MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, June 12, 2025

Councillors Present: Jim Donahue (Chairman), Diana Smith, Katherine Higley, Debbie Leach, Paul O'Grady, Frances Parkes and Romilly Swann.
Officers Present: Brian Inglis (Clerk and RFO)
Public and Press: None
District or County Councillor: None

1 **Apologies for absence & Parish Council Declaration** –
There were no apologies. Cllr Leach read the Parish Council Declaration

2 **Declarations of Interest –** There were none.

3 **Public Forum** – a time for members of the public to speak on any item on the agenda. No public present

4 **To approve minutes of the meeting of May 8, 2025.**
Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes, and these were signed by the Chairman.

5 **Chairman's Announcements -** See **Appendix 1**
An increase in instances of dog walkers not cleaning up after their dogs in various spots around the village was noted, all Councillors agreeing that steps should be taken to address this problem.
(Action – Clerk to make an agenda item at next meeting)

6 **To receive reports from District and County Councillors**

6.1 SODC District Councillor Report – No report.

6.2 OCC County Councillor Report – Cllr Filipova-Rivers submitted a report. See **Appendix 2**

7 **Planning Applications** – None received

8 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.

9 **Finance**:

9.1 To approve the payment schedule for June:

Payments:	**Sub-total**	**VAT**	**Total**
Staff Expenditure – June (Salary + Quarterly PAYE and NICs)		-	897.87
Scofell – Monthly Grounds Maintenance 36270	694.44	138.89	833.33
Lloyds Bank – May Bank Charges		-	4.25
Arthur J Gallagher – Insurance Premium		-	913.83
Redcap Towing Centre (eBay) – Reflectors, Hardwick Road	44.98	8.99	53.97
South Oxfordshire DC – Premises Licence		-	70.00
Printinco – Whitchurch Spring Bulletin		-	542.00
Claire Connell – Internal Auditor Charge		-	280.00
Leslie Maynerd – GROW Team Expenses Reimbursement		-	44.73

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

9.2 To note receipts as detailed:

Receipts:	Amount
EQ Care Homes – Bulletin Advertising	185.00
Warmingham & Co – Bulletin Advertising	185.00

9.3 **Bank Statements and Reconciliations for May 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.

9.4 **To consider the annual grant application from the Village Hall Committee for a grant of £1,200**
Resolution: It was agreed to make the donation of the full amount. (Action – RFO to make payment)

10 **Internal Audit**

10.1 **To receive and review the report from the Internal Auditor:**
The RFO expanded on the report, which had been previously circulated to Councillors, with the following points being noted.
The review of the PC Risk Assessment to be added to the July agenda (Action – Clerk)
The requirement for the PC to have a gov.uk or org.uk domain was discussed. (Action – Clerk to investigate and circulate options to Councillors, to be a future agenda item)
Resolution: Councillors voted to accept the report

10.2 **To consider the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2025-26**
Resolution: Councillors approved the appointment of Claire Connell as Internal Auditor for 2025-26

11 **External Audit – To consider the 2024-25 AGAR for submission to the External Auditor**

11.1 **Section 1: Annual Governance Statement - to consider the questions and respond accordingly**
Resolution: Councillors voted to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2024-25

11.2 **Section 2: Accounting Statement - to consider and agree the accounting statement figures**
Resolution: Councillors voted to approve the Accounting Statement for 2024-25

11.3 **Electors' Rights – to note the dates for the Notice of Public Rights**
The Notice of Public Rights will cover the period from Monday 16th June to Friday 26th July 2025.
The notice will be posted on the village notice board and published on the village website. (Action – Clerk)

11.4 **Statement of Variances – to consider the draft Statement of Variances**
The detail of this statement was considered and noted by Councillors

12 **Motion: To agree a list of OCC Highways related projects that we wish to raise with our county councillor**.
Proposer: Cllr Donahue, **Seconder:** Cllr Smith
Resolution: Councillors voted to submit a list to our County Councillor – See **Appendix 3**

13 **Motion: To agree the purchase of a speed monitoring sign for the High Street, according to the previously circulated quotation. Proposer:** Cllr Parkes, **Seconder:** Cllr Smith
Resolution: Councillors voted to purchase the specified unit as per the quotation (Action Cllr Parkes / Clerk)

14 The Clerk gave a report to Councillors on the progress of the Hardwick Road Verges Project, as follows -
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 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.
(Action – Cllrs Parkes and Smith to research options for temporary bollards for placing in the lower narrows)

16 Items for Report and Inclusion on the next scheduled Agenda – deadline Thursday, July 3, 2025.

17 To confirm the date and time of next meeting as Thursday July 10, 2025 at 20:00

APPENDIX 1 – CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – Cllr Jim Donahue

I have been away for two weeks and am working to catch up on some issues.

