

Minutes of North Moreton Parish Council Meeting held North Moreton Village Hall on Tuesday 11 November 2025

Present: Cllr. V. Gibbs (Chair), Cllr. Kathy Howat, Cllr. S.C. Harrison, Cllr. D. Tebworth, County Cllr. Johnny Hope-Smith), Cllr. AM. Simpson, Mr. A. Wise (Clerk) and 4 members of the public

	VG opened the meeting at 7:30 pm	
25/3371 Apologies	Cllr. C.I. Shipton (Vice-Chair) and Cllr. C. Topping	
25/3372 Report on OCC and SODC activities	<p>SODC Report – See attachment 6</p> <p>OCC Report – See attachment 7</p> <p>KH to use the village email to encourage residents to complete the new Movement and Place (MAP) Plan for Science Vale — a long-term vision to improve transport, public spaces, and quality of life across the area.</p> <p>https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/science-vale-map</p>	KH
25/3373 Hear representations from members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A representative from Moreton Cricket Club addressed the meeting and explained that due to the recent increase in the ECBs finances, largely due to the sale of the Hundred Franchises, local cricket clubs are being encouraged to apply for grants to improve playing facilities. This has now become more important as the Moreton Mavericks, ladies XI due to recent successes begin to play in a higher league structure and host bigger clubs. The club was asking the PC, as a courtesy for permission to do the following 4 things: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move the camera for live streaming of matches so that less of residents' properties appear in the background 2. Install a hybrid wicket on the square to allow more matches to be played from that one strip 3. Purchase roll on, roll off covers which can be stored on the boundary edge during the season and in the nets during the off season 4. Flatten the area of the outfield from the edge of the square up to the boundary next to White's Field thus improving the condition of the outfield and lessen the risk of fielders getting hit by the cricket ball bouncing up awkwardly off a ridge in the outfield <p>Point 4 will cause the most inconvenience to residents and visitors to the rec ground as this area will need to be fenced off whilst the grass seed grows for 4-6 weeks next March / April. Cricket club will communicate to residents via the village email.</p> <p>Cricket club confirmed that they will give the PC a donation of £500 towards the cost of the car park Mud control slabs and the PC expressed their thanks. It was proposed by VG, seconded by KH that the PC allow the cricket club under terms of the newly signed lease to 2037 to make these changes if successful with their grant application to the ECB.</p>	
25/3374 Approve the minutes of the meeting of 16.09.25	It was proposed by VG, seconded by SH, that the minutes be signed as a true record. Carried nem con.	
25/3375 Consider matters, not taken elsewhere, arising from the minutes of the meeting of 16.09.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All action items have been completed. 	

25/3376 Receive reports from Parish Councillors and the Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	
25/3377 Financial matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of payments. It was proposed VG, seconded SH, and carried that the following invoices be paid: Parish Clerk's Salary, Expenses, PAYE, Dog Poo Bin emptying, Rospa, Mud control slabs and Charlie Nickless - attachments 2 & 3. Accounts were reviewed Clerk showed the councillors the draft 2026/27 Budget for consideration before being signed off at the Jan'26 meeting. 	
25/3378 Planning since meeting of 16.09.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AW presented the current planning application situation – attachment 4 Clerk asked for how he should respond to planning application P25/S1951/FUL – St Peters Farm. It was proposed by DT, seconded by SH, that the clerk should respond with SUPPORT for short - term lets. 	
25/3379 Highways, Transport and Footpaths	<p>Footpath Update Footpath Warden reported that the OCC Highways Tree Surgeon had been out to view the large tree currently overhanging the footpath in Bear Lane and confirmed that although it was not urgent some remedial work will be carried out some time in the future by their department.</p> <p>Bus KH attended the PTR Meeting today over Zoom and reported that they were taken through the integrated transport plan, the Cowley Branch Line authorization, that Julian's Car Park will close to enable development and that the Oxford Congestion charge has started.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clerk to write to highways asking for the team to come back to clear out the gullies / drains between Old School House and Goodwood House in Wallingford Road, as they couldn't get to them last time because of a parked van. Clerk to write to highways requesting that the overgrown hedge that is impairing drivers view at the top of Long Wittenham Road at the junction with Wallingford and Didcot Roads be trimmed down to an acceptable level. Clerk asked councilors for suggestions for completing the Deep Clean Form from SODC. Clerk to respond saying: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To clear weeds from footpaths in both Elm Road and Wallingford Roads To clear the weeds from outside the Bus Shelter To give the bus shelter a good tidy up inside and out Chair to walk up Long Wittenham Road, take photos of the dumped tyres on the verge and report on "Fix My Street". DT to keep an eye on the state of the village noticeboard and report to PC when it deteriorates further. 	<p>AW</p> <p>AW</p> <p>AW</p> <p>VG</p> <p>DT</p>
25/3380 Recreation and Playground matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clerk to confirm to Mud control once pro-forma invoice has been paid and arrange a suitable delivery date to Melhuish Farm. Then the work can be done at 0900 hrs on Sunday 23rd November 2025. 	AW
25/3381 Risk assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VG signed off appropriate parts of the current Risk Assessment Checklist. - attachment 5 	
25/3382 Respond to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	

