



MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, May 8, 2025

Councillors Present:

Jim Donahue (Chairman), Diana Smith, Katherine Higley, Paul O'Grady (arrived 20:08) and Romilly Swann.

Officers Present: Brian Inglis (Clerk and RFO)

Public and Press: None

District or County Councillor: Cllr Peter Dragonetti (South Oxfordshire District Council) and
Cllr Magdalena Filipova-Rivers (Oxfordshire County Council)

- | | | |
|------|---|-------|
| 1 | Election of Chairman of Parish Council for 2025-26 | 20:00 |
| | Cllr Donahue was elected as Chairman for 2025-26 and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office | |
| 2 | Apologies for absence & Parish Council Declaration | 20:02 |
| | Apologies were received from Cllr Frances Parkes and Cllr Debbie Leach. | |
| 3 | Declarations of Interest – There were none. | 20:03 |
| 4 | Election of Vice-Chairman of Parish Council for 2025-26 | 20:04 |
| | Cllr Smith was elected as Vice-Chairman for 2025-26 and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office | |
| 5 | Appointment of Chairs and Parish Council Representatives on Working Groups and Committees | 20:06 |
| | The list was updated and will be published on the village website (Action – Clerk) See Appendix 3 | |
| 6 | Public Forum – a time for members of the public to speak on any item on the agenda. No public present | 20:07 |
| 7 | To approve minutes of the meeting of April 17, 2025. | 20:08 |
| | Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes, and these were signed by the Chairman. | |
| 8 | Chairman's Announcements - See Appendix 1 | 20:10 |
| | It was agreed to add an item of "Thank You Notes" as a future standing agenda item (Action – Clerk)
Two "Thank You" notes were agreed (Action – Cllrs to send wording to The Clerk) | |
| 9 | To receive reports from District and County Councillors | 20:20 |
| 6.1 | SODC District Councillor Report – Cllr Dragonetti gave a verbal report. | |
| 6.2 | OCC County Councillor Report – Cllr Filipova-Rivers expanded on a submitted report. See Appendix 2 | |
| 10 | Planning Applications – to note receipt of the following notification | 20:30 |
| 10.1 | P25/S1367/DIS | |
| | Discharge of Conditions 5 (sustainable measures) and 12 (external lighting) on planning application
P19/S4248/FUL (Redevelopment of the site to include demolition of time expired buildings (G, K, M, N, S
(all to be fully demolished) and U (part demolition to remove store room) and replacement with a single
building (Building H). Refurbishment of existing laboratories (Building D.)) | |
| | Technology Centre Bozdown Drive Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR | |
| 11 | The Clerk gave a brief report on decisions made by SODC since the last meeting and updated Councillors
on the status of applications which are still under consideration. | 20:32 |

12

Finance:

20.35

12.1

To approve the payment schedule for May:

Payments:	Sub-total	VAT	Total (£)
Staff Expenditure – May			690.93
South Oxfordshire District Council – Dog Bin Empty	858.73	171.75	1030.48
South Oxfordshire DC – Pre-Planning Advice (Tea Hut)	413.33	82.67	496.00
Bouchier Fencing Ltd – Posts for Hardwick Rd project	351.00	70.20	421.20
Scofell – Monthly Grounds Maintenance 35793	694.44	138.89	833.33
Scofell – Monthly Grounds Maintenance 36029	694.44	138.89	833.33
Lloyds Bank – April Bank Charges			4.25
Amazon – Notice Board Keys	5.74	1.16	6.90
Reimburse Councillor Expenses – Red Rose			11.99
Arthur J Gallagher – Parish Council Insurance			913.83

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

12.2

To note receipts as detailed:

Receipts:	Amount
South Oxfordshire District Council – CIL Payment	4762.80
HMRC – VAT Return 2024-25	2063.92

12.3

Bank Statements and Reconciliations for April 2025:

The RFO gave a concise report on documents which had been previously circulated and scrutinised by councillors, answering questions to the satisfaction of councillors.

12.4

To approve the updated budget for Parish Council Year 2025-26

The Clerk gave a report on the Final Budget for 2025-26 (circulated prior to the meeting)

Resolution: Councillors voted to approve the Final Budget.

The detail of the quotation from Insurance Brokers (Arthur J Gallagher) was discussed.