Grant for Eastfield Lane Survey Culvert – We were successful in getting the grant and Geoff Weir from the Flood Forum team will be liaising with SODC and OCC Flooding teams to move this forward.

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. Cllr Higley confirmed that the pavement cleaning was completed on 12 May. She has raised an enquiry to SODC to clarify the manner in which they dispose of the waste from the cleaning.

Cedar Lodge – The Cedar Lodge Grand Opening has been delayed from 30th May to an unspecified time with a potential event in August. I understand that this delay is partly due to some extra conditions that were placed on the developer by SODC planning that was approved as part of the recent retrospective planning decision.

There have been complaints about debris from a large skip and mess left from cigarette butts from the builder. There are now signs from the Parish Council requesting that they use bins and keep the area tidy. I will follow-up OCC Highways with the support of our County Councillor on the results of inspecting the condition of Eastfield Lane that was meant to happen in May. They say that can't take any further action until they make an assessment.

Resident issues:

- Received a question about drainage problem and cones on the High Street upper narrows due to heavy rains. OCC Drainage team say they will plan repairs that ae impacting one of the houses there.
- A resident also asked me to chase the bent bollard in the lower narrows. I had raised this as a FMS super user and have now also asked Jon Beale to chase this.
- New Bench on Village Green – Frances is working with a resident to replace one of the benches that is damage with a new one in honour of a former resident.
- I am still following up on getting a High Street drain cleared that was missed previous drains clearing earlier this year. FMS super users have now been given the ability to action blocked drains. I have raised this today.

APPENDIX 2 – REPORT from COUNTY COUNCILLOR – Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers

1. <u>What Have I been Up To</u>

- **Over the last month I visited all 7 Parish Councils**. Goring and South stoke, and Woodcote and Kidmore End Meetings coincide, but I will do my best to join you at as many as possible.
- **I visited Langtree School and presented to 2 of their GCSE classes** on politics, elections, and the work of the councils. Children were especially interested in homelessness. I really enjoyed the thorough grilling and hope to continue to engage with them in the future.
- **I attended a meeting with Woodcote Primary school along with our MP to** discuss funding issues and the immense pressure schools are at the moment.
- **I attended the inaugural meeting of the South Stoke Friends of the Perch and Pike Pub group** and supported the emerging steering group with helpful contacts and resources. I will continue to keep a close eye and provide support in any way that I can.
- **I attended Highways Maintenance and Road Safety Service All Member Briefing**. I raised questions regarding additional traffic calming measures in 20pmh zones, and how we can ensure developers/utilities put roads right after completion of works. (more on this below)

- **I joined the South Stoke Wildlife and Conservation Group Celebration event** at White Hill Quarry. The group have made huge contributions to hedge planting and nature recovery around the village and I am so grateful to them for all their hard work.
- **I met with OCC officers to discuss Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans** and if there is potential to roll these out to the Goring and Woodcote Division.
- **I had the pleasure of attending the South Stoke and Goring Heath Village Fetes,** It was wonderful to experience the vibrant village life firsthand and to see the incredible dedication of volunteers who work so hard to foster such a strong sense of community.

2. **Highways Maintenance and Road Safety All member briefing information**

Road Maintenance

This may be familiar to all but some helpful State of the Nation information is set out below:

The Council takes a **dual approach to road maintenance**:

- **Reactive maintenance** addresses urgent defects and incidents, including potholes and gully issues. This includes services like the Dragon Patcher and minor works teams. In 2024/25, Oxfordshire recorded approximately 40,000 road defects, of which 35,000 were potholes. The County received 26,981 highway enquiries, averaging 107 per working day. The total spend on defect repairs was £4.78 million, with an average repair cost of £106 per defect.
- **Preventative maintenance** aims to extend road life and avoid more costly future repairs. This includes: Surface dressing and micro-surfacing; Edge strengthening; Embankment stabilisation; Resurfacing and patching. In 2025/26, the Council has committed £22 million to preventative treatments and £15 million to highway schemes, including drainage and footway improvements.