North Moreton Parish Council

Chmn

Communications as the Chairman may direct		
25/3383 Attend to any other business at the Chairman's discretion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• None	
25/3384 Date of Next Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7:30pm Tuesday 13 January 2026 in North Moreton Village Hall.	
Closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VG declared the meeting closed at 8:40pm	

Signed:

Date:

Attachments:

1. Agenda
2. Financial Statements
3. Expenditure against Budget 2023-2024
4. Planning Applications
5. Risk assessment checklist
6. SODC Report

Title	District Councillors' Report
Councillors	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson & Cllr Crispin Topping
Parish	North Moreton
Date	11 November 2025

[Booking link](#) for planning surgeries for town and parish councils

Five councils launch ambitious plan for local government reform

Change is coming to local government across England, and five councils have worked together to create a proposal for two new, innovative and locally accountable unitary authorities for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire that will tackle existing inefficiencies, improve services, and support local communities in response to the government's call for reform of council structures. The proposal is one of three being put forward for the area and has the potential to save the most money of all the options – with possible savings reaching £59.8m a year. It would create authorities that are big enough to be efficient, stable and reliable, but local enough to care and be responsive to communities.

The proposal would create two councils covering the following geographical areas:

- **Oxford and Shires Council** would comprise all of the existing district areas of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire.
- **Ridgeway Council** would be made up of the whole of West Berkshire Council's area and all of the existing district areas of South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.

The proposal has been designed to meet the criteria set out by the government earlier this year. The criteria called for all proposals to be for councils that serve populations of around 500,000, are

financially stable, deliver high-quality services, are responsive to the needs of communities, and support positive growth across the region.

The key benefits of the proposal would be:

- Significant cost savings and financial stability – helping to protect key services. Financial modelling indicates this proposal has the potential to generate the highest level of ongoing financial savings and provides the best combined financial resilience among the three proposals being submitted for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.
- Reimagined service delivery, addressing concerns raised by residents during widespread public engagement earlier this year.
- Sustainable growth for Oxford, market towns and rural areas, balancing the needs of different communities and delivering more jobs, better transport and the right homes in the right places.
- A high standard of democratic representation with councils that are the right size to respond to the needs of individual communities.

Financial modelling shows the new councils have the potential to save around £59.8m per year after paying off initial transition costs, which looks like the highest saving of the three models proposed in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. These savings would come from reducing the number of councils and adopting a new, innovative approach to service delivery. It would also help to minimise the disaggregation risks associated with splitting upper-tier services, as the proposal involves two existing upper-tier councils.

