

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7 JANUARY 2025
in the Lilac Room, Village Hall commencing at 7.30 pm**

01.26 Presentation by Fiona Brown, Communities Lead / Rural Housing Enabler, West Oxfordshire District Council - 'Affordable Housing and the Rural Enabling Service'

The Council welcomed Fiona Brown, Communities Lead and Rural Housing Enabler, who represents both Cherwell District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

Key points from the presentation included:

Funding and Purpose: The Rural Housing Enabling service is funded through DEFRA. Its primary objective is to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing specifically for local people in rural communities.

Rural Exception Sites: The service focuses on identifying "exception sites"—small plots of land that would not normally be granted planning permission for standard market housing but can be developed specifically for affordable housing to meet a proven local need.

Scale of Development: The service concentrates on small-scale sites, typically consisting of fewer than 10 units, to ensure developments remain proportionate to the village character.

Partnerships: The service works closely with Housing Association partners to manage the build and long-term tenancy of these homes.

Housing Needs Survey: Fiona emphasised that they support the implementation of Housing Needs Surveys to gather primary evidence of demand within the parish.

Ducklington Data and Local Context: Fiona reported that current data—collated from Census information and the District Housing Register—indicates a specific housing need in Ducklington for 11 affordable homes.

Council Discussion:

Current Developments: Councillors noted that there are currently planning applications submitted for larger private developments within the village which includes affordable housing.

Defining "Local Connection": A discussion was held regarding the strict definition of a "local connection." It was clarified that these homes are legally bound to be offered first to those with a clear link to Ducklington (e.g., through residency, employment, or family).

Local Lettings Plan: The possibility of implementing a Local Lettings Plan was discussed to ensure that the allocation of any new affordable units prioritises Ducklington residents in perpetuity.

Article 4 and Planning: Councillors queried the use of Article 4 data and how "exception sites" are protected to ensure they remain limited to affordable housing use only, preventing future conversion to market-rate housing.

Integration with the Neighbourhood Plan: The Council discussed the importance of incorporating these housing strategies into the Ducklington Neighbourhood Plan. It was suggested that formalising the requirement for small-scale, local-connection housing within the plan would provide greater leverage in future planning decisions.

Liaison with Planning Lead: It was proposed that Fiona meets with Cllr Paul Lishman, the lead councillor for Local Planning and the Neighbourhood Plan, to discuss how the Rural Enabling Service can align with the village's long-term objectives.

Action: As Cllr Lishman was absent from the meeting, the Clerk was instructed to arrange contact between Fiona Brown and Cllr Lishman to progress these discussions.

Note: These minutes serve as a summary of the presentation and the subsequent preliminary discussions. Formal resolutions regarding specific sites will be subject to future council meetings and public consultation.

02.26 Presentation by Jenny Greenway, Website Administrator - 'Ideas for Improving the Website'

Jenny Greenway presented a strategic vision for the Ducklington Parish Council website, emphasising the need for better integration between the Village Newsletter, the Community Facebook page, the Village Hall website, and the Parish Council's digital presence.

Key Objectives:

- Include information on all village events.
- Increase website traffic and community engagement.
- Ensure the website acts as a central "hub" for the parish.

Social Media Strategy: The Council discussed the potential for a Parish Council Facebook Page. It was suggested that this page be "locked" (admin-only posting) to serve as a broadcast tool for news updates and events. Jenny noted that this would drive users back to the main website for more information.

Design and User Interface (UI) Improvements: Jenny has conducted a comprehensive review of the website's aesthetics and navigation and makes the following suggestions with the aim of improving readability and branding:

Branding: Jenny suggested a higher resolution logo and adjustments to font sizes (reducing the size of 'Ducklington Parish Council' while increasing the size of the descriptive local authority text).

Navigation: Jenny proposes enhancing the menu banner with a "Contact Us" button, increasing menu depth/font size, and making gold-coloured links bold to ensure they are visible.

Visuals: Jenny suggests reducing the depth of the Home page banner and introducing a rotating gallery of high-quality village images on the right-hand side (RHS).

