

<b>Title</b>	District Councillors' Report
<b>Councillors</b>	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson & Cllr Ben Manning
<b>Parish</b>	Astons Parish Council
<b>Date</b>	8 November 2023

[Booking link](#) for planning surgeries for town and parish councils  
Corporate Performance Report [Quarter 1](#)

### **South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have pledged their ongoing commitment for paying staff at least the Real Living Wage.**

Both councils currently ensure all directly employed council staff receive at least the Real Living Wage and have done for several years. The Real Living Wage (currently £10.90 with an update due to be announced on 24 October this year) is based on the cost of living – looking at the current cost of household goods and services.

Last week, at Vale's Council meeting on Wednesday 11 October, and South's Council meeting on Thursday 12 October, councillors put forward a cross-party motion on the Real Living Wage, which were both passed unanimously.

The councils are now working towards accreditation as a Living Wage employer with the Living Wage Foundation. This will include setting out a plan of action so all future companies seeking to win council contracts are committed to paying, as a minimum, the Real Living Wage. Whilst it is not in our power to change existing contracts, we will urge our current suppliers and contractors to follow our example and commit to the Real Living Wage.

### **More people eligible for help for energy-saving measures**

As the cold weather starts to set in, we are promoting Welcome the Warmth - which offers a variety of fully funded energy efficiency measures including insulation, solar panels and heat pumps for those on a lower household income. The good news is that the income eligibility cap for the Oxfordshire scheme, including South and Vale residents, is now £39,000 (up from £31,000) which should mean that many more people are eligible to receive the help. Please help spread the word – [for more details, see the Welcome the Warmth website](#).

### **Grants available now to help look after local green spaces**

If you know a local volunteer group or organisation helping nature, they could be eligible for funding from us. We've teamed up with Trust for Oxfordshire (TOE) to help communities protect and enhance their local green spaces and improve access for residents to benefit from being in nature. The next grant application deadline is midday 8 January 2024. If you've got an idea and want

to give your project a boost, we recommend you have a quick chat with TOE before applying. Contact Rachel on [admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk)

### **Affordable housing grant to help address urgent need**

A new improved grant process means as part of the district council's work to help meet the urgent need for genuinely affordable housing in the region, local developers, Community Land Trusts and self-builders can apply for a Section 106 **affordable housing grant to build affordable homes that meet the councils' climate criteria.**

The council approved an improvement to the existing affordable housing policy to enable funds from Section 106 developer contributions to be used as a grant to build affordable homes that are energy efficient and cheaper for residents to live in and heat. The policy includes a revamped application process which includes clear evaluation guidelines and free expert consultation services for applicants who would like additional guidance.

The new application form now includes questions which determine how projects will minimise energy use and carbon emissions, as well as how they have identified locally appropriate species and set up long term management plans if they are adding tree planting and biodiversity improvements.

For more information and the application forms, please visit – [the South Oxfordshire affordable housing page](#)

### **Free carbon Emissions calculator tool**

We've launched a free simple-to-use carbon emissions calculator tool for town and parish councils to measure their current carbon emissions using energy and fuel bills. It makes it easy to work out where carbon and cost savings can be made.

For more information, email [climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk)

### **Changes to postal and proxy voting**

A series of national changes were introduced on 31 October for postal and proxy voting, and our officers have prepared [this briefing note](#) for members to explain them in a bit more detail. The changes include new identity checking requirements, online applications, restrictions on the number of people a person can act as a proxy for and maximum periods for absent voter applications.