The proposal sets out plans to make services more cost-effective while improving outcomes. Oxfordshire County Council is currently responsible for around 85 per cent of the council spending in its area, with a significant proportion of that going on Adults' Social Care and Children's Services. Research shows that these services can often be less efficient across a large area like Oxfordshire, where the average spend per person is above the national average, while demand is low. The proposal includes a new, local approach to these services that would reduce costs while delivering a much more local, responsive, and improved service.

In line with national guidance, each council will have just under 100 councillors providing good democratic representation at a level local enough to allow councillors to understand their communities.

The proposed councils would turbocharge economic growth by focusing on the unique nature of each area. Oxford & Shires would focus on growth linked to Oxford's world-class innovation and knowledge economy and the wider area's world-class engineering sector and booming rural economy. Ridgeway would focus on making the most of advanced research, rural enterprise, and connectivity across the M4 and A34 corridors.

The councils would support sustainable housing growth, combined with much better transport planning, to manage the growth of Oxford and the wider area in a practical way. This would allow Oxford to flourish as a global brand, not just as an island within the county, but as part of the wider region. It will also reduce the requirement to build on the green belt, which itself could place more pressure on Oxford's strained services, increase congestion, and damage the character of the city. The proposal are currently being considered by councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, before it is submitted to the government by the deadline of 28 November. While the local councils will formally decide which proposal to endorse at their meetings, the ultimate decision on which is taken forward will sit with the government.

It is anticipated that the government will then consult with residents and stakeholders on all proposals for the area in 2026 before deciding which model is put in place in early summer. The new council or councils are expected in 2028.

Residents can read the full proposal or an abridged version on the website <http://twocouncils.org>. The proposal covers all key aspects, including how services will be run, financial modelling,

implementation plans and vision for the future.

Cllr David Hingley, Leader of Cherwell District Council, said: “Our proposal for two new unitary councils will create authorities that are designed around what our communities truly need. They will be locally accountable to their residents and underpinned by sound finances, positioning them to serve and empower future generations.

“By drawing from the strengths of all parts of Oxfordshire, Oxford and West Berkshire, these councils will be the right size to deliver for our residents and businesses – enterprising, connected and ready to meet local priorities.”

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “Residents have been clear; they want councils to be efficient while delivering better services. They also need to represent their communities and deliver on their behalf. This is the opportunity to address current problems, and this proposal creates councils that will deliver better services, save money, and positively tackle big topics such as infrastructure and housing growth in a way that works for local communities.

Cllr Bethia Thomas, Leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council, said: “This is a once in a generation opportunity – and we need to think about what will truly deliver for our communities both now and in the future.

“We believe that means basing the councils on existing communities and a shared history and sense of identity while also being forward-thinking and innovative. It is an opportunity to be bold and to redesign councils, so they are fit for the future and fit to serve the places we hold dear.”

Cllr Jeff Brooks, Leader of West Berkshire Council, said: “It’s important that through LGR we deliver the best option for our residents. This proposal is about creating councils that are big enough to cope, but small enough to care. It could save the most money of all the proposals and take a modern and innovative approach to service delivery, learning from our good work locally but also from other areas.

“It will help us proactively tackle the financial challenges facing West Berkshire as a small unitary authority whilst preserving the character and communities we hold dear.”

Cllr Andy Graham, Leader for West Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We were clear that residents needed to come first in any discussions around future options for local government. The feedback we have received over the last several months has shaped this proposal, so it truly reflects our communities, both now and in the future.

“We wanted to build on the obvious benefits of a two-unitary option while creating something that is new, forward-thinking and makes the most of this change in approach to deliver more for local people while protecting the services they currently value.”

More information on the proposal is available at <https://twocouncils.org>

Councils to take positive steps to represent communities despite concerns with Inspectors’ Local Plan decision

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have written two letters to the Inspectors in response to the Planning Inspectors’ letter published last month, which recommended the councils withdraw their Joint Local Plan from the examination process based on a single issue – the ‘duty to co-operate’ with Oxford city.

