

MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 3 June 2026 at 7.30 pm in the Lilac Room, The Village Hall

Thom Rhodes, Clerk and Proper Officer

MINUTES**Members Present:**

Cllr. David Duthie (Chair)
Cllr. Jo George
Cllr. Sarah Varnom
Cllr. Matthew Barker
Cllr. John Dunsdon
Cllr. Angela Dowley
Cllr. Thomas Ashby (Oxfordshire County)
Cllr. Liam Mackenzie (West Oxfordshire District)

Also in Attendance:

Thom Rhodes (Clerk and RFO)

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. Paul Lishman, and Cllr. John Smyth.

Public Participation

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to address the Council. No members of the public were present.

76.26 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 13 May 2026 were proposed by Cllr. George and seconded by Cllr. Duthie. The Minutes were approved as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 28 May 2026 were proposed and seconded. The Minutes were approved as a correct record.

77.26 County and District Council Matters**County Councillor Report – Cllr. Thomas Ashby**

Quiet Lanes: Cllr. Ashby reported that ten Quiet Lane proposals have been put forward across the county. Only the proposals in Combe (West Oxfordshire) are relevant locally.

Brize Norton Parish Council has formally objected; Curbridge Parish Council is expected to submit a formal objection imminently. Cllr. Ashby has also submitted a personal objection. A proposed alternative was outlined, comprising an upgrade to the bridleway between Windrush Place, through Peashell Farm, past Bushy Ground and onto the B4477, with £1.3 million available for road improvements between Minster and Carterton. No formal response from the Council was required.

Witney High Street: Construction is progressing and is expected to be complete in late October or early November 2026. ANPR cameras will be introduced to restrict private vehicle access, with exemptions for blue badge holders, taxis, loading and unloading vehicles, and buses. Members noted that the blue badge exemption process is expected to mirror the congestion zone system.

Witney Road / Curbridge Road Junction: Cllr. Ashby advised that formal improvement proposals must be submitted via the county portal by the Parish Council. Members noted there may be a cost to the Council for any works arising. The Clerk to submit the proposal via the portal should the Council wish.

Action: Clerk to submit formal improvement proposal for the Witney Road/Curbridge Road junction via the Oxfordshire Highways portal. **(Clerk)**

EV Charging Project: Cllr. Ashby reported on a meeting held on 2 June 2026 regarding EV charging proposals. Proposed locations include Church Green and Thorney Leys. Cllr. Ashby expressed reservations about the Church Green proposal, given recently installed residential parking. No public consultation has taken place on these sites. Cllr. Ashby will arrange a separate meeting with the project contact to seek a revised location for the proposed parking bay.

Courtside at The Leys: Cllr. Ashby confirmed the facility is now open for sports and its takeaway hatch is operational.

A40 Slip Roads: Cllr. Ashby reported the A40 slip roads are expected to open within one to two weeks. The new junction will incorporate sensor-controlled traffic lights in place of a fixed sequence.

Park and Ride / Oxford Bus Lanes: Approval has been given to build the park-and-ride entrance and inbound bus lanes to Oxford. Bus lanes will not extend on the outbound route. The overall scheme is expected to be complete by the end of 2029. Members noted some concerns about the junction design (traffic lights rather than a roundabout) and potential impact on the A40.

District Councillor Report – Cllr. Liam Mackenzie

Cllr. Mackenzie arrived later in the meeting (see item 7.3 below). Members noted his written District Councillor's Report (June 2026), which had been circulated with the briefing pack.

78.26 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made in respect of items on the agenda.

79.26 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings and Standing Items**4.1 Village Hall**

Cllr. Varnom confirmed that the Village Hall committee had met recently and that the AGM is booked for the end of September 2026. No further matters to report.

4.2 CCTV Camera Log

No incidents to report.

4.3 Village Newsletter

It was confirmed that the decision made at the previous meeting – to move to colour print with the colour version also published on the parish council website – is correct. The Clerk was asked to ensure the colour version is uploaded promptly following each issue. It was agreed that the next councillor profile feature would be a new or recently co-opted councillor, who agreed to submit a short profile and photograph (Cllr. Dowley)

4.4 Projects Committee

Cllr. George will arrange an evening meeting to progress the Art Trail project. The proofread Art Trail leaflet document has been approved with minor amendments. Cllr. George confirmed she will instruct the printer to proceed with the order.

The Art Trail will incorporate QR codes on each art piece, linking to a downloadable version of the leaflet on the parish council website. It was resolved to approve a printing budget of up to £50 for 100 copies. If the cost exceeds this amount, Cllr. George will circulate an email to members for approval before proceeding.