Home Page Functionality: Jenny suggests removing the confusing Bin/Recycling image with a clear, aligned Collection Calendar and removing redundant subheadings in the News / Events / Minutes banner.

Page-Specific Updates

1. The Parish & News

Neighbourhood Plan: This section has been moved to the bottom of the menu until more content is available.

Statistics: Parish statistics are to be updated using 2021 National Census data.

News Management: Introduction of categories and "Pinned" posts for important news. The Council discussed adding a sidebar for recurring items and a "Read More News" button to keep the home page tidy.

Events: Rename "View Events" to "Upcoming Events" and include links to all village organisations and the Village Hall's regular activities.

2. The Council: Land, Buildings & Compliance

Photography: Updated photos are required for Bartholomew Close (sculpture), the Sensory Garden, and the Sports Pavilion. Information regarding the funding sources for these projects should be included.

Correction: The image for the Chalcroft section is incorrect and needs replacing.

Policy Review: The Code of Conduct (2012) and Freedom of Information sections require reviewing and date-stamping to ensure they remain current.

Transparency: Update the Disclosable Pecuniary Interests page and archive older Minutes/Agendas.

3. Services & Contact

Maps & Navigation: Correct the "Blue Pin" for parking and add a map for the Conservation Area.

Accessibility: Move text from PDFs (specifically for Grants and Bins) directly onto the web pages to improve searchability and ease of use.

Contact Us: Remove the village map (address is sufficient) and add a "Report It" button.

Security: Discussion regarding adding a 'Captcha' verification to forms to prevent spam bots.

Action Plan

The Council thanked Jenny for her thorough audit.

It was agreed that Jenny Greenway will:

- i. act on the technical and design updates as discussed,
- ii. access and upload information regarding the 2021 Census and Council land/buildings, and
- iii. investigate the setup of a moderated Facebook page for Council announcements.

03.26 Parish Councillors Present:

Matthew Barker (Vice Chairman)
Peter Almgill - from 8.30 pm, item 10:26 d)
Richard Border
John Dunsdon
Jo George
John Smyth
Sarah Varnom - until 8.45 pm, item 10.26 m)

In Attendance: Steve Smith (Clerk)
Liam McKenzie (WODC Conservative Candidate)
Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC) - until 8.00 pm
Fiona Brown (WODC) - until 8.00 pm
Jenny Greenway - until 8.15 pm

04.26 Parish Councillors' Apologies:

David Duthie (Chairman)
Paul Lishman

05.26 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

06.26 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 3 December 2025:

Cllr Varnom proposed and Cllr Barker seconded and the Council **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

07.26 County Council (OCC) / District Council (WODC) Matters:

Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC) reported:

TEMPORARY TRAFFIC LIGHTS ON A415 UPDATE

I am aware of the frustration the temporary traffic lights on the A415 have been causing residents over the last few days – especially the rat running that is being caused.

Thames Water were issued a Fixed Penalty Notice, with the traffic lights being removed in the afternoon of 07/01/26.

UNAUTHORISED ITEMS LOCATED ON THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY

Since unauthorised objects started to appear on the Highways I have been contacted by several people in Witney and Ducklington who are both supportive of these objects appearing, and those with concerns.

To date, 397 flags have been removed at a cost of just over £16,000.

Going forward, the Council's policy is as follows:

- **Safety First:** Any attachments deemed dangerous to the highway will be removed immediately.
- **Standard Removal:** Non-hazardous flags will be removed within **28 days** of being reported via FixMyStreet. For security reasons, the Council will not disclose the specific date of removal within that window.
- **Repeat Instances:** Locations where flags are replaced after an initial removal will be logged, but the Council will not conduct repeat visits for further removals at those sites.

Regarding legal action, OCC is consulting with their legal team but remains discreet about specific enforcement measures. Overall, the Council aims for a **proportionate and sensible** approach.

Any residents who have concerns about any unauthorised object appearing on the Highway can report it on *FixMyStreet*.

