MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, February 12, 2026

Councillors Present: Jim Donahue (Chairman), Diana Smith (Vice-Chairman), Katherine Higley, Debbie Leach, Paul O'Grady and Romilly Swann.
Officers Present: Brian Inglis (Clerk and RFO)
Public and Press: One member of the public was present. **District or County Councillor:** None present

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

2 **Declarations of Interest –** None

3 **Public Forum** – No public wished to speak at this point

4 **To approve minutes of the meeting of January 8, 2026.**
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 Vacancy on the Parish Council – The Clerk reported that there had been no applications.

8 **Planning Applications** – Councillors agreed the following response(s).

8.1 **P25/S4090/HH – 6 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP**
Enlargement of existing dormer, conversion of existing garage to provide ancillary accommodation comprising of gym and games room and changes to external materials (cladding) and fenestration including relocation of existing front door and associate porch canopy. Councillors voted to SUPPORT this application.

8.2 **P26/S0178/FUL - The Boathouse, 2 The Moorings, Sheepwash Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7RA**
Demolition of existing and construction of a self-build replacement boathouse incorporating a wet dock, dry boat store and workshop at ground level, with two-bedroom residential accommodation above.
Councillors voted to SUPPORT this application, with a request that close attention be given to the plans for the treatment and discharge of foul water from the proposed new dwelling.

9 The Clerk gave a brief report on planning applications under consideration by SODC and applications which have been decided since the last meeting.

10 **Finance**:

10.1 To approve the payment schedule for February and to note payments and receipts since the last meeting:

Payments:	**Sub-total**	**VAT**	**Total**
Staff Expenditure (February)	-	-	636.80
HMRC (PAYE and NICs for Q3)	-	-	414.04
National Allotment Society (Annual Subscription)	70.00	14.00	84.00
Printinco (Whitchurch Bulletin)	-	-	507.00
Community Heartbeat Trust (Defibrillator Pads) - Pd	134.95	26.99	161.94
Cllr Higley (Reimburse for Daffodil Bulbs)	-	-	46.19
Lloyds Bank – Service Charges (DD)	-	-	4.25
Receipts: None			

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments. RFO to action.
The Council approved payment of an invoice received after the payment schedule had been drawn up and relating to expenditure agreed at the Council meeting held on 10th October 2024, as follows –
Cutler Arch Ltd (Tea Hut Design Fees). Sub-Total £910.00 + Vat £182.00. Total to Pay £1092.00

10.2 **Bank Statements and Reconciliations for January 2026:**
The RFO gave a concise report on documents which had been previously circulated and scrutinised by councillors. The Reconciliation report was approved by Councillors.

10.3 **Grant application from Action for Pangbourne Toilets Community Trust.**
Councillors approved a grant payment of £850. RFO to action.

11 **Grounds Maintenance Contract renewal.** Councillors approved the extension of the contract, for a further two-year period with Scofell Landscapes Ltd, at an annual cost of £6562.50

12 **Hardwick Road Verges Project.** The Clerk reported that the WoTHabs team have compiled a final report, with accompanying photos which has been submitted to Mend the Gap together with the second claim form. This claim has been processed and a sum of £6,700 is due to be received. A final sum of £300 can be claimed once the seed has been sown and the project can be deemed by Mend the Gap to be complete.

13 **Councillor responsibilities for Village Green matters.** Cllr Higley will continue to lead on a project to restore and maintain the benches on the village green. Cllr Donahue will continue to lead on the Tea Hut Project. Cllr Donahue has undertaken to be the main PC contact for the Cricket Club, and to take the position of Chair of the Village Green Working Group (VGWG).
Cllr Donahue noted that Frances Parkes has offered to manage the bin at the north end of the village green and will seek to confirm this with her. Cllr Higley will look at options and costings to repair or replace this bin. The Clerk will continue to manage the grass cutting and village maintenance schedule with the contractor and users of the village green, liaising with the VGWG as appropriate.

14 **Parish Council email Service.** A decision was not reached, and this would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. (Action – Clerk to re-send details of options and costings)

15 **Motion:** To agree to permit metal detecting on the Village Green (and any other Parish Council land), and to adopt the Permission Agreement and Code of Conduct as issued by the National Council for Metal Detecting. **Proposer:** Cllr Higley, **Seconded:** Cllr Smith. This motion was deferred until the next meeting.

16 **Parish Council Action List.** The list was reviewed. Cllr Leach was appointed to carry out Internal Controls with the RFO, committing to do this on a quarterly basis.

17 **Thank-You notes.** Councillors agreed that a note would be sent to Tim Hardwick on behalf of the Parish Council, recognising the work involved in managing the village defibrillators.

18 **Motion:** Under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public shall be excluded from the remainder of the meeting by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. **Proposer:** Cllr Leach. **Seconded:** Cllr Higley
Resolution: Councillors agreed that the meeting would continue with no public presence.

19 **Motion**: To appoint a solicitor to provide legal advice on boundary issues in the parish.
Proposer: Cllr Leach. **Seconded:** Cllr Higley
Resolution: Councillors considered agreed to appoint Freeths to provide this service.

20 **Instructions to Solicitor.** Councillors considered options and agreed on the scope of instructions to be given to Freeths following their appointment at item 19.

21 Items for Report and Inclusion on the next scheduled Agenda – deadline Thursday, March 5, 2026.

22 To confirm the date and time of next meeting as Thursday, March 12, 2026 at 20:00

Signed……. Date……..

