**MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL**
**At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, October 9, 2025**

**Councillors Present:** Jim Donahue (Chairman), Diana Smith, Katherine Higley, Debbie Leach, Frances Parkes, Paul O'Grady 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 for absence. Cllr Smith read the Parish Council Declaration

2 **Declarations of Interest –** None

3 **Public Forum** – No public present

4 **To approve minutes of the meeting of September 11, 2025.**
**Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the minutes, and these were signed by the Chairman.

5 **Chairman's Announcements -** See **Appendix 1**

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

6.1 SODC District Councillor – No Report

6.2 OCC County Councillor – No Report

7 **Planning Applications** – Councillors noted receipt of the following application.

7.1 **P25/S3002/DIS** Discharge of condition(s) 9 (Landscaping (incl hard surfacing and boundary treatment)) on application ref P21/S4904/FUL (Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of new dwelling).
**Uplands Cottage, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HH**

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, including works to trees in the village.

9 **Finance**:

9.1 To approve the payment schedule for October and to note payments and receipts since the last meeting:

| **Payment** | **Sub-total** | **VAT** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Staff Expenditure (October) | - | - | 636.80 |
| HMRC (PAYE and NICs – Q2) | - | - | 256.29 |
| Scofell Landscapes – Grass Cutting | 694.44 | 138.89 | 833.33 |
| Lloyds Bank – Service Charges | - | - | 4.25 |
| Brunel Surveys – Topographic Survey | 2500.00 | 500.00 | 3000.00 |
| Chesterton Parish Council – SLCC Membership (25% Contribution) | - | - | 60.00 |
| **Receipts: None** | | | |

**Resolution:** The Council voted to approve the payments. RFO to action.

9.2 **Bank Statements and Reconciliations for September 2025:**
The RFO gave a concise report on documents which had been previously circulated and scrutinised by councillors. The Reconciliation report was approved by Councillors.

10 The Clerk gave an update to Councillors on the options and associated costs to satisfy the requirement for the Parish Council to operate a PC owned email address system, after which it was agreed to place an amount (to be determined) on the draft budget for 2026/27. (Action – Clerk to continue research into this)

11 **Motion:** To agree to place some tree trunks along the sides of the Conservation Area (entrance point to the rear of Old Barn Cottages) following damage caused by vehicles parking on the grass.
**Proposer:** Cllr Higley, **Seconder:** Cllr Smith
**Resolution:** Councillors voted to approve the motion, as amended to include a **"No Parking"** sign.
(Action – Cllr Higley to progress)

12 **Motion:** To place three benches in the playground, and to spend up to £20 on related sundry items.
**Proposer:** Cllr Higley, **Seconder:** Cllr Smith
**Resolution:** Councillors voted to approve the motion.
(Action – Cllr Higley to arrange, in consultation with playground working group on positioning)

13 **Motion:** To approve an updated Residents' Issue List.
**Proposer:** Cllr Donahue, **Seconder:** Cllr Smith
**Resolution:** Councillors voted to approve the motion. (Action – Clerk to upload the list to village website)

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.

15 Cllr Higley reported that the consultation period on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal has now closed, and comments are being considered by SODC.

16 Councillor Donahue gave an update to Councillors on the progress of the Replacement Tea Hut Project, stating that the next steps would be to look at design options for the new structure.

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.

18 Councillors discussed a reply from a resident who had been written to following the results of a recent survey which had been carried out on an area of Parish Council land, and after discussion, agreed on the next steps. (Action – the Clerk was provided with wording of a follow-up email message to be sent to the resident)

19 To consider the wording for any Thank You notes to be sent on behalf of the Parish Council. None

20 Items for Report and Inclusion on the next scheduled Agenda – deadline Thursday, November 6, 2025.

21 To confirm the date and time of next meeting as Thursday November 13, 2025 at 20:00

**APPENDIX 1** – CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – Cllr Jim Donahue

**Eastfield Lane Update**

I have been raising the condition of Eastfield Lane to OCC Highways as the condition is clearly worse than it was before the construction work over the last two years and have been making some progress:

- I reported 17 small potholes as a Fix My Street super user the week of 22 August.
- I have asked Highways to address some of the larger potholes and deteriorated road by the verge. They encouraged me to report them as a FMS Super User despite them being larger than normally allowable for a super user to report.
- In September I reported 11 further FMS reports for much larger areas, especially along the south verge of the road. I have asked OCC Highways to help with getting these actioned. 10 of these have been addressed, with only one outstanding and OCC says it will be resolved by the end of October.