Operatives are having to go out at night to remove flags, because of the intimidation they are receiving by members of the public. Locally, flags are due to be removed within 28 days of the first official *FixMyStreet* report.

HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE CHANGES COME INTO EFFECT THIS MONTH

From 14th January, residents are being asked to book slots to visit their local HWRC. More information can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/household-waste/household-waste-recycling-centres/book-recycling-centre-visit>

PROPOSED CLOSURE TO THREE OXFORDSHIRE FIRE STATIONS

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue proposes station closures (Henley, Eynsham, Woodstock), staff/engine cuts, and reduced night-time cover, drawing strong opposition.

Cllr Thomas Ashby, Shadow Cabinet for Community Wellbeing & Safety said, *"It is fundamentally contradictory to cut fire infrastructure while planning for massive growth. Closing fire stations slows response times and removes essential local protection, effectively 'playing Russian roulette' with resident safety. The Council must recognise that expanding communities requires more infrastructure, including fire services, not less. I demand they urgently rethink these proposed cuts."*

To respond to the consultation, please follow the link:

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ofrs-consultation>

My thoughts here:

<https://tashby971.wixsite.com/thomasashby/post/a-crisis-in-community-safety-why-we-must-reject-the-cuts-to-oxfordshire-fire-and-rescue-service>

APPLY FOR YOUR OXFORD CONGESTION ZONE PERMIT

Remember, if you wish to travel into Oxford by car and are not exempt, please follow this link to apply for a permit: [Apply for Oxford Congestion Zone Permit](#)

WITNEY LIBRARY

Witney Library has now re-opened. The newly refurbished library has been welcomed by many across the community.

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND IS NOW OPEN

At the start of this new Municipal Year the Councillor Priority Fund is back allowing Councillors to grant local groups funding. £10,000 has been allocated to each councillor between May 2025 - May 2027. To apply for Councillor Priority Funding, please follow the link:

[Apply for Councillor Priority Funding](#)

DUCKLINGTON PARISH SIGNAGE

As mentioned my question at the 9th December's Full Council was:

"Ducklington Parish Council wishes to enhance the Parish's identity, which is larger than Ducklington Village, by installing clear boundary signs. Despite their efforts, they have not yet secured approval for this project.

Will the Cabinet Member lend their support to the Parish Council and take action to ensure the installation of signage on their boundary, helping to clearly mark the Parish limits for residents and visitors?

This request is seeking permission, not the funding of the signs

The Leader of the Council responded in writing with:

"I appreciate that a parish's identity is important and is more than just that within the built-up area of the place. We do need to be mindful that the more signage there is along our highway the more cluttered it can look, that it can make hedge and verge cutting more difficult, and can negatively contribute to any collision that occurs on the highway. Whilst this might be minimal for one parish, we do need to consider the impact of several wishing to pursue such a measure, and the fairness of those areas who could afford to install and maintain and those who can't. The council has no approved policy that specifically considers this and that would be a first step on this matter; if the policy was favourable, then alongside this, requirements on location, size, style and material would need to be specified with any permission provided. I will ask officers to consider and draft a proposed Parish Boundary Signage & Identity policy for Cabinet to consider."

Therefore, we are not going to see any immediate progress until this new policy has been written.

THE MOORS

I will always continue to oppose The Moors development, with my last update to the Parish Council being:

Oxfordshire County Council:

The EA is the planning consultee for development proposed in Flood Zone 3 (fluvial flood risk) and has requested further updates to the FRA and flood modelling report due to deficiencies in that report. The EA has a national flood risk modelling review team that is qualified to comment on hydraulic modelling reports. It is yet to be seen whether the updated report meets the requirements as set out by the EA.

The LLFA does not comment on the fluvial flood risk to proposed development in Flood Zone 3 because the EA is the relevant consultee for this. The LLFA is the consultee for surface water drainage, and while we may comment on surface water flood risk, the overriding risk to this development is fluvial and any mapped flood risk for surface water is likely to be linked to the fluvial flood risk also.