Resolution: Councillors voted to accept the proposal, with a 3-year agreement to hold the price, subject to stated conditions. The policy will renew on 1st June 2025.

12.5

Update on Year End and plans for Internal Audit and AGAR submission

The Clerk has submitted all financial reports generated by the Rialtas Accounting system, Bank Statements and Reconciliations, HMRC Records and other documents as requested by the Internal Auditor Claire Connell and will work with the IA to present the AGAR to the June meeting of council.

13

Governance:

21:00

13.1

To consider adopting updated NALC Standing Orders 2025 (as recommended by OALC)

Resolution: Councillors voted to adopt the updated document. (Action – Clerk to make the updates)

13.2

To consider adopting updated NALC Financial Regulations 2025 (as recommended by OALC)

Resolution: Councillors voted to adopt the updated document. (Action – Clerk to make the updates)

14

The Clerk gave a report to Councillors on the progress of the Hardwick Road Verges Project, as follows -

21:00

The Highways permit is yet to be issued, but our contractor is hopeful of this being imminent.

The posts and reflectors have been delivered to the site.

15

To review plans for the Annual Village Assembly on Thursday May 22, 2025

21:05

The Clerk gave a brief report on responses to invitations to attend the Village Assembly. Updated report to be forwarded to Chairman before the event. (Action – Clerk)

16

To agree the dates of meetings of the Parish Council in 2025-26

21:10

The dates of Parish Council meeting for 2025-26 were set and will be published on the village website and notice board (Action – Clerk)

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 17 | To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list. The list was updated, with some actions being marked as complete. A new action was added – Clerk to research free GDPR training courses for Councillors. | 21:15 |
| 18 | Items for Report and Inclusion on the next scheduled Agenda – deadline Thursday, June 5, 2025. | 21:20 |
| 19 | To confirm the date and time of next meeting as Thursday June 12, 2025 at 20:00 | 21:25 |

APPENDIX 1 – CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS – Cllr Jim Donahue

Biffa Deep Cleaning of Pavements

The Parish Council requested this annual deep cleaning to address all pavements in the village, including Hardwick Road and the High Street. This is scheduled for May, so I will keep an eye out for them.

Cedar Lodge

The Cedar Lodge VIP Grand Opening has been moved from 9th May to 30th May. I have forwarded the invitation to council members. I will be away and unable to attend.

You will have seen that we had a report of some contractors working on the weekend from neighbours. They reported this to SODC Planning as a breach in planning conditions and asking them to enforce compliance going forward. Apparently, the planning conditions only allow working until 1pm on Saturdays. I contacted the ZephyrX Programme Director Saturday morning who contacted the site manager, who sent his apologies for working past 1pm. Apparently it stopped at about 2pm.

OCC Highways is still committed to inspecting the condition of Eastfield Lane in early May. They say that can’t take any further action until they make an assessment.

Playground Manhole cover – Thank you to Cllrs Higley and Smith along with Brian Howe of Manor Road who built up dirt around this to reduce the risk of this as a tripping hazard.

Resident issues:

- New Bench on Village Green – A resident has offered to fund a new bench on the Village Green in remembrance of a former resident. Frances is working with them to replace one of the benches that is damaged. I would also like to thank Cormac Neeson of the Cricket Club for making some repairs to the bench in the meantime.
- Two residents complained to me about two large signs on Hardwick Road for “The Roof Moss Guys”. As this was not in compliance with our advertising policy, I asked Brian to contact the company, and the signs were taken down a couple days later.
- I am still following up on getting a High Street drain cleared that was missed previous drains clearing earlier this year.
 - A new OCC drainage clearing contractor has just started this fiscal year and the clearing process has changed along with it. So, OCC are not sure when it can be done.
 - OCC understands that this drain is critical as it may be blocking street drainage to the river.
 - I will stay in touch with them to confirm when he can commit to a timeframe.

1. Budget

The budget was approved at Oxfordshire County Council and the highlights are as follows:

- An additional £58.8 million fixing potholes
- An additional £17.2 million for children's services
- An additional £1.14 million for SEND
- An additional £10.8 million for Adult Social Care
- An additional £11.8 million for greener schools and public buildings
- Unlocking £22.5 million of developer contributions
- An additional £1.8 million for rural active travel including £200k for the Haddenham and Thame Greenway
- £3.6 million to increase the frequency of gully clearing from every 4 years to annually
- £1 million for better rail stations and greener travel
- Park & Ride prices frozen for 2025/26

2. Recycling

For the 11th year in a row, residents in Oxfordshire are the best in England for recycling, reusing and composting, according to the latest government figures. OCC have again been named the top performing county council waste disposal authority.