APPENDIX 1 – CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – Cllr Jim Donahue

Remembrance - I note with sadness that two very important members of our community passed away in the past few weeks, Nick Brazil and Richard Wingfield. They each contributed significantly to our community and worked closely with the Parish Council and will be missed.

Eastfield Lane Condition – As a FixMyStreet Super User, I have been reporting issues for over 6 months since the new Care Home was re-opened last summer that have nearly all now been addressed; however, I am sorry to report that the recent weather has now created a proliferation of new or re-opened potholes. I count at least 20-30.

- The wet weather makes it difficult for me to report these, and even if I did, I feel it may be a waste of time, as what the road really needs is a resurfacing, or at least large sections of it addressed.
- I raised this to the OCC Highways Team, and they are still non-committal about Eastfield Lane or other roads being approved for resurfacing but confirmed that Eastfield Land is on their priority list as it has been for some time.

In the past 6 months, I reported the following issues as an FMS Superuser:

- In August, 17 smaller potholes. These were fixed but are now mostly re-opened.
- In September, 11 larger potholes and deteriorated road sections by the verge. These were finally all fixed by December. The good news is that these larger stretches of fixes are generally still in place.
- In December I also reported about 10 gully drain clearing reports to address silt that blocked most of the drains during construction. These appear to have been mostly completed in January.

Update of 9 Priority issues for OCC Highways – As the Parish Council raised these issues last June, I have asked Cllr Filipova-Rivers for an update and had an initial response. I sent her an updated showing that all 9 issues are still open requested that she highlight these priorities to OCC Highway in budget planning for next fiscal year.

- She indicated that funding for the pedestrian crossing at the Greyhound should now be available in FY 26/27. We understand that Jon Beale is looking at options for both the crossing point and new road surface.
- I also had an update from OCC Highways that our gullies were due for their annual drain clearing in January – but are behind schedule.
- Maggie also made the comments that potholes are very bad this year due to the weather but also pothole repairs are not lasting – they are only meant to be temporary and are opening up within days of being fixed. This is something I am hearing from many people I know in the area.

Flood Prevention - Eastfield Lane Culvert Topological Survey follow-up

We are following up on the options to reduce the risk of flooding in the village following the SODC Topological Survey of the Eastfield Lane Culvert. At the moment, Option 1 seems the most promising and we are also following up on Options 2 and 4:

1. A trial has been set up to reduce the flow of water at the entrance to the culvert to the river under Eastfield Lane at Walliscote Farm. This only takes effect if the river levels exceed the height of the weir, so it can only be tested in this situation.
2. Cllr Smith and I are following up with SODC on recommendation that the ditches behind Eastfield Lane be cleared of silt leading to the river making use of the £20k budget that the Parish Council could use for this. We have gained consent from affected riparian landowners and SODC is investigating suppliers to do the work.
3. Replacing the pipes under properties south of Eastfield Lane with wider pipes or open ditches leading to the existing ditches to the river is not considered a realistic option as it is likely to be too expensive and difficult to achieve.
4. Jet and clear the pipes under the affected properties on Eastfield Lane. SODC has states that clearing the ditches behind them must be done first as described in Option 2.
5. As discussed above. I have also requested the clearing of drains on Eastfield Lane where required which will have some effect on the capacity to address flooding on the road.

Flood Forum change – Geoff Weir has resigned, leaving only one member still active.

- Geoff's view is that the issues are better understood and recommendations have been made to Parish Council and a separate Flood Forum may not be needed in the short-term.
- John Southey is still available as an advisor as needed.
- I am leading the implementation of the recommendations under the auspices of Emergency Planning team – now with the help of Romilly.
- Romilly and I and both being trained as a Community Flood Wardens.

Death of a cyclist on Jubilee trail:

- A cyclist passing through the village was killed on Jubilee Path in January apparently hitting his head on a low branch. We understand that it was a group of cyclists in their 50s riding at night, some on e-bikes.
- The defibrillator was used at the Cricket Club for the first time, we assume as part of this incident. Tim Hardwick has ordered new pads and will have them replaced.
- A Green Team working party cut back the branches on that part of the trail on 9th February, led by Pete and Sally Woolhouse and Neil Huntington.
- We should continue to encourage cyclists not to use the trail, which is marked as an Oxfordshire Footpath at one end and a 'no cycling' sign has now been placed at the other end, I presume by friends of the cyclist in the accident.

Tea Hut draft design has been prepared by Architect that I have shared with Councillors.

- They are preparing more detailed building regulations required to develop cost estimates.
- Payment of £1,029 is required for initial design was previously authorised.
- A second payment was also pre-authorised for the technical design work now underway.

Resident issues:

- Cllr Leach raised issue of streetlight at lower narrows by the Old Stables. This has now been resolved.
- A resident notified the Parish Council of plans to pollard a tree on Hillside. The ownership of the land where the tree is located is not certain, but direct neighbours have been consulted and there are no objections.
- Thames Path condition dangerous at Hartley Steps, especially for cyclist going down the steep hill. I raised a report to OCC on the dangerous condition of the deteriorated Thames Path on the Hartley steps.
- A resident requested permission for their son to perform metal detecting on the Village Green and Maze area. The Parish Council is discussing how this can be accommodated whilst ensuring that the playing field is not damaged.
- Cricket Club water issue - there is a leak in the water supply up by the football goals. They have tried to get Castle Water or the main water company to do something for 6 months but without success. It is costing them about £800 over the last 6 months in lost water. The CC turn the taps off as much as possible, but they are asking the PC to fix this stating that we are overall responsible for the Village Green Infrastructure. I will look into this, but it seems like we need to work together to develop a realistic plan to improve the plumbing on the Village Green.