As the EA have requested the updates to the FRA and modelling report, we must rely on them to comment on whether the updated details meet their expectations, and whether they can remove their objection.

West Oxfordshire District Council:

The latest update is that the Applicant has submitted flood modelling data to include the Windrush seeking to respond to the EA in their latest comments and continue their challenge of the flood risk categorisation of the site.

As I understand it, they are seeking to argue that the Windrush has no connection with the application site and instead, it is the sole effect of the Colwell Brook that needs to be taken into account when considering flood risk. Essentially, they are trying to argue the flood risk has been overstated by the EA.

I have reconsulted the EA, as well as WODC Drainage and the Parish Council, on the Applicant's latest submission and we are awaiting a response. Once we have this, my intention will be to bring it to Committee with the recommendation clearly to be largely influenced by the EA's position.

Since the last Parish Council Meeting, I have not any further correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council.

Cllr Adrian Walsh (WODC) is currently away.

08.26 Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items

None disclosed.

09.26 PLANNING

- a) Application No: **25/00423/OUT** - Land to the South of Standlake Rd, Ducklington PROPOSAL: Outline planning application for up to 36 dwellings with creation of new vehicular access off Standlake Road and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. All matters reserved except access (Amended Description).

Applicant: Jenny Hutchings

Town and Country Planning Act

The Clerk reported that an extension of the deadline for the Parish Council's response has been agreed to 12th January 2026.

The Clerk reported that Cllr Lishman continues to engage in discussions with the planning

officer regarding play/open space and proposed traffic calming measures.

The planning officer has said she would be happy to facilitate a meeting with the developer and parish council if required.

Following a discussion, Councillors determined that no further comments were required at this stage beyond the existing submissions.

It was **RESOLVED** that: The Clerk be instructed to write to the Planning Officer stating that Ducklington Parish Council wishes to reiterate all its previous comments and concerns regarding this outline planning application and requests that these are fully taken into account during the decision-making process.

- b) Application No: **24/02878/RES** - Land East of Witney Rd, Ducklington (the Moors) - Reserved Matters Application for Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale together with associated works for 105 dwellings.

Applicant: Mr John Brooks

Town and Country Planning Act

Applicant Response to Environment Agency Comments / EA Consultation - Modelling Response

The Council received a report from the Clerk regarding the ongoing flooding and drainage concerns at The Moors. The purpose of the report was to formalise the appointment of GWP Consultants to provide professional oversight and to outline the financial commitment required for a potential formal challenge.

Phase 1 : Initial Review

Cllr Lishman has established contact with John Sutton of GWP Consultants.

Status: An initial review is scheduled to commence in early January 2026.

Scope: A preliminary assessment and professional advice based on a half-day consultancy.

Agreed Fee: £440.00.

Phase 2: Technical Review and Formal Objection

The Council noted that if the initial assessment identifies significant merit for a challenge, a second phase will be triggered immediately to meet planning deadlines.

Scope: A comprehensive technical review and the drafting of a formal objection.

Timeline: Targeted for completion by the end of January or early February 2026.

Additional Cost: £1,760.00.

Total Project Commitment: £2,200.00.

Financial Deliberation:

Councillors discussed the necessity of the expenditure:

Merit: It was agreed that professional technical data is essential to ensure any Council objection is robust and represents a justified use of public funds.

Budgetary Impact: The Council considered whether the costs would be met from the current financial year's budget or drawn from general reserves. It was noted that the narrow window for decision-making requires pre-authorised financial flexibility.

Resolution and Motion

The following motion was proposed and seconded:

The Council **RESOLVES** to receive the initial report from GWP Consultants regarding The Moors drainage issues and, subject to a positive recommendation from the consultant that further action is warranted, authorises additional expenditure of up to £1,760.00 for the completion of a full technical review and formal objection. To ensure timely progression, the Council delegates authority to Cllr Lishman to trigger this second phase of work in consultation with GWP Consultants, provided the total project cost does not exceed £2,200.00."

