chosen cause or general good cause fund. Almost £99,000 will also go towards increasing volunteering and volunteering opportunities across the district.

Cllr Jane Murphy, Cabinet Member for Finance at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "I am very pleased that despite tough budget conditions we are able to continue to offer over a million pounds to help community projects in our towns and villages. We're also launching the new local lottery and working to increase volunteering in order to provide extra support."

### **Design Guide shortlisted for award**

South and Vale urban design officers together with collaboration from other specialist officers have had the South Oxfordshire Design Guide shortlisted for the Public Sector entry in the Francis Tibbalds Urban Design Awards 2017.

Being shortlisted for the award is a good step towards raising the profile of the Council and the need to secure high quality design in South Oxfordshire. Awarded by the Urban Design Group, the awards give more recognition to urban design work, particularly at project stage. Voting is now underway and the results will be announced in March 2017.

### **Neighbourhood Planning Up-date.**

This month at Planning Committee we had the first opportunity to put Minister For Housing Gavin Barwell MP's announced new rules concerning Neighbourhood Plans to the test. An application for homes at Sonning Common was refused for a number of reasons, but one of the most significant was that the application differed significantly from the policies of the Adopted Neighbourhood Plan. This was not the only reason and I

have no doubt that the developer will appeal, but it will be one of the earliest tests of the Minister's directive.

### **5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) update**

Our public position remains that we have 3.8 years housing land supply (target 5YHLS).

- We have updated the district-wide completions data, which is being verified before we recalculate our 5YHLS
- In addition to all the major applications in and around our larger villages we are starting to receive housing proposals in our smaller villages such as Brightwell cum Sotwell (3) and Warborough (2).

### **46 Young Achievers awarded in South Oxfordshire**

Dozens of young people from South Oxfordshire have been recognised for their achievements in sport, art or citizenship at a celebration event.

South Oxfordshire District Council's Young Achiever Award Ceremony took place on Wednesday 22 February at Didcot Civic Hall with district council Chairman Paul Harrison and Vice Chairman Jeanette Matelot presenting certificates to 46 young people. Each young achiever also received £250.

Those recognised for their achievements include synchronised swimmers Lottie Moghul, aged 12, and Teri-Faye Coupar, 15; ice dancers Hannah Stewart and Anais Sophie, 13 and 15 years old; 16 year old endurance athlete Nancie Bowley; and Emily Williams, 15, who volunteers to help at her local Beaver group.

### **Grants available to help get residents active**

New funding from Sport England will be available to councils, community groups and sports clubs from January 2017. The funding is aimed at projects which reduce inactivity, increase volunteering and improve facilities. Please tell residents about the following funds:

- Community Asset Fund for capital projects to provide new or enhanced facilities, or new facilities in fields or unused buildings. Types of projects that could be eligible include renovating a sports pavilion, installing floodlighting or creating a new sports pitch. £5,000 - £150,000 is available.
- Inactivity Fund for revenue projects that increase activity levels in people aged 55 and over such as Walking Football or care home activities. Funding is anticipated to be between £250,000-£500,000.
- Volunteer Funding which targets under-represented groups and young people aged 10-20 years. Projects could include charities and organisations working with groups to promote volunteering opportunities for example matching volunteers to sports club volunteering roles.

For more information please contact Cath Dale, Participation Officer on 07801 203 551 or 01235 422222 or by email [cath.dale@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:cath.dale@southandvale.gov.uk).

### **Councils' meet Food Standards Agency targets**

The Food Standards Agency has recently published its report on local authority food law enforcement for the period 2015-16.

Out of the 323 English authorities that provided data, only 18 met the target to complete 100% of inspections scheduled for the year. Both South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are included within these 18, and are the only Oxfordshire authorities to have met this target. Both councils also achieved the national average of 93% for food premises that are 'broadly compliant' with food law.

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## **Report to Goring Division Parish Council - GENERAL OCC REPORT**

### **EXTRA FUNDING SECURED IN ADDITION TO 2017/18 BUDGET PROPOSALS**

The County Council set its budget for 2017/18 on Tuesday 14th February. Ahead of the meeting, it was announced the Council had £1,957,000 extra, over and above the position reported to the Cabinet in January, as a result of better than expected business rate collections, council tax collection fund surpluses and a higher than expected grant. The County is proposing to hold £926,000 of this until the 2018/19 financial year, to deal with future pressures. Cabinet proposes to spend the rest of the money (£1.03m) in this financial year in the following ways:

- £170,000 to be spent on additional grass-cutting work on highway verges. This is an area of spend that has been reduced in recent years.
- £250,000 one-off funding initially for a pilot Communities Fund for parishes and towns to bid for matched funding schemes following changes/reductions for funding for services.
- £600,000 additional funding for children's social care – a part of the council that has been exempted from cuts since 2010 but has continued to experience significant rising demand on services in common with children's social care departments across England.
- £11,000 increase on the Council's Flood Defence Levy.