3. Resurfacing Plans 25/26

Oxfordshire County Council is launching a £7.4 million road resurfacing programme this spring, aiming to improve nearly 100 roads across the county. The initiative, running from 22 April to 16 June 2025, will involve surface dressing treatments to over one million square metres of carriageway. This preventive maintenance approach is designed to extend the lifespan of roads and enhance driving conditions. The council emphasises the importance of this work in maintaining road quality and urges motorists to stay informed about upcoming works and to drive cautiously in treated areas. The method offers many advantages, including:

- Sealing the road surface to keep out water, one of the major causes of deterioration and potholes.
- Reducing the deterioration of the road surface.
- Restoring the necessary level of skid resistance to reduce skid-related traffic collisions.
- Enabling worn out road surfaces to last longer, increasing the time before structural maintenance is required.
- Maximising the cost effectiveness of limited highway maintenance budgets.
- Minimising traffic disruption and congestion as large areas of roads – up to 100,000 square metres – can be treated in a single day.
- The work is highly weather dependent and cannot be completed in wet conditions.

Updated details about the programme, including a map showing where and when the work will be taking place, will be available on Oxfordshire County Council's [website](#).

In the division surface dressing is planned for **Whitchurch Hill, Gallowstee Common**.

4. Gulley Cleaning Schedule for 25/26

Below you will find the gulley cleaning schedule for the upcoming financial year. If there are any problem areas you would like me to raise with county officers, please let me know.

Start	Finish	District	Ward
01/01/2026	28/02/2026	South	Goring
01/01/2026	28/02/2026	South	Kidmore End & Whitchurch
01/02/2026	31/03/2026	South	Woodcote & Rotherfield

5. Plans for Improving Bus Travel

Oxfordshire County Council has submitted an updated Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the UK government, detailing how it intends to utilise over £15 million in allocated funding to enhance bus services across the county. The plan focuses on making bus travel more reliable, accessible, and affordable, particularly in rural areas. Key proposals include introducing new and faster services, retaining existing routes, and implementing measures such as £1 Sunday bus fares during December to encourage increased usage.

These efforts are part of a broader strategy to increase bus patronage and reduce reliance on private vehicles, contributing to environmental goals and improved public transportation options for residents. The council's submission reflects its commitment to working collaboratively with bus operators and stakeholders to deliver a more efficient and user-friendly bus network

6. Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Oxfordshire is developing its first Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to restore and enhance the county's natural environment. This initiative, part of a national effort under the Environment Act 2021, aims to map out key areas for biodiversity improvement and outline actions to support wildlife, improve air and water quality, and mitigate climate change impacts. The strategy is being shaped collaboratively by Oxfordshire County Council, district councils, Natural England, and local communities

The development process has involved extensive public engagement. Phase 1 (February–March 2024) gathered input from 1,038 participants through workshops, events, and an online survey. Phase 2 (May–June 2024) focused on identifying specific locations for potential habitat restoration. Currently, in Phase 3, draft documents and maps have been published, highlighting priority areas and proposed actions for biodiversity enhancement. Feedback from this phase will inform the final strategy, set to be published by July 2025.

7. Devolution and Government Reorganisation

On 16 December 2024, the government published a white paper on a national programme of devolution and reform to local government. The county council's cabinet responded by requesting that the county is fast-tracked for local government reorganisation while continuing to work with partners on a future mayoral strategic authority.

The County Council has submitted a bid for a single Oxfordshire-wide unitary authority which contrasts the view of SODC which is working on a proposal for a 'Ridgway Council' comprising South Oxon, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire. Both those proposals are in line with government's white paper so it will be up to the Secretary of State to choose. There are pros and cons to each of those, and I support the inclusion of both bids. However, on balance my current preference is for a smaller unitary without an urban centre which should lead to a more equitable consideration and allocation of resources to our towns and villages.