Decision: Unanimously Approved

Proposer: Cllr Barker

Second: Cllr Dunsdon

- c) Application No: **MW.0165/23** - Details Pursuant to Condition No.16 (Restoration Scheme for phase 9) of planning permission no. MW.0165/23 at Gill Mill Quarry, Standlake Road, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX29 7PP

Applicant: Smiths & Sons (Bletchington) Limited

Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)

The Council reviewed the details of the proposed restoration scheme for Phase 9. It was noted that the proposals were in line with the expected environmental and land-use recovery standards for the site.

It was **RESOLVED** that: The Council has **no objections** and approves the details as submitted.

- d) Application No: **MW.0165/23** - Details Pursuant to Condition No.15 (Working Scheme for phase 9) of planning permission no. MW.0165/23 at Gill Mill Quarry, Standlake Road, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX29 7PP

Applicant: Smiths & Sons (Bletchington) Limited

Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)

The Council reviewed the details of the proposed working scheme for Phase 9. It was noted that the scheme outlines the methodology for extraction and site management during this specific phase of operations.

It was **RESOLVED** that: The Council has **no objections** and approves the details as submitted.

e) **Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr Lishman was absent. Matter deferred to the next meeting.

10.26 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) **Hotel**

Nothing further to report.

b) **Village Hall**

Cllr George reported on the failing heating system at the Village Hall. The existing boiler has reached the end of its service life and needs replacing.

While a green energy solution (such as a heat pump) was the preferred initial option, a technical assessment has determined that site restrictions and the building's current infrastructure make these alternatives unfeasible at this time.

A new, high-efficiency condensing gas boiler will be installed. While gas-based, the new unit will significantly improve the hall's energy rating and reduce current carbon emissions.

A formal project plan is being drawn up, and money has already been set aside to cover the total cost of the replacement.

Efficiency Measures: To complement the new boiler, Cllr George is currently investigating available grant funding specifically for improved building insulation to further reduce heat loss and operating costs.

c) **CCTV Camera Log**

The Clerk reported there had been no incidents on the CCTV log this month, so far as he is aware.

It was agreed that Cllr Smyth would approach the Secretary of the Ducklington Sports Club to ascertain whether surveillance footage is available to assist police enquiries following the theft of a vehicle from Park Road

d) **Village Newsletter**

The Clerk reminded councillors that the deadline for articles to be published in the February / March Village Newsletter (Issue 236) is 16 January 2026.

Articles should be submitted to Emma Buckard: newsletter@ducklingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Action: The Clerk to advertise the availability of three vacant allotment plots, noting an average annual rent of £25.00 (adjusted based on plot size).

Action: Cllr Barker to submit a short profile and a current photograph for the next Newsletter.

The Council considered a recommendation from the Clerk to provide an honorarium to Emma Buckard, the Editor of the Village Newsletter. Members expressed their appreciation for the consistently high quality of her work. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council award an honorarium to Emma Buckard as a gesture of goodwill and in recognition of her excellent service.

Amount: £250.00

Proposer: Cllr Varnom

Seconder: Cllr Almgill

Vote: Unanimous

e) **Projects Committee**

Cllr George informed the Council that the artist, Natasha Housego can provide a yearly maintenance service for the new village sculpture at Bartholomew Close Open Area, and confirmed that the cost for this annual provision would be £400.00.

Additionally, the Council discussed the requirement to protect the new assets. Cllr George requested that the Clerk contact the Council's insurers to ensure the new artworks are adequately covered under the existing policy.

Actions:

1. **Maintenance Agreement:** The Clerk to formalise the maintenance arrangement with Natasha Housego at the confirmed rate of £400.00 per annum.
2. **Insurance:** The Clerk to arrange to include the new Art Works on the Council's asset register and insurance schedule.

Cllr Barker reported that two tonnes of topsoil is required for the new Sensory Garden to support plant growth.

Action: The Clerk to obtain three formal quotes for the procurement and delivery of two tonnes of topsoil (to be delivered in 2 x bulk bags) for comparison and approval at the next meeting.