### **OPEN ACCESS CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO CONTINUE AT 34 BUILDINGS**

Start-up funding for 12 more community schemes to run open access services at children's centres has been approved by OCC. The proposals, which will receive a total of £305,883, are among the latest to be considered as part of the transition from council-funded to community-led services at children's centre locations. Community services will complement the council's new service for 0-19 year-olds, which will meet the needs and aspirations of children at risk of abuse and neglect in Oxfordshire, and ensure that families who need extra help are identified at an early stage. When added to previously considered applications, the approval of these 12 schemes means funded plans are now in place for services such as 'stay and play' to continue at 18 children's centres, with business cases at a further six centres supported in principle but deferred to the final round of the Transition Fund for more work. Added to this, open access sessions will also continue at the eight Children and Family Centres and two satellite centres at the heart of the council's new Children's Service. In total, it means a combination of council-funded and community-led solutions for open access services are now confirmed or supported in principle at 34 buildings across the county – with more to come when applications for the

final round of transition funding are considered.

### **‘FIX MY STREET’ WEBSITE UPGRADE**

Over the last six months OCC has been working hard to make Fix My Street work more effectively. The new service will launch this month. It will improve the quality and consistency of public reports, as well as OCC internal processes for closing down reports, making it easier to reliably see what's going on in a given area. Members of the public who consistently give good information can be rewarded with 'trusted reporter' status, meaning OCC will fast track future reports to the contractor, resulting in quicker resolution for the resident and reduced effort for the inspectors. Before the new system launches, OCC needs to deal with reports that are still marked as 'open' in the current version. This means: 1) Leave open anything which has been active within the last 12 months; 2) Close anything older than 2 years; 3) For reports between 1 and 2 years old, notify the reporter by email that OCC intends to close their report, but give them the option to 're-open' the issue if they believe it is still a problem.

### **EXTENSION OF FIRE & AND AMBULANCE SERVICE CO-RESPONDING**

OCC Fire and Rescue Service has been working in partnership with South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) co-responding in the community for over 12 years. More recently OCC has also been working with Thames Valley Fire and Rescue partners to undertake a collaborative co-responding trial. (Co-Responders are firefighters trained by SCAS to provide a 'first response' to specific medical emergencies where there is an immediate threat to life prior to an emergency ambulance arriving on scene.) The trial has been a success with crews attending approximately 1500 medical emergency calls per year. To further support communities Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service are working in partnership with SCAS towards all fire engines within communities being available for cardiac arrests, so that casualties across Oxfordshire can receive the quickest available defibrillator and casualty support.

### **CADDY CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE OXFORDSHIRE'S FOOD WASTE**

Residents are being urged to do their bit to make sure food waste doesn't end up on the scrap heap. At the moment it is thought that around 30% of the county's food waste is put in waste bins rather than the food caddy – a figure all Oxfordshire's councils hope to cut significantly. To do this, the councils have launched a campaign with Agrivert, the company who process the county's food waste, to encourage residents to recycle more of the food they would otherwise throw away. It is two and a half times cheaper to process food waste if it is put into a food waste caddy for recycling or composting than if the same waste is put in the general rubbish bin. There's lots of advice on how to reduce food waste and information on how it is recycled at [www.recycleforoxfordshire.org.uk/lovefoodhatewaste](http://www.recycleforoxfordshire.org.uk/lovefoodhatewaste)

County Councillor David Nimmo Smith, Cabinet member for Environment, said: *“It is as easy to recycle food waste as it is to throw it in the main rubbish bin – but the benefits of recycling can be quite startling. Food waste collected for recycling is treated at Agrivert's anaerobic digestion plants in Oxfordshire, and used to generate enough electricity for over 9,000 homes, as well as making fertiliser for use on local farms.”*

## UNITARY UPDATE

At the end of January, OCC launched 'A Fresh Start for Oxfordshire', a draft of OCC's intended proposal for DCLG on how and why a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire could work. Since then, there have been meetings with the Leaders of South Oxfordshire and Vale District Councils, and further public consultation. It has now been agreed that the three councils will move forward with a new joint proposal for a single unitary council called 'A New Council for a Better Oxfordshire'. The principal change from the earlier version is that the proposed five area boards would be replaced by 15 to 20 area boards, based on the county's main market towns and their surrounding villages. In addition, Oxford (the city itself) would have a strengthened model of governance including an autonomous local council and area boards covering different parts. Full details can be found here: <https://www.better-oxfordshire.org>

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

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