The new contract with M Group went live on April 1 2025 after a very long and thorough process. The key documents setting out the Council's approach are the Highways Asset Management Policy and its associated Plan.

To make processing your report quicker, upload photos that show the pothole's location, plus a close-up with an object that helps show its size. Visit FixMyStreet.

I have been asked by parishes to clarify the responsibility of developers to put roads back to their original state following construction. I will inform PCs when I get a proper answer but so far, I have been told that the challenge is proving that they have damaged it and that the road must have been in a decent state prior to development.

Road Safety and Vision Zero

The Council continues implementing its Vision Zero strategy, aiming to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries by 2050. This includes the 20mph programme (now closed), which has delivered works in 275 parishes and will be evaluated for impact on safety and speed. Furthermore, the Traffic and Road Safety team, supported by a £2 million capital budget, manages a range of measures including traffic calming schemes, speed limit changes, and safety audits.

PC will have an opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of the 20mph scheme and it is important to raise the need of additional traffic calming measures on some of the roads in the Goring and Woodcote division. I am currently trying to establish the process for requesting these and will report back as a learn more.

3. Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are strategic documents developed by local authorities to identify and prioritise improvements in cycling and walking infrastructure. They provide a long-term approach to developing comprehensive local networks for active travel.

Two LCWIPs have been approved and published for Abingdon and Didcot, available on Oxfordshire County Council's Active Travel webpage. These are currently the only approved LCWIPs for the South and Vale area. LCWIPs for Thame, Wantage & Grove, and the Wallingford area are in progress. Once completed, they will expand the coverage of planned active travel improvements across the division.

Development and Scope of LCWIPs: Further information is available on the active travel webpage, including LCWIPs for other Oxfordshire districts, walking and cycling design standards, and the Strategic Active Travel Network (SATN), which addresses inter-area connectivity.

The Department for Transport's LCWIP technical guidance outlines the six stages of LCWIP development. This may be of interest to those seeking to understand the process and identify opportunities for community involvement, particularly in defining geographic scope.

Oxfordshire County Council aims to create LCWIPs for all areas, prioritising locations that meet the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) criteria (population over 10,000). Stages 1, 2 and 6 of LCWIP development will be led internally, with potential consultant support for Stages 3–5, subject to funding availability. Delivery of improvements identified in LCWIPs will depend on funding sources such as developer contributions, S106, CIL, and national funds like the Consolidated Active Travel Fund (CATF).

Once current drafts are complete, attention will shift to a wider list of LCWIP areas identified for South Oxfordshire, with further work expected later this year or into next year.

I would be interested to know if Prish Councils would be interested in finding out more about the potential for developing an LCWIP for the Goring and Woodcote Division and perhaps setting up a small inter-settlement group to discuss.

4. OCC Marmot Ambitions

Oxfordshire has committed to becoming a **Marmot Place**, embedding equity-focused principles into public health and system-wide policy to reduce health inequalities shaped by social determinants. In partnership with the Institute of Health Equity, a two-year work programme is underway, focusing initially on three priorities: giving every child the best start in life, creating fair employment and good work for all, and ensuring a healthy standard of living for all.

Key workstreams include:

- early years development
- inclusive economic growth
- rural inequality mapping
- primary care engagement
- and collaborative policy research through the Oxfordshire Policy Lab.

A multi-agency governance structure, including a Steering Group and Advisory Board ensures accountability and integration with existing health and wellbeing strategies. Progress will be monitored through a new

health equity framework, with outputs guiding funding bids and informing local action. The programme is resourced through the Council's Public Health budget, with £141,575 allocated across 2024–2026.

5. **Oxford City Traffic Proposals**

Oxfordshire County Council is preparing an alternative "Plan B" strategy to tackle congestion in the absence of a Botley Road reopening, aiming to improve bus reliability and ease gridlock following escalating concerns raised by local transport operators.

The Managing Director of Oxford Bus Company has described congestion levels in the city as an emergency, highlighting journey time increases of between 15 and 33 per cent. This has placed significant strain on services, with operators needing to use more buses to maintain timetables, which is neither financially nor operationally sustainable.