Their most recent letter was written in light of the Ministerial letter of 9 October 2025. Inspectors acknowledged receipt of this and confirmed that a more substantive response will be provided in due course.

In their first response to the Planning Inspectors the councils have defended the processes carried out to develop the plan. They go on to explain to the Inspectors that any decision on whether to withdraw the plan from examination would need to be taken at full Council meetings.

Here are some of the key issues the councils have raised in their response to the Inspectors:

- The letter contains errors, for example, the Inspectors referred to South and Vale being in the “Oxfordshire Housing Market Area” when deciding if there were strategic matters to engage with neighbours on. But housing market areas are no longer part of how housing need is calculated and haven’t been for some years.
- The Inspectors said things that “could affect Oxford” count as a Strategic Matter. The law says a strategic matter that requires cooperation must have (or would have) a significant impact on two or more planning areas. The Inspectors did not explain what those significant impacts actually are (not just ‘could’ be) on Oxford and the areas of South and/or Vale arising from what the joint local plan proposes.
- The Inspectors relied on Oxford’s (now withdrawn) Local Plan 2040, which had claimed there was a shortfall in housing supply. But that was before taking into account the 6,780 homes committed in the Joint Local Plan in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse for Oxford’s unmet need. Using the government’s Standard Method for calculating housing numbers – which the Inspectors of Oxford’s plan instructed Oxford to do – Oxford’s need was already covered.
- The Inspectors appear to have misunderstood the housing numbers, saying “it should have been obvious” that there was a reasonable prospect of additional Oxford unmet need in later years. But the evidence showed the Joint Local Plan (and partners’ plans) fully accommodated Oxford’s unmet needs up to 2040.
- The Inspectors downplayed work led by Oxfordshire County Council in 2023 showing that Oxford’s unmet need was fully addressed, favouring a note by Oxford City Council which said it wasn’t.

Despite the significant concerns with the Inspectors’ conclusions, the councils’ leaders have both committed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that future development in the areas remains sustainable, appropriate and well-planned.

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “I’m dismayed that after several years of diligent, careful and collaborative hard work, our positive, innovative Joint Local Plan that works towards genuinely sustainable growth, could be undone by Inspectors’ conclusions based on out-of-date policy and misinterpreted legislation. I am not aware of another emerging local plan in Oxfordshire that so encompasses and embraces the vision set out in the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, which all our councils signed up to, as our Joint Local Plan.”

Cllr Bethia Thomas, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council, said: “It’s very disappointing that positive and constructive approaches to planning development could be undermined by the Inspectors’ letter. We will consider very carefully the many implications of the different options ahead of us, and it will be for all Members of both councils to decide which next step is in the best interests of our residents and our districts – they will be at the heart of whatever we decide.”

Joint Local Plan background information

Over the past four years, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have worked

tirelessly together to prepare new planning policies in an innovative, forward-looking Joint Local Plan to guide sustainable development across both districts.

The Joint Local Plan was developed through extensive consultation and deep engagement with our residents, community groups, neighbouring authorities, developers, infrastructure providers and government agencies. It gained unanimous cross-party support at both councils before submission for examination in December 2024, a rare level of political alignment that demonstrated shared commitment to a plan-led future for South and Vale's communities.

Despite this, the Inspectors examining the Joint Local Plan wrote to South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils on 26 September 2025 following Stage 1 of the Joint Local Plan Examination Hearing Sessions. This letter advised the councils withdraw the plan from examination, citing a single technical matter, the Duty to Cooperate, specifically with Oxford City Council. Their letter is available in the Examination Library ([ID10](#)). On 1 October the Councils issued a joint Press Release, available here: [South Oxfordshire](#) and [Vale of White Horse](#).

On 6 October the Councils wrote to the Planning Inspectors about their letter - the [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

On 20 October the Councils wrote a second letter to the Inspectors in light of the Ministerial letter of 9 October 2025 – [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

The Inspectors have written to the Councils to acknowledge receipt of their letter of 20 October 2025 and confirm that a more substantive response will be provided in due course - [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

Community grant scheme: one month to go

The Councillor Community Grant Scheme closes for applications at midday **Friday 5 December**.