8. School Places

More than nine out of ten Oxfordshire children with applications to start reception year in primary schools across the county have been offered a place at their first choice for the next school year.

9. The Oxfordshire all-age autism strategy 2025 – 2030

Oxfordshire County Council is developing its first all-age autism strategy for 2025–2030, aiming to enhance the lives of autistic individuals across the county. This comprehensive plan addresses the diverse needs of autistic people and their families, ensuring access to necessary resources, services, and opportunities for a fulfilling life. The strategy has been co-produced with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to reflect the community's needs and aspirations.

The council is currently seeking public feedback on the draft strategy. Residents are encouraged to review the draft and share their views on its vision and themes. The feedback will inform any necessary changes before the strategy is finalised in May 2025. The consultation is open until 11:59 PM on Sunday, 25 May 2025. To participate, visit the [Let's Talk Oxfordshire consultation page](#) and complete the online survey. Alternative formats and paper copies are available upon request by emailing consultations@oxfordshire.gov.uk or calling 01865 792422. **Related to this**, if you a parent or carer of a child or young person with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)? Get information and advice straight to your inbox. Sign up [here](#)

10. Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

Oxfordshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) is a key strategic document which Oxfordshire County Council as highway authority is required by law to have in place. It sets out how the council can work with others to try and make sure the public rights of way network meets the needs of the public, now and in the future. More information on ROWIPs can be found at [Government guidance on improvement plans](#)

This is the first consultation of two that are necessary to produce the third RoWIP for Oxfordshire. This is the **initial review stage** and the views of land managers, local councils and other stakeholders are being sought alongside members of the public, and, taken together, will help officers to write a meaningful and deliverable plan. Please see the survey [here](#)

11. Grants and Cost of Living

Hardship fund: OCC's hardship fund (Resident Support Scheme) was launched in June. Phone: 01865 804171

Home Upgrade Grants: OCC & its partner AgilityEco is reaching out directly to households who will qualify to benefit from Home Upgrade Grants (to improve energy efficiency for 'off-grid' homes)

Community Capacity Grants: The Community Capacity Fund will open for grant applications from 6th September. Grants of between £5,000 and £20,000 are funded by OCC and applications processed by Oxfordshire Community Foundation. Grants are given to projects that "support people to live well in their community, remaining fit and healthy for as long as possible"

First points of contact for Parish Council related activities

- **General** – Chairman – Cllr Jim Donahue, 07557 668601 or [Email](#)
Clerk – Brian Inglis, 07737 982907 or [Email](#)
- **Village Hall** – Parish Council contact - Cllr Katherine Higley, [Email](#)
 - for information on hiring the hall please see the web-page [here](#).
- **Traffic and Parking** – Cllr Diana Smith [Email](#)
- **Pedestrian Safety** – Cllr Jim Donahue [Email](#), Cllr Diana Smith [Email](#)
- **OCC Road, Pavement and Drainage** – Cllr Jim Donahue, 07557 668601 or [Email](#)
- **Open Spaces**
 - Village Maintenance Contractor Supervising Officer – Brian Inglis (Clerk)
 - Village maintenance working parties, and Open Space guardian responsibilities are coordinated by the [Green Team](#)
- **Allotments** – John Coupland – Chair, Whitchurch & District Allotment Society [Email](#)
Parish Council contact – Cllr Katherine Higley, [Email](#)
- **Village Emergency Planning** - Cllr Jim Donahue, 07557 668601 or [Email](#),
Village Emergency contacts are defined in the Emergency Plan [here](#).
- **Planning Applications** – applications assigned to lead councillors
Contact Brian Inglis (Clerk) for general questions, 07737 982907 or [Email](#)
- **GDPR Officer** – Brian Inglis (Clerk), 07737 982907 or [Email](#)

Working Groups affiliated with the Parish Council

Village Green Working Group:

Cllr Frances Parkes – Chair [Email](#)
Jon Morrell (Cricket Club)
Gavin Jones (Whitchurch Primary School)
Gill Goodwin (WoTHabs)
Alex Hilton (Football Club)
Jill Bradon (Green Team)
[Working Group Terms of Reference](#)

Playground Working Group:

Cllr Catherine Higley - Chair [Email](#)
Cllr Diana Smith
Cllr Debbie Leach
Cllr Paul O’Grady
[Working Group Terms of Reference](#)