Cllr George enquired whether the Ducklington Sports Club intended to apply for available Section 106 (S106) funding. In response, Cllr Smyth confirmed that development plans for the club are currently in preparation. It was noted that while S106 money is a key component, the total project costs will require a multi-stream funding approach, including applications to the Football Association (FA) and local fundraising events.

The Council and the Sports Club are mindful of the fixed deadline regarding these developer contributions; Cllr Smyth confirmed the club is aware that the S106 funds must be fully utilised by December 2028

f) **Nature Plan / Wild Ducks**

Cllr George provided an update on the ongoing work of the Wild Ducks and the village Nature Plan. It was reported that a significant number of bulbs have been planted across the village, with a strong display expected in the coming spring.

A new project is being organised for the spring, to be led by Marilyn Morris.

Cllr George requested that a budget of £200.00 be made available to support the Wild Ducks in 2026.

Cllr Varnom proposed that the Wild Ducks take over the ongoing maintenance of the village planters and the Sensory Garden moving forward. This transition is intended to ensure consistent care and alignment with the village's broader nature and biodiversity goals.

Resolutions:

- The Council approved the allocation of £200.00 for the Wild Ducks.
- Wild Ducks to be asked if they are willing to take on the maintenance of the planters and Sensory Garden.

g) **Village Events Committee**

Management and Expenditure of Parish Celebration Group Earmarked Reserves:

Cllr Barker withdrew his original motion concerning independent spending power for the Village Events Committee. The Council then considered a report from the Clerk regarding the legal and audit requirements for managing "ring-fenced" funds.

The Clerk advised that under the Local Government Act 1972, the Council cannot legally delegate its spending authority to an outside group. By adopting the Clerk's recommended mechanism, the Council ensures proper oversight of public and donated funds as well as the ability to reclaim VAT on eligible expenses via direct payment.

It was reported that the current balance held in the Parish Celebration Group earmarked reserve is £2,145.53.

After a discussion, Cllr Border proposed the motion recommended by the Clerk, which was seconded by Cllr Almgill and the Council formally **RESOLVED:** That the Council authorises the Parish Clerk to make payments for sundry expenses in connection with village events (including, but not limited to, insurance, equipment hire, and publicity), to be funded from the Parish Celebration Group earmarked reserve, up to the remaining balance of that reserve.

Big Lunch Event: Licensing for Outdoor Music:

The Council discussed the upcoming "Big Lunch" event scheduled for 7th June 2026. It is proposed to have live bands performing. To ensure the event is legally compliant, particularly regarding the provision of outdoor music, the Council identified the need to clarify licensing requirements. This includes potential Temporary Event Notices (TEN) and PPL/PRS licensing for copyrighted music.

Action: The Clerk is authorised to contact West Oxfordshire District Council and the relevant licensing authorities to clarify whether a specific licence is required for the event and to report back to the Council.

h) **St George Flag Re-Installation**

The Council considered a report from the Clerk regarding the re-installation of a St George Flag on Openreach property. It was noted that while the flag itself has since been removed, the baton to which it was attached remains.

RESOLVED: That no further action be taken by the Parish Council at this time.

i) **Training on Storing and Sharing files in Google Drive**

Cllr Almgill apologised for the delay in progressing this item due to time constraints and requested that the matter be deferred to the next meeting

j) **EV Microhubs**

Nothing further to report. Cllr George to follow up and report to the next meeting.

k) **Lone Working Policy for Employees**

The Council considered a draft Lone Working Policy submitted by Cllr Varnom. The policy was developed to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of individuals carrying out Council business without direct supervision, such as working in the Village Hall or at home, attending site visits, or carrying out inspections.

Members reviewed the draft and agreed that the scope should be broadened. It was determined that the protections and responsibilities outlined should apply to all representatives of the Council rather than being restricted to a specific role.

Amendment: It was agreed that the draft be amended to replace all instances of the phrase "**the Clerk**" with "**those working on behalf of the Council**" throughout the document.