There's still funding available for organisations to apply for, and for organisations to submit their applications, so please help us spread the word.

And if you know of any organisations that have previously applied that you weren't able to support, why not reach out to them and see if they still need funding?

If you wish to discuss your grant allocation with our Community Enablement team, or have questions about eligible projects, please email grants@southandvale.gov.uk

Magic awaits in Didcot as Beauty and the Beast opens in six weeks

With just six weeks to go until opening night, excitement is building as Polka Dot Pantomimes brings the much-loved classic Beauty and the Beast to Cornerstone Arts Centre this Christmas.

Running from **Thursday 18 December to Wednesday 31 December**, this spectacular family production promises a festive experience filled with laughter, music and magic. Audiences can look forward to dazzling costumes, impressive special effects, toe-tapping musical numbers and even a few real panto pooches.

Featuring a talented professional cast alongside local young performers, Beauty and the Beast is

set to be a true community celebration and the perfect festive treat for audiences of all ages.

Tickets are on sale [now on their website](#).

Council launches 'Winter Campaign' to help residents stay warm, well and connected

As the colder months roll in, South Oxfordshire District Council is launching its 'Winter in South Oxfordshire' campaign - a seasonal initiative packed with practical advice, local events, and support to help residents stay warm, well and connected this winter.

The campaign brings together a wide range of services and resources from the council and partner organisations, including community activities, health advice, and support services to help residents through the winter months.

Highlights of the campaign include signposting to information on:

- **Winter activities and events:** From group walks to performances and workshops, there's something for everyone. Visit the Active Communities page or check out what's on at Cornerstone Arts Centre.
- **Energy-saving support:** Guidance is available on how to make simple home improvements, such as insulation, draught-proofing, and efficient heating, to help residents stay warm and reduce energy costs.
- **Community Hub support:** If people are struggling financially or need advice, the council's Community Hub is here to help — from food and housing support to mental health guidance.
- **Emergency preparedness:** Get ready for winter weather with tips on flooding, power cuts, and emergency kits.
- **Preventing damp and mould:** Tips on how to stop condensation building up in our homes and prevent mould growing.
- **Support for rough sleepers:** The council activates emergency accommodation during severe weather and works year-round to support people at risk of homelessness.
- **Warm spaces:** Local libraries, leisure centres and other venues are offering warm, welcoming places to relax, recharge and connect.
- **Health advice:** The NHS winter health guide offers tips for staying well.

Residents can find all the information and resources on the council's [Winter in South Oxfordshire page](#).

Breaking the cycle of homelessness

Our proactive work to break the cycle of homelessness and improve people's lives is at the heart of our new Joint Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

We support many families and individuals who face multiple challenges in their lives to find sustainable, secure accommodation.

The joint strategy is now live on our webpages [South](#) / [Vale](#) and sets how we prevent homelessness wherever possible and help people access affordable housing which meets their needs. See our media release [South](#) / [Vale](#) for more on this. Please do share our social media posts and signpost people to our website for help with homelessness.

Social housing allocation policy changes now in place

Following a public consultation we've now put in place an updated joint Housing Allocation Policy for both councils. The refreshed policy sets out the criteria on who can join the councils' housing register and the rules for how social housing is allocated. See the policy on our website [South](#) / [Vale](#)

South East Strategic Option (SESRO) consultation

A reminder, following on from our email on 28 October regarding the launch of Thames Water's statutory consultation for the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO).

As well as an online survey available until 13 January 2026, Thames Water is also hosting community drop-in events.

Thames Water is also offering councillors dedicated sessions at the following location (Didcot session was 10 November):

- **The Beacon, Wantage: 26 November 1pm to 2pm**

If you have any questions about the consultation materials or process, please contact Thames Water at info.SESRO@thameswater.co.uk

New Active Communities leaflet

Active Communities has released a new leaflet packed with their free and low-cost sport and wellbeing activities.

