MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
At the Village Hall at 20:00 Thursday, March 13, 2025

Councillors Present:
Jim Donahue (Chairman), Diana Smith, Katherine Higley, Paul O'Grady and Frances Parkes.
Officers Present: Brian Inglis (Clerk and RFO)
Public and Press: 2 Members of the public, Alex Carter (Henley Standard
District or County Councillor: Cllr Peter Dragonetti (South Oxfordshire District Council)

1 **Apologies for absence & Parish Council Declaration** 20:00
Apologies were received from Cllr Debbie Leach.
Cllr Donahue read the Parish Council Declaration.

2 **Declarations of Interest –** There were none. 20:02

3 **Public Forum** – a time for members of the public to speak on any item on the agenda. 20.02
No members of the public wished to speak at this time.

4 **To approve minutes of the meeting of February 13, 2025.** 20:03
Resolution: The Council voted to approve the minutes, and these were signed by the Chairman.

5 **Vacancy on the Parish Council –** 20.05
Romilly Swann, proposed by Cllr Donahue and seconded by Cllr Smith, was unanimously elected to the parish council. Cllr Swann duly completed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting.

6 **Chairman's Announcements -** See **Appendix 1** 20:08

7 **To receive reports from District and County Councillors** 20:20

7.1 SODC District Councillor Report – Cllr Dragonetti. See **Appendix 2**

7.2 OCC County Councillor Report. None received

8 **Planning Applications** – to discuss and agree Council's response to the following: 20:30

8.1 **P25/S0384/HH**
Single storey side extension.
1 Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ
Resolution: Councillors voted to support this application.

8.2 **P24/S2309/FUL**
Installation of ground mounted photovoltaic solar panels and battery energy storage system to supply electrical power to Pangbourne Technology Centre; associated plant, plant enclosure and cabling; access driveway; landscaping; and ancillary works (Additional information received 15 November 2024 and amended plans and information received 5 March 2025).
Land to north & west of Pangbourne Technology Centre Bozedown Drive Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR
Resolution: Councillors voted to object to this application, noting and supporting comments made by the SODC Ecology team and repeating comments previously made in September 2024 as follows - *The Parish Council voted to object to the application, supporting the Heritage and Landscape Officer recommendations to avoid development on AONB green land and consider car park mounted solar panels.*

8.3 **P25/S0284/DIS**

Discharge of condition 7 (external lighting) on planning application P23/S4055/S73

Eastfield House Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ.

Resolution: Councillors voted to write to the Case Officer, with photos attached, as follows –

Councillors are unclear as to how these proposals would affect the neighbours in Eastfield Lane and residents further afield within the Conservation Area, Local Plan Policy ENV8 applies, and hope that the wording of Policy DES2 and in particular DES6 in the Local Plan is taken into account when deciding on this application.

Lighting in the surrounding area is generally of a low level, with widespread use of sensors and it is hoped that any permission given will insist on minimising the disturbance to neighbours, and will consider how the installation of more lighting will impact the nocturnal wildlife in the area.

Concerns of Councillors and residents are not allayed by the current presence of a bright LED light which burns 24 hours a day above an east facing side entrance to the facility. The attached photos show the impact of this light at dusk and then again at nightfall when the disturbance to neighbours is more obvious. This light seems to be unnecessarily bright and it is unclear why this light needs to shine all the time. Councillors feel that a combination of a warmer/softer light and the use of sensors would be just as effective while being far friendlier to neighbours adjacent and beyond.

A copy of this letter and photos to be sent to the Cedar Lodge Community Liaison Officer (Action – Clerk)

9 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. 20.45

10 **Finance**: 20.47

10.1 To approve the payment schedule for March:

Payments:	**Sub-total**	**VAT**	**Total (£)**
Staff Expenditure (March)			639.10
Community First Oxfordshire - Subscription		NIL	55.00
Pangbourne Toilets - Grant			800.00
Amazon – Solar Lighting Units (paid)	38.32	7.67	45.99
Amazon – Notice Board Keys (paid)	3.57	0.72	4.29
Cutler Arch Ltd – Professional Fees and Expenses (paid)	850.61	166.74	1017.35
Whitchurch Twinning Society – Grant (paid)			200.00

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payments.

10.2 To note receipts as detailed:

Receipts:	**Amount**
Whitchurch and District Allotment Society – 50% Rental Charge	283.50

10.3 **Bank Statements and Reconciliations for February 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.

10.4 To consider the renewal of the membership to Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), at a cost of £200.00

Resolution: Councillors voted to renew the membership.

10.5 To discuss the notification of Oxfordshire County Council Priority Action Flood Project for 2025 and consider any Expression of Interest for Flood Project Funding (deadline – 18th March 2025).

After discussion, Councillors decided that there was no appropriate response or application to be made.

11 The Clerk gave a report to Councillors on the progress of the Hardwick Road Verges Project, as follows - 20:55

The WoTHabs team have submitted an online form to the OCC Ecology & Biodiversity Officer, and three areas of Hardwick Road are now a designated Road Verge Nature Reserve (RVNR).