Action: Cllr. George to instruct to proceed with printing the Art Trail leaflet (up to £50 for 100 copies). **(Cllr. George)**

4.5 Nature Plan / Wild Ducks

The Council noted it will have a table at the forthcoming Big Lunch Live event, featuring hedgehog information, pond commitments and registration of existing garden ponds. 150 plants have been organised for a plant table, and volunteers are confirmed. The event has been organised very well and the Council expressed its thanks to everyone involved for their efforts. Councillors noted the excellent effort involved.

4.6 Village Pond

No update to report. This item is carried forward to the next meeting.

4.7 Village Events Committee

Cllr. Barker reported on arrangements for the village event on Sunday 7 June 2026. The official road closure sign was received late and displayed for six days rather than the required ten; this was noted but won't affect the outcome and safety of the event. Music and entertainment licences have been secured at no cost – of which the Council expressed its gratitude. The event commences at 12:30, with setup from 10:00.

4.8 EV Microhubs

Cllr. George reported that the site visit from Connected Kerb has been delayed due to the absence of the project contact. A further meeting is scheduled for 30 June 2026 at 11:00 am; Cllr. George is unable to attend. The Council is awaiting the site visit before any formal decisions can be made. The Clerk confirmed he holds a signed copy of the letter of intent.

Action: Clerk to send signed letter of intent to Connected Kerb (Stuart).

80.26 New Business

5.1 New Village Defibrillator

Cllr. Varnom reported that the defibrillator housing box stored in the village hall is empty; no defibrillator unit is currently held by the Council. It was confirmed that a previous application for a free defibrillator was declined on the basis that two units already exist in the village.

It was agreed that the following steps would be taken: (1) Cllr. Varnom to contact DSC to establish the location of the missing unit. Cllr. Smythe is following up with E.T. (GDPR) regarding the missing unit; (2) if the unit cannot be located, the Council will consider purchasing a replacement; (3) once a unit is confirmed, detailed drawings and fitting information will be prepared for submission to the planning authority, as required for wall-mounting on the Village Hall. A contact was identified who may be able to assist with producing the required architectural drawings.

Action: Cllr. Varnom to contact DSC regarding the whereabouts of the defibrillator unit. To report back at next meeting. **(Cllr. Varnom)**

Action: Cllr. Duthie to provide details for the individual who can assist with installation and architectural drawings. **(Cllr. Duthie)**

5.2 Retrospective Home Working Allowance Claim – Former Clerk (S. Smith)

The Council considered a retrospective claim from the former Clerk for £1,231.78, representing four years of home working allowance at £6 per week. The background to the matter was discussed, including the informal arrangement whereby the Village Hall was intended to serve as the Clerk's workplace on Fridays, funded in part by the Council's existing contribution to the Village Hall. The council were obliged to note that no written

agreement existed regarding home working, that the arrangement was not stipulated in the former Clerk's contract of employment, and that there is no statutory or legal obligation on the Council to make the payment.

The former Clerk may instead direct a claim to HMRC, through which he would likely receive approximately 30% of the total amount retrospectively. The Clerk offered to assist the former Clerk in making that application if the Council or former Clerk so wished. Clerk to reach out later in June to former.

It was proposed that the claim be declined and the former Clerk directed to submit a claim via HMRC. Members voted in favour.

Resolved: The retrospective home working allowance claim is declined. The Council will support the former Clerk to make the claim to HMRC.

81.26 Playgrounds, Cemetery, Litter, Open Spaces, Sports Pavilion, Sports Field and Allotments

81.1 Playgrounds

The Council noted the lacking inspection contractor requirements (routine inspections). J.N. (GDPR) will advise in approximately one month, on his return from holiday, whether he is able to undertake the playground inspections going forward. Members were reminded to obtain demolition and removal quotes for the unsafe play equipment. The Clerk confirmed that six quotes have been requested from vendors. It was noted that the temporary tape cordon around the dangerous equipment had been removed/damaged within days of being erected. In the interim, more substantial physical barriers will be sourced: Cllr. Barker noted that green fencing held in the village container could be used, and the Clerk has a contact who may be able to lend Heras fences. A volunteer to erect the temporary fencing was sought.

It is anticipated that removal and replacement of the equipment will take place within 6–8 weeks, subject to quotes being reviewed at the next meeting. Members noted the safety risk and agreed this should be progressed as a priority.

Action: Clerk to collate demolition/removal quotes and circulate to members in advance of next meeting. **(Clerk)**

Action: Cllr. Barker, Duthie / Clerk to arrange erection of temporary physical barriers (green fencing or Heras fences) around the unsafe equipment. **(Cllr. Barker / Duthie / Clerk)**

81.2 Cemetery Management

The Clerk confirmed that the Scribe cemetery management software has been approved and demonstrated. The agreed pricing is £50 per month combined for cemetery and allotment modules (reduced from approximately £75/month). A one-off setup fee is included in the payments schedule. The Clerk will visit the rector and other relevant contacts as part of his introductory rounds.

