

£210,000 investment in new gym equipment in South Oxfordshire

Abbey Sports Centre in Berinsfield, as well as leisure centres in Wheatley and Thame, will benefit from new equipment including treadmills, bikes, weights and resistance machines. Much of the current gym equipment at all the centres is over 10 years old and the gyms will benefit from a boost with new, modern equipment from Technogym.

SODC switchboard update

As part of our transformation programme, we are pleased to report our Switchboard is expected to move back “in house” from Capita at the end of this month.

The council will be using a new automated switchboard system – this should mean that most switchboard calls can be routed through to the right person or team automatically. Anyone who can't navigate the automated system – or doesn't know who they want to speak to – will be able to speak to a customer service advisor, who will try to resolve their enquiry or put them through to someone who can.

New tourism and local events website

We've just launched the new [Visit Southern Oxfordshire website](https://southernoxfordshire.com). It is packed with things to do in South Oxfordshire (and Vale) for visitors and residents alike – right now you can find out about what's going on over the festive period from light switch-ons and pantomimes, to festive markets and Santa Dashes. Our area is, of course, home to many high quality independent businesses; Shopping locally helps to support our highstreets and the local business community, and you'll find unique gifts and won't have to worry about your parcel going missing! Please take a look and spread the word: <https://southernoxfordshire.com>

Calling all Binfluencers – join our new WhatsApp channel!

We've just launch a new WhatsApp channel to help keep people informed about the council's waste and recycling services, including changes to collections during adverse weather and occasional reuse, reduce and recycle messages. The main aim of the channel is to encourage local “Binfluencers” to sign up and share updates with their local community. You can follow the Channel here: whatsapp.com/channel/0029VarRk8rGE56pjHEU8K29

Electric maintenance vehicles for SODC & Vale of the White Horse

The councils have taken delivery of two new electric vans as they start to decarbonise their fleet of maintenance vehicles. The all-electric Renault Kangoo vans will be used by the parks team and the public toilet cleaning team to travel throughout South and Vale.

It is estimated each van has already saved 475.25kg of carbon dioxide equivalent in the first two months of use. Their arrival is the beginning of a broader plan by the councils to fully convert the 12-strong fleet of maintenance vehicles within the next three years.

Wallingford Beach bathing water update

South Oxfordshire District Council leader Cllr David Rouane and the Council's River Thames Champion, Cllr Jo Robb issued a statement following news that the water at Wallingford Beach has received a 'poor' rating for this year by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in its recent report on Bathing Water sites:

“Wallingford was only made a designated bathing water site in May. Its rating for the 2024 bathing season (May to September) has been given due to spikes of bacteria in two of the 19 water samples taken... Designation puts pressure on the Environment Agency to investigate and address poor water quality to ensure the site meets bathing water standards.

“Rivers and streams are struggling to cope due to water pollution, including in the Thames. While we knew bathing water status would not immediately solve that issue, it should mean Thames Water would be legally required to treat waste outflows to a much higher standard... it has been an important first step towards that goal, which is our ultimate ambition.”

The DEFRA report on bathing water quality is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env17-bathing-water-quality-additional-datasets>. More information for river users is on South Oxfordshire District Council's [rivers and waterways page](#) - including the [Thames Water storm discharge map](#).

Council Services Over Christmas and New Year 2024/25

A guide to council services over the Christmas and New Year period when the council offices are closed to the public.

Abbey House – Reception will close at Abbey House from 4pm on Tuesday 24 December 2024 and will reopen on Thursday 2 January 2025 at 8.30am.

Waste collections – all you need to know about waste collections over the Christmas and New Year period – including the changes to the collection dates and what to do if collections are disrupted – is on our **Christmas waste page**.

Housing – If you know anyone who is at immediate risk of being made homeless while our offices are closed, contact our out-of-hours service, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The number to call 01235 422410. If you see someone sleeping rough and in an emergency situation you can call Streetlink on 0300 500 0914.

Cost of living help – The Community Hub will be closed from 4.30pm on Tuesday 24 December 2024 and will reopen on Thursday 2 January 2025 at 8.30am. If you need support or advice over the festive period please go to our **cost of living help pages for more information** or please contact our emergency out of hours phone number – 01235 422410.

Planning – Any planning applications or post submitted after we close for Christmas, including electronic submissions, will be treated as having been received on our next working day, Thursday 2 January 2025.

Council tax and benefits services – If anyone needs urgent help with council tax or benefits during the holidays, phone lines will be open as usual on 27 and 30 December.

Emergency Situations – There are details of what to do and who to contact during an emergency on our website – **emergency situations**

Leisure Centres and Warm Spaces – over the Christmas period there will be changes to the opening times of our Better Leisure Centres, please check via the **Better UK website** or with staff at your local centre for details. Our Leisure Centres are also open as **Warm Spaces** this winter from 9am to 2pm weekdays. Pop in and charge your phone, have a hot drink and chat with others.

If you know of an organisation planning to be a warm space during the winter months please do encourage them to add their details to: <https://www.warmwelcome.uk/#find-a-space>

Festive events – Discover what's happening across South Oxfordshire this Christmas at **SouthernOxfordshire.com**, a helpful guide to seasonal events and activities.

Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot is celebrating the festive season with Cinderella the pantomime, running from Wednesday 18 December to Tuesday 31 December. Tickets are now available on **Cornerstone Arts Centre's website**.