Our contractor has completed the process of applying for the permit to carry out work on the highway, and is ready to visit Hardwick Road after this is issued, to measure up and mark out.

12 Cllr Parkes gave a concise report to Councillors on the Village Green Tea Hut project, as follows - 20:58
An application for pre-planning advice has been submitted to SODC to highlight any challenges which might need to be addressed before the process is taken any further.

13 To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of 21:00
actions on the action list. The list was updated, with some actions being marked as complete.

14 Items for Report and Inclusion on the next Agenda – deadline Thursday, April 3, 2025. 21:02
It was agreed that the matter of road repairs and improvements along Eastfield Lane would be an agenda item for the next meeting of full council (Action – Councillors to advise Clerk)

15 To confirm the date and time of next meeting as Thursday April 10, 2025 at 20:00. 21:05

APPENDIX 1 – CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – Cllr Jim Donahue

Ferryboat pavement repair – We can give it a few weeks, but it seems that finally something has been done that looks similar to the original pavement. 3rd time lucky?

Eastfield lane – There is less mud and debris due to road sweeping, but road condition is steadily deteriorating

- I have raised this to OCC Highways who has requested and inspection planned – this is likely to happen in the next week
- 2 residents raised concerns to me – punctured tyres and other car damage and concerns safety risks for children cycling. Ditches on the south side are getting worse and cars forced to drive in them due to vans across the road. They asked that street sweeping school hours which I have passed on.
- I have raised the state of the road to both ZephyrX and OCC Highways
- Uncertain who will ultimately repair the road and to what extent
    - OCC responsible for road
    - ZephyrX will repair verges but say that are not allowed to repair the road other than temporary fill
    - J Guest will fill some pothole with Type 1 MPOT base tomorrow – but are not allowed to resurface the road

Cedar Lodge Opening Event planned for 9th May

- Up to 40 cars to be parked for event
- I have advised them to avoid Eastfield Lane, except for those with reserved spots at the Care home
- High Street and Swanston Field available
- Recommended Pangbourne Village Hall and Rail Station or take the train!

Muddy Lane Adverse Possession – Received a promising update from Land Registry asking for clarification on Gas Utilities easement. Brian is investigating.

Holiday - I will be on holiday 17-21 March. Email out of office will direct to Cllr Smith and the Clerk.

APPENDIX 2 – REPORT from DISTRICT COUNCILLOR – Cllr Peter Dragonetti

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

There are now some emerging options for how things will be reorganised, with a proposal that SODC are leaning towards of Unitary named Ridgeway comprising SODC, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire, while the County Council are proposing a Unitary based on the current County Council.

In my view, the current District Council is a good size, enabling it to be efficient and effective, and reasonably local and accessible. The fact that it is financially strong while having one of the lowest council taxes in the country shows it must be doing quite a lot right.

This is link to a 93-page document setting out the situation. A little too long to summarise here…..

https://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/documents/b11263/Supplementary%20papers%20%20Interim%20Proposals%20and%20Preparations%20for%20Local%20Government%20Reorganisation%20LGR.pdf?T=9

Community Grants

Through the good financial management of the current administration, we have been able to increase the amounts available for grants to the community, and there are several schemes for local community groups and projects

These include

- Everyone Active - £50,000
- Capital Grant scheme - £320,000
- Performing Arts Grants - £60,000
- Councillor Grant - £7,500 per ward (was £5,000)
- Community Infrastructure Levy Grant - £750,000

All these grants have their own criteria, so please look on the website or phone the grants team for more information. www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants. Probably all this funding will be lost when SODC is unitised with other authorities

There is a grant funding advice session at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot on Thursday 20th March, with appointments available from 12.30 to 4 pm. Voluntary and community organisations can discuss projects, ask questions and check eligibility. Book a time slot by emailing grants@southandvale,gov.uk or phoning 01235 422405

Planning Appeals

We have just lost a planning appeal against a solar farm at Burcot. We were pleased that an Appeal for a development of 90 homes on open fields at Shillingford has been withdrawn, no doubt because of the expectation of the outcome, but the Council will, I believe, be able to recover costs. An appeal against the Council's action against change of use of land from equestrian to residential in Horspath was dismissed.

Garden Waste Changes – starting in April!

The change to the garden waste system is now imminent, and you can now sign up the new arrangement.

To receive garden waste collections from 1 April 2025, residents must purchase an annual permit. This will replace direct debits, which are surprisingly troublesome to collect each year. What residents need to do:

- From late February, visit www.southandvale.gov.uk/GardenWastePermit to make a one-off, annual payment for garden waste collections.

- When customers get the permit in the post, they need to stick it to the lid of their brown bin.

Garden waste customers can also sign up for an online account on our website to make things easier when they purchase the next permit in 2026. Anyone who cannot easily signup for a permit online can call us on 01235 422422 for support. Visit the New Garden Waste FAQ page for more information.