- OCC's official response from the road inspection in July is that 'This road has been proposed for surfacing inlay or minor patching in the next financial year.' They explained that this could mean a full resurfacing, partial resurfacing, or selected areas of large patches. They use a paving machine for this work as opposed to the crew with shovels that the current work is being done with.
- I will keep raising issues to OCC as they occur to ensure it stays on their priority list.

**SSEN Tree work on Muddy Lane –** SSEN contacted the Parish Council seeking approval to cut back the trees that have grown up close to the electricity lines along Muddy Lane. The area of work is quite extensive and includes the entire length of Muddy Lane and the eastern end of Eastfield Lane, close to the school entrance. Neil Huntington is working with them and provided the following update.

- The lane will need to be temporarily closed, or access limited and the power possibly switched off for a period.
- They agreed it would be sensible to do the work during the school holidays, although we await full details.
- SSEN said they would be accommodating regarding our requests, including for the removal, or otherwise of branches and chippings.
- They are now contacting the company that will actually do the work and promised to let us have dates for a site meeting before works commence.
- Cllr Higley and representatives of WoTHabs have stated that they wish to be involved.
- Neil has put the Allotment Society on notice that access will be required at some time in the near future and as you would expect, they do not have an issue with it.
- SSEN have also contacted the school.
- SSEN plan a site visit on Friday 10th Oct at 10am. Sally and Gill from WOTHabs will be available.

**Eastfield Lane Culvert Topological Survey**

Geoff Weir is continuing to work with SODC Flooding Engineer to follow-up on his recommended next steps but are still waiting for his recommendation. In the meantime, the Flood Forum has contacted landowners where the culvert goes through to give them a heads up that they may be impacted.

**Dolphin Centre Youth Coordinator** – Requesting a meeting to discuss a new provision, partnered with Berkshire Youth, we have created for young people in our community, particularly over the school holidays and beyond.

**Resident issues:**

- **Faded Road Marking by School** - The Primary school asked me to raise the issue of faded Road Markings at the end of Eastfield Lane by the school. This has resulted in a couple of members of school staff having incidents with people delivering to local businesses who are not familiar with the give way system by the school.
    - This is strictly a matter for OCC Highways not the PC, but I raised it on FMS.
    - Unfortunately, OCC's response was that their budgets for this current financial year have nearly all been allocated. They tend to do the work in dry Summer and autumn months The report has been closed and the matter has been recorded on our list for consideration within future programmed works.
    - The PC recommended that the school should contact the police if there are continues cars not following road marking regulations.
- **Resident comments on Manor Road parking –** We received a proposal for double yellow lines and residents parking on part of the entrance to the road to address safety issues from lack of visibility due to a long row of parked cars. This will be considered as part of the upcoming review of the High Street traffic scheme.
- **Yew Tree on Hardwick Road** – a resident is concerned about the yew tree by the power sub-station on Hardwick Roads upper narrows. The tree appears to be in poor health and could get blown over in a storm. They would like to see it removed. Ivy has been cut. Cllr Highley to discuss options with SODC tree officer.
- **Blocked drains in upper and lower narrows** –
    - Upper narrows - OCC drainage team still investigating option to address upper narrows. Very complex due to 11kvA utilities buried on top of drainage pipe.
    - Lower narrows – They have requested a cleaning of the pipes between gullies to determine if they are viable, or collapsed.