81.3 Litter Picker's Report

The Council noted the litter picker's report. The matter of commercial and event notices fly-posted on telegraph poles was discussed; it was agreed that Julie is authorised to remove expired and commercial notices (such as handyman services) during her rounds. The Council thanked Julie for her continued excellent work. Members agreed to raise the matter of fly-posting by external event organisers informally. Quotes remain pending for replacement notice boards at the bus shelter and in the cemetery.

81.4 Village and School Car Park – Drainage

The Council noted that drainage works have been carried out at the village and school car park. Three potholes in the adjacent roadway were also filled by G. Hill & Sons. A letter of thanks will be sent. The Council expressed their gratitude towards the team and their efforts to help repair.

81.5 Sports Pavilion

The Council noted that the FCC (the WREN grant, renamed) cannot be pursued as the administering body is now based in Abingdon with a 15-mile radius, which excludes Ducklington by approximately one mile. The Council's contact is now pursuing FA grants, which have recently opened. Nicky Mellings (WODC) is the relevant contact. Members agreed to await the outcome of the FA grant application.

81.6 Allotments

Cllr. Dunsdon reported that four plots remain unattended. Two have been cultivated by volunteers and planted with potatoes to keep them in good order; these will be available to new allotment holders in due course. A third plot is in poor condition; Cllr. Dunsdon has begun clearing it but requires weed-suppressing plastic sheeting to contain weed growth. It was resolved to approve expenditure of up to £50 for sheeting.

A fourth plot held by a resident has not been tended this year and multiple attempts to contact him by telephone have received no response. It was resolved to write formally to the tenant notifying him of his contractual obligations and requiring him to remediate the plot within a specified period before any reclamation action is taken.

Members enjoyed a report in the village newsletter on allotment holders and their produce, and noted the impressive dedication of several tenants.

The Clerk confirmed contact details for prospective allotment holders will be re-forwarded to Cllr. Dunsdon.

Action: Approved: Expenditure of up to £50 for plastic weed-suppressing sheeting for allotment plots. (Cllr. Dunsdon to purchase) **(Cllr. Dunsdon)**

Action: Clerk to write formally to tenant regarding his unattended allotment plot, in line with the standard procedure. **(Clerk)**

Action: Clerk to forward contact details of prospective allotment holders to Cllr. Dunsdon. **(Clerk)**

82.26 Finance

7.1 Account Balances, Bank Reconciliation and Debts

The Clerk reported that access to the Unity Trust Bank online banking system has not yet been granted, and accordingly a full bank reconciliation cannot be completed. A manual review of incomings via the Scribe platform has been carried out and appears in order. The Clerk noted that, as required, there are no current demands in arrears or anticipated future payment demands against Ducklington Parish Council.

7.2 Invoices for Payment

The payments schedule (circulated with the briefing pack) was reviewed. The former Clerk's final week's payment, and the Clerk's monthly salary was noted as delayed, and an HMRC PAYE payment will also be required once these payments are made – this will be raised for payment in July. Cllr. Duthie will assist with uploading invoices to Unity pending the Clerk obtaining system access.

The following payments were approved as presented in the briefing pack:

Payee	Description	Invoice No.	Notes
D&S Garden Services	Mowing/strimming – open spaces (8 & 22 May)	SI-1437	
D&S Garden Services	Churchyard grass cutting (7 & 21 May)	SI-1438	
Castle Water	Allotments water supply	10010087266	
Oxfordshire County Council	Allotment rental	3920894768	*
Jenny Wren Marketing	Website updates & Art Trail webpage	1222	
AJG / Hiscox Insurance	Annual insurance renewal 01/06/26–31/05/27	556911640	*
No Butts Bin Co. Ltd	Winawood 3-seater bench (new teak)	4829156	Already delivered –

Payee	Description	Invoice No.	Notes
			payment delay.
No Butts Bin Co. Ltd	Custom SS memorial plaque (200x50mm)	4829157	Already delivered – payment delay.
Cllr M. Barker (Exp.)	Gravel – repairs & maintenance	Exp/B&Q	
Cllr M. Barker (Exp.)	VEC bin – village events committee	Exp/B&Q	
G. Hill & Sons Ltd	Car park soakaway & drainage works	10282	
Prysebros Ltd	Weed street spraying – May 2026	HC4834	
The Flying Press Ltd	730 newsletters, Issue 238 (June/July)	52892	
Civic.ly	Cemetery & allotments software – setup fee	-	
Civic.ly	Cemetery & allotments software – Month 1	-	
S. Smith (former Clerk)	Final week's wages	–	Noted by council – delay to PAYE access.
T. Rhodes (Clerk)	Monthly salary – June 2026	–	Noted by council – delay to PAYE access.
HMRC	PAYE payment	–	Noted by council – delay to PAYE access.