The current situation has been worsened by the long closure of Botley Road and the effect of new traffic restrictions, such as low traffic neighbourhoods, which have pushed more vehicles onto already busy main routes. The Council's "Plan B" will consider urgent actions to relieve pressure on the network, support the viability of public transport, and maintain confidence in Oxford's bus services.

6. **Overview of Current urgent and emergency care (UEC) Pressures in Oxfordshire (Report to HOSC)**

The UEC system in Oxfordshire faces significant pressure due to rising demand and system constraints. Key challenges include:

- Delays in ambulance response and hospital handovers.
- Increasing emergency department (ED) attendances and admissions.
- Capacity limitations across hospital, virtual ward, and home-based care services.
- Mental health crisis response struggling to meet 24/7 needs and reduce inappropriate placements.

Improvement Plans and Strategic Priorities for 2025/26: The Oxfordshire system has established an integrated improvement programme with several core objectives:

- Enhance same-day emergency care and urgent treatment centre usage.
- Improve ambulance performance and ED flow, targeting 78% of patients discharged within four hours.
- Expand neighbourhood-based models for personalised, holistic care.
- Increase early discharge rates and home-based care options, aiming for more discharges by day 7.

Mental Health and Neighbourhood Service Integration: Specific actions are underway to strengthen mental health and neighbourhood responses:

- Implementing a 24/7 mental health crisis team and expanding the "SUNRISE" all-age text service.
- Introducing a single point of access to streamline referrals and support discharge-to-assess models.
- Embedding multi-disciplinary neighbourhood teams to support complex community needs.
- Aligning virtual wards and visiting services to reduce unnecessary admissions and improve care at home.

Read more

7. **Help for Schools to cut energy and carbon**

Action on carbon and energy in schools (ACES) is a council funded service helping schools across Oxfordshire reduce their energy use, lower carbon emissions and save money on energy bills. Through the scheme,

maintained schools can also apply for an interest free loan from OCC to finance bigger upgrades like LED lighting and rooftop Solar PV.

For more information, please see here.

8. Pizza and Politics Scheme for 11–18-year-olds

Young people aged 11 to 18 in Oxfordshire can participate in the "Pizza and Politics" events organised by Oxfordshire County Council. These sessions provide an opportunity to learn about local democracy, engage in discussions with councillors and decision-makers, and share perspectives on issues affecting youth. Participants receive a £15 thank-you payment, reimbursement for travel expenses, and a certificate of participation. Events are held in various locations across the county and include refreshments. Find out more and sign up through the website.

If there is enough interest, we could explore hosting a session closer to home.

9. Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS): Overview and Access Information

The Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS), delivered by Oxfordshire County Council, provides personalised support to young people aged 11–18 who are experiencing challenges such as social isolation, low confidence, school exclusion, or unsafe living situations. Support is also extended to young people up to age 25 who have an EHCP or who have been in care.

TYSS offers both one-to-one and group-based support tailored to individual needs, aiming to build resilience, life skills, and positive relationships. Support sessions can take place in various settings including schools, homes, youth centres, or neutral community locations. Participation is voluntary, and young people are offered choice in how they communicate with the service (e.g. phone, email, WhatsApp).

Referral Routes

- Self-referral: Young people aged 13 and over may complete a referral form independently.
- Parental or carer referral: Parents and carers may also refer, with the consent of the young person.
- Professional referral: Schools, social workers, and other professionals are encouraged to support access through direct referral.

Contact and Further Resources

- Website
- Referral Form
- Email: tyss@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- Tellmi App: Free, safe wellbeing support for 11–18-year-olds in Oxfordshire
- Activities Oxfordshire: Directory of local youth services and activities
- The *No Limits* programme supports Oxfordshire residents aged 16+ to access work, education, or training. It offers up to 30 hours of one-to-one support, including help with CVs, applications, interviews, and digital access

10. Civil Parking Enforcement

The current contract for civil parking enforcement in Oxfordshire is due to expire in April 2026. Preparatory work is well underway to scope and commission a new contract, with procurement planned to go out to tender in due course. This provides a key opportunity to evaluate service performance, expand capabilities, and ensure the next contract delivers enhanced outcomes for residents and road users.

Over the term of the existing contract, responsibility for civil enforcement has been integrated across all districts, leading to greater consistency and local control. There are also emerging links with other services, such as technical and back-office support for the traffic filters, which will be explored for greater operational synergy. The re-procurement process will additionally consider the integration of further powers and enforcement tools, such as Red Routes, enhanced observation periods for loading on double yellow lines, and potential provisions for pavement parking, all of which are subject to legislative context or ongoing national lobbying.