Cllr Varnom proposed the adoption of the policy as amended, which was seconded by Cllr Almgill. **RESOLVED:** That the Council adopts the Lone Working Policy, subject to the inclusion of the agreed terminology amendments.

Action: The Clerk to update the Lone Working Policy document with the amended phrasing and archive the finalised version in the Council's policy folder.

Action: The policy to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis.

l) Replacement Speed Indicator Sign

The Council considered the Clerk's report regarding the procurement of a replacement Speed Limit Reminder (SLR) to support the newly implemented 20mph zone and relocation of the existing unit to replace the faulty unit in Standlake Road.

During the discussion, members reviewed the specifications regarding data collection and Bluetooth retrofitting, concluding that these features were not required for the current project scope.

The Council considered the recommendations as amended and **RESOLVED** to proceed with the following:

New Unit Procurement: The supply and installation of a new 300mm '20mph & Slow Down' solar-powered unit, including a new 80W solar kit, but excluding the data collection package.

Unit Relocation: The relocation of existing unit SN 10740 to replace the faulty unit SN 9941, excluding a Bluetooth retrofit.

Proposer: Cllr Barker

Seconder: Cllr George

Vote: Approved by a majority (5 in favour, 2 against).

Action: The Clerk is to procure a formal, detailed quotation from Westcotec Ltd for the supply and installation of the 300mm solar-powered unit and the relocation of unit SN 10740, as per the approved specifications. The Clerk will report this quotation to the Council at the next meeting for final financial approval. Additionally, the Council is to explore funding support through the Councillor Priority Fund

m) A415 Speed Limit

The Council received a detailed progress report regarding the ongoing formal request to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) for a reduction in the speed limit on the A415.

The Clerk reported that following correspondence with Roger Plater (Senior Officer, Vision Zero, OCC), he has refined the Council's request into a two-pronged proposal:

- **Cokethorpe School Section:** A reduction from the current 50 mph to 40 mph.
- **The Buffer Zone:** Extending the current 50 mph limit through to the existing 30 mph zone by the Ducklington roundabout, thereby eliminating the hazardous 60 mph "high-speed gap" near the Lidl crossing.

The Council noted that the request is officially logged on the OCC tracker, with assessment expected within the next six months.

Resolution: The Council formally thanked the Clerk for the proactive and thorough way this matter has been taken forward. Members expressed their support for the proposal and recorded their hope that OCC will include this specific stretch of the A415 in the "first tranche" of their A-road reviews.

Action: The Clerk to maintain regular contact with the OCC Vision Zero team and report any further updates to a future meeting.

n) **Request for Dog Bin at Mill Meadow and Account Reconciliation**

The Council received a report from the Clerk regarding West Oxfordshire District Council's (WODC) waste management services, specifically concerning a request for a new bin at Mill Meadow and the discovery of historical billing arrears.

The Clerk reported that:

- A resident had requested a new bin at Mill Meadow to address increasing dog fouling.
- Publica (the service provider) quoted a £45.00 installation fee and an ongoing weekly emptying charge of £8.37.
- Publica had refused to authorise new installations due to an outstanding balance of £4,450.97. This debt had accrued because invoices were historically sent to a former Clerk's residential address and were never received by the Council.
- The billing address has now been corrected to the Village Hall, and the Clerk has obtained copies of all missing invoices for the period 01/04/23 to 31/03/26.

Discussion: Members expressed concern regarding the administrative errors leading to the arrears and the high cost of the ongoing service charge for a single bin.

RESOLVED: To request District Councillor Adrian Walsh to take up the matter of the Mill Meadow bin on behalf of the Parish Council.

Action: The Clerk to write to **the resident** to inform her that the Council is actively pursuing the matter of the Mill Meadow bin by raising the issue directly with the District Councillor.

11.25 New Business

a) **Circulation of Draft Agenda**

Cllr Barker requested that a draft agenda be circulated on the Wednesday prior to publication to ensure all member items are included. The Clerk confirmed he is happy to receive agenda requests at any time, provided they are submitted to him by the Thursday evening preceding the

Friday publication date. The Clerk further requested that such items be supported by written reports and if applicable, draft motions for consideration by members.