** OCC allotment rental and Hiscox insurance: subject to confirmation that payment has not already been made automatically. Civic.ly entries: subject to receipt of formal invoices before payment is released; Scribe trading as.*

Action: Clerk to gain access to Unity Trust Bank system and circulate full reconciliation. Cllr. Duthie to assist with payment uploads in the interim. **(Clerk / Cllr. Duthie)**

83.26 District Councillor Report – Cllr. Liam Mackenzie (The Moors Development)

Cllr. Mackenzie joined the meeting at this point. He reported on developments regarding the planning application for The Moors. The Environment Agency is currently assessing flood risk data submitted by the developer, and a decision on the updated Flood Risk Assessment is expected on or around 19 June 2026. The Parish Council confirmed it has not yet received the updated flood risk data despite repeated requests over several months. Members expressed significant frustration at the limited time available to review and respond to this

data before the Environment Agency's decision.

Cllr. Mackenzie noted the developer's longstanding strategy of seeking to reclassify the site as flood zone 2. The planning officer is expected to recommend approval if this reclassification is supported by the Environment Agency. Members noted that, as at 3 June 2026, the updated Flood Risk Assessment had still not been published on the planning portal.

It was discussed whether to request that the *GWP* query extension be formally considered as part of the assessment. Members acknowledged this approach carries a risk of strengthening the developer's evidence base, but agreed it should nonetheless be raised to ensure all relevant data is properly considered. It was resolved that this point should be included in individual member responses and in the Council's correspondence with the Environment Agency.

46 Witney Road – Change of Use: Cllr. Mackenzie noted that a planning application for the conversion of a garage annex into holiday let accommodation (Airbnb) at 46 Witney Road has passed consultation with no objections received. The application provides for five parking spaces (two retained by the owner, three for the holiday let). No further action by the Council was required.

Grain Store: Cllr. Mackenzie confirmed the approval of the grain store application, previously noted at the Annual Parish Meeting. Members were content with this outcome.

Action: Cllr. Mackenzie to contact James Nelson (West Oxfordshire DC) to request immediate release of flood risk data to the Parish Council ahead of the 19 June 2026 deadline. **(Cllr. Mackenzie)**

Action: Members to include the *GWP* query extension as a point of concern in individual responses to the Environment Agency. **(All Members)**

84.26 Other Comments and Matters for Next Agenda

8.1 Sensory Garden – Timber and Bedding Plants

Cllr. Barker requested a small budget for additional timber to reinforce the low rope border in the sensory garden, which is being damaged by people standing on it. Expenditure of up to £60 for timber was proposed and approved.

Cllr. Barker requested approval for bedding plants for the planters, at approximately £10 per box. Expenditure of up to £100 was approved. Members noted the garden looks excellent and thanks were expressed to Jenny Tarbox for her ongoing involvement. *Cllr. Varnom* confirmed that Jenny Tarbox will assist with planting the week commencing 10 June 2026.

Resolved: Up to £60 for timber and up to £100 for bedding plants approved for the sensory garden.

85.26 Clerk's Comments

The Clerk provided the following updates:

85.1 Agenda Delay: The Clerk apologised for the delay in circulating the agenda, which was due to illness and a misunderstanding of the meeting date. This will not recur.

85.2 AGAR Progress: All required documentation, account statements, and supporting evidence have been compiled for both the internal and external auditors. These will be shared with all members in a single folder once the internal report is received. Signed AGAR documents returned by Moore have been received for former years 22/23 and 23/24, noted by the Council and agreed. The Clerk confirmed that all submissions to the website will be made together to minimise costs.

85.3 General Progress: The Clerk confirmed that the email inbox has been reduced from approximately 19,000 emails to 6,000, with approximately 200 considered still pertinent. All Register of Interests forms have been signed and submitted. Election expense sheets have been submitted. All key obligations are on track.

The Clerk confirmed he holds physical keys to the Village Hall and the Lilac Room. An issue with the post box key was noted; Cllr. Varnom agreed to investigate. The building access key code has been changed.

The Clerk confirmed awareness of the lone working policy held in the Google Drive and confirmed prior safeguarding training. Office hours will be a minimum of four hours from 10:00 am on Fridays initially.

85.4 Co-opted Councillor Email Access: Cllr. Dowley confirmed access has been granted. Paperwork for the co-opted member will be delivered mid-June 2026, and also dropped to Cllr. Almgil for signing.

Action: Clerk to deliver co-opted councillor paperwork to Cllr. Angela Dowley and to Cllr. Peter Almgil. **(Clerk)**

Action: Cllr. Varnom to investigate the post box key and report back to the Clerk. **(Cllr. Varnom)**

86.26 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Ducklington Parish Council will be held on Wednesday 1 July 2026. Cllr. Varnom sent apologies in advance for that meeting.

The meeting closed at 20:49.

Signed: Date:

(Chair, Ducklington Parish Council)