The leaflet includes information about:

- Community Walks led by trained volunteers at multiple locations across the district.
- Move Together programme providing tailored support for individuals with health, mobility, or social isolation challenges.
- Family-friendly holiday sessions through the YouMove scheme, along with inclusive sports activities for all ages.
- Nature trails, running groups, Nordic walking, and more.

Download a copy from [\(South\)the Active Communities page](#) / [\(Vale\)the Active Communities page](#) or pick one up from the reception at Abbey House or our venues around the district.

Over £900,000 boost for local infrastructure in South Oxfordshire

Over the last six months, the council has transferred over £900,000 to invest in vital infrastructure delivered by the council, town and parish councils and other community organisations.

These investments have supported many projects — from public art and refurbishment works to the purchase of new spin bikes for Didcot Wave Leisure Centre.

As the local planning authority, South Oxfordshire collects financial contributions in the form of

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) – this is the funding from housing developers to support the growth of the district when new developments are created.

S106 funding transferred between 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 has totalled £257,761. During this six-month period the council has also transferred £670,927 of CIL to town and parish councils that have experienced CIL liable development in their area.

Follow this link for a breakdown of [S106 funds have been approved and paid out and CIL monies transferred for South](#) (the document should download automatically).

Find out more about [CIL here](#) and [S106 here](#). If you'd like further information, please contact the [Infrastructure and Development Team](#).

7. OCC Report

Title	County Councillor's Report
Author	Cllr Johnny Hope-Smith
Parishes	Cholsey, East Hagbourne, Little Wittenham, Long Wittenham, Moulsoford, North Moreton, South Moreton, West Hagbourne
Date	November 2025
Contact Details	johnny.hope-smith@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Dear Parish Councillors and Residents,

Here are some updates and news I have gathered for you. Please provide any feedback, if its too much or not enough and of course any more information on a specific topic I can help with. I have put in **BOLD** the items which I think may be specifically appropriate for the Parishes to consider advertising or acting upon.

1. **HART of the Community – Tackling Local Highways Issues**

Oxfordshire County Council has launched new Highways Asset Response Teams (HARTs) to deliver fast, visible improvements to local roads and footpaths - directly responding to resident concerns.

These mobile teams are designed to “blitz” areas with clusters of small but noticeable issues reported via Fix My Street, such as:

- Cleaning street signs
- Removing damaged railings
- Clearing overgrown vegetation
- Resetting uneven slabs and kerbstones
- Cleaning debris from footways
- Removing fly posters and redundant street barriers

- Patching smaller road defects
- Repairing footway defects

What parishes can do:

- Encourage residents to report issues (preferably with photos) via Fix My Street:
<https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk>
- **Highlight local hotspots to the County Council for future HART visits via the questionnaire – Have you received yours?**

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hart-of-the-community-new-teams-target-areas-most-in-need-of-highway-work/>

2. Have Our Say – Science Vale Movement and Place Plan Consultation

Oxfordshire County Council has launched a public consultation on the new Movement and Place (MAP) Plan for Science Vale — a long-term vision to improve transport, public spaces, and quality of life across the area.

The MAP Plan is a 25-year strategy covering towns and villages including Didcot, Wantage, Harwell, East & West Hagbourne, North & South Moreton, Long & Little Wittenham, Sutton Courtenay, Milton, and others. It aims to support sustainable growth by:

- Improving walking, cycling, and public transport options
- Enhancing public spaces and village centres
- Reducing congestion and improving air quality
- Supporting access to jobs, education, and services
- Making travel safer and more inclusive

The plan is a “live” document, meaning it will be regularly updated to reflect community feedback and future needs.

What parishes can do:

- Encourage residents to take part in the consultation before **1 December 2025**
- Share the MAP Plan summary and survey link locally
- Provide parish-level feedback on transport priorities and public space improvements

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/science-vale-map>

Your input will help shape the final version of the plan, which is due to be presented to the Council's Cabinet in January 2026.