Agreed: To adopt this procedure and review the process in six months.

b) **Proposed Fire Station Closures**

The Council discussed the ongoing public consultation by Oxfordshire County Council regarding proposed structural changes to the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. It was noted that the consultation, which closes on **20 January 2026**, includes several significant proposals, notably:

- **Proposed Station Closures:** The permanent closure of on-call fire stations in Eynsham, Woodstock, and Henley.
- **Service Reductions:** The removal of five fire engines across the county and a reduction in night-time cover, leaving five wholetime engines available for the entire county during night hours.

Members debated whether the Parish Council should submit a formal collective response to these proposals. Concerns were raised regarding the potential impact on local response times.

Motion proposed by Cllr Dunsdon and seconded by Cllr Border: That the Parish Council submit a formal response to the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service consultation opposing the proposed cuts.

VOTE:

- In favour: 2
- Against: 4

The motion was **DEFEATED**.

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council will not submit a collective response to the consultation. It remains open for individual councillors to submit their own responses to the Oxfordshire County Council consultation as they see fit before the deadline.

c) **Flags at Ducklington Roundabout**

The Council received a report from the Clerk regarding the unauthorised installation of flags on Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) streetlight columns at the Ducklington Roundabout.

It was noted that OCC Highways has officially authorised the removal of the attachments (Ref: 8580292) on a 28-working-day priority.

Councillors also considered County Councillor Thomas Ashby's detailed report (see minute 07.26)

RESOLVED: that no further action be taken at this time.

12.26 **Playgrounds, Cemetery, Litter, Open Spaces, Sports Pavilion, Sports Field, Allotments**

a) **Playgrounds - Inspection Reports**

The Council considered the schedule of recommended maintenance actions as detailed in the inspection reports.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be authorised to take all necessary steps to ensure the recommended maintenance actions are carried out and to provide an update to the Council upon their completion.

b) **Cemetery Management**

The Council received a comprehensive report from the Clerk detailing the transition of cemetery management to the Parish Council. The report outlined the statutory requirements for record-keeping, proposed procedures for interments, and a proposed interim fee structure.

RESOLVED: 1. To adopt the formal process for burial liaison, scheduling, and documentation as outlined in the Clerk's report. 2. To authorise the Clerk to procure the required bound registers from Shaw & Sons to ensure compliance with burial law. 3. To adopt the existing Churchyard Regulations and a fee structure based on the Church of England Fee Tables as a temporary measure pending formal adoption of a bespoke Ducklington fees policy. 4. To re-erect a small noticeboard within the cemetery to display the adopted regulations. and 5. To formally notify local Funeral Directors of the Council's assumption of burial authority responsibilities and to continue liaison with St Bartholomew's Church regarding existing plot reservations.

This will ensure:

- **Legal Compliance:** Authorises the purchase of the necessary "hard copy" registers.
- **Consistency:** Adopts an interim fee and regulation model to ensure the council can operate immediately while a bespoke Ducklington policy is drafted.
- **Communication:** Sets an action for the Clerk to manage the handover from the Church and notify the industry (Funeral Directors).

c) **Sensory Garden, Chalcroft - Connecting to a Water Source**

The Council considered a proposal from the Clerk to investigate the feasibility of installing a permanent water connection to support the long-term maintenance and plant health of the Sensory Garden. It was noted that a dedicated supply would improve operational efficiency and ensure the sustainability of the site.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be tasked with the following actions for report at the February meeting:

1. **Thames Water Liaison:** Initiate a pre-application enquiry to identify the nearest mains connection point and determine the requirements for a non-household supply.

2. **Site Survey and Costing:** Identify the most efficient pipework route and obtain estimates for connection fees, meter installation, and necessary local groundworks (including a standpipe).
3. **Regulatory Compliance:** Ensure all proposals meet water-standard regulations, specifically regarding backflow prevention.
4. **