The central objective is to improve the consistency and visibility of parking enforcement across Oxfordshire. One of the primary challenges remains the recruitment and retention of civil enforcement officers. The council is also seeking to strengthen mechanisms for public reporting.

Residents can report illegal or unsafe parking via the council's Civil Enforcement webpage. Dangerous parking causing obstruction is the responsibility of the Police. I am aware of complaints that not enough enforcement is taking place in Goring and it is something I will be raising in future discussions.

11. Grants and Cost of Living

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

- **The Warm Homes** provides funding to eligible low-income households in Oxfordshire with poor energy efficiency ratings to support the installation of insulation and low carbon heating, helping to lower energy bills and reduce carbon emissions. Find out more. Other retrofit opportunities can be found here

12. Consultations

- **Oxford to Caversham: A4074** - proposed 40mph & 50mph speed limits (closes 20th June 2025). Find out more and respond
- Oxfordshire **Rights of Way Improvement** Plan (RoWIP) Find out more
- Oxfordshire **Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment** 2025 consultation (closes 3rd Aug, 2025) Find out more and respond
- Oxfordshire **(Adults) Learning Disability** Plan 2025 – 2035, (closes on 13th July, 2025) Find out more and respond

APPENDIX 3 – OCC HIGHWAYS PRIORITIES, sent to Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, June 2025

	Description	**Status**
1	Eastfield Lane – Resurfacing following Cedar Lodge work	OCC originally committed to that the care home contractor, Zephyr X, would "make good" any damage, but now is taking responsibility for road repairs as other projects were ongoing concurrently on the same street. The care home work is now largely complete in June although the official opening date is now delayed from the end of May. ZephyrX has committed to repair verges but states OCC must repair road. OCC repaired some of the worst stretches of the road in Nov 2024 and Apr 2025. OCC promised annual inspection in May and would assess whether it needs resurfacing and priority further road repairs.
2	Pedestrian Crossing on High Street opposite the Greyhound – required for school run crossing. This would make use of a previously lower kerb on the west side of road and a virtual pavement in part of the Greyhound Car Park.	This has been discussed with Jon Beale for a few years and was meant to be put in place following new residents parking scheme which was implemented September 2024. May 2025: Jon states that lower than expected budget meant is did not make the cut for FY 2025/26. Will try again next year?
3	Pedestrian safety at lower narrows on the High Street.	Several options had been investigated and Jon Beale concluded that the current solution was the best in a difficult situation. A new option has recently been discovered using thin, temporary bollards that we would like to trial in cooperation with OCC Highways.
4	Manor Road resurfacing – Poor condition of road surface due to wear from daily Thames Water vehicles to the sewage plant.	We raised this in Aug 2024 meeting with Highways Engagement team. They stated that it was considered a Cat 3 to be resurfaces in the future, but no committed date to do the work.
5	Hardwick Road resurfacing – upper narrows near High Street is full of poorly repaired utility trenches causing safety issues for cyclists.	Hardwick road is so part of route of National Cycle Trail – King Alfred's Way. We raised this in Aug 2024 meeting with Highways Engagement team. They stated that it was considered a Cat 3 to be resurfaces in the future, but no committed date to do the work.
6	Path Hill Farm Road resurfacing – very poor condition for road used by farm vehicles with no suspension and taxi to take children to outdoor skills training centre.	This has been raised several times to Highways Engagement team and Mark Boscombe including at the August 2024 Highway's Engagement team meeting. The dragon patcher was sent out at some point in 2024, but the potholes returned in less than a month.
7	Maintenance of drainage grips/ soakaways coming down Whitchurch Hill into the village and clearing of drainage sewers generally on the High Street.	The catchpits were cleared in January 2025 for the first time in a number of years. Need regular maintenance – ideally annually.
8	On-going maintenance of roadside drains in village: especially High	These were finally given a good clearing in November 2024 and January 2025, however a few drains were not cleared. I am chasing these with area manager and Fix My Street.

	Street, Hardwick Road, Swanston Field and Eastfield Lane.	We are very interested in regular annual cleaning of all drains.
9	Bent Bollard on High Street lower narrows	Raised to Fix My Street in Feb 2025 and escalated to Jon Beale who is chasing this.