3. INFO & ACTION – Electric Blanket Safety Checks – Over One in Three Fail

Following the recent electric blanket testing events promoted by my September's CC report, Oxfordshire County Council's Trading Standards team has reported a concerning increase in failure rates.

Between 22 September and 10 October, over 920 electric blankets were tested at ten events across the county — nearly 200 more than last year. Alarming, 338 blankets failed safety checks, representing a 36.7% failure rate, up from the previous year.

Why this matters:

- Faulty electric blankets pose a serious risk of fire or injury, especially during colder months.
- Even newer blankets can fail safety tests.

- Common issues include exposed or bunched wires, wear and tear, and internal faults not visible to the eye.

What parishes can do:

- Remind residents to check their electric blankets before use
- Share advice from Electrical Safety First on how to spot faults:
<https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk>
- Encourage safe disposal of old or damaged blankets at local recycling centres

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cpd2y0je4zqo>

4. INFO - New Lane Rental Scheme to Reduce Roadwork Disruption

Oxfordshire County Council has received government approval to introduce a Lane Rental Scheme (LRS), aimed at reducing the disruption caused by roadworks on the county's busiest roads.

The scheme allows the council to charge utility companies and developers a daily fee for carrying out works on key parts of the road network during peak times. This creates a financial incentive to:

- Complete works more quickly
- Avoid peak-hour disruption
- Improve coordination between different works promoters
- Use smarter planning and technology to minimise delays

Why this matters:

- Oxfordshire sees around 30,000 roadwork requests per year
- The current permit scheme only allows cost recovery — LRS goes further by encouraging better behaviour
- Roughly 9% of the network (the busiest roads, esp bus usage) will be subject to charges
- Surplus income will be reinvested into improving the highway network

What parishes can do:

- Share this update with residents to explain how the council is tackling roadwork disruption

5. REMINDER – Free Park and Ride Bus Travel & Temporary Congestion Charge

As shared last month, Oxfordshire County Council is offering free bus travel from park and ride sites until the end of January 2026, alongside a temporary congestion charge in Oxford.

- Valid for up to 2 adults and 3 children with a park and ride parking ticket
- Applies to all bus services from the five park and ride sites

The £5 daily congestion charge applies to six key roads, but many exemptions and free permits are available — including for carers, blue badge holders, and Oxfordshire residents, 25 per car in our area.

The aim of the scheme is to cut congestion & improve air quality

What parishes can do:

- **Remind residents to take advantage of the free travel offer**
- **Share this informal but helpful guide** with tips and exemptions
<https://oxfordclarion.uk/twelve-easy-hacks-to-beat-oxfords-congestion-charge-2/>

- or/and share official Permit info and applications site:
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestioncharge

6. REMINDER: Councillor Priority Fund – Supporting Local Projects

The Councillor Priority Fund has reopened, offering each Oxfordshire County Councillor £10,000 to support community projects within their division. This funding is designed to help deliver local priorities and strengthen community initiatives.

Parish councils, community groups, and local organisations are encouraged to apply for funding to support projects that benefit residents. Examples might include:

- Improvements to community facilities
- Local environmental initiatives
- Activities that promote wellbeing or inclusion
- Smaller-scale projects are especially encouraged, as the fund is modest and intended to support a wide range of communities across Oxfordshire

Key details:

- Applications must be submitted by 30 November **2026**
- Grants are typically paid within 28 days of approval
- Applicants must register for an account to apply and track progress
- Monitoring and reporting are required for successful projects

To ensure your project meets the funding criteria, please read the guidance document before applying.

What parishes can do:

- **Identify local projects that could benefit from modest funding**
- **Collaborate with community groups to develop proposals**
- **Submit applications early to allow time for review and payment**

Keep records and be prepared to report on outcomes

For more information or to apply, visit the Councillor Priority Fund page.

<https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/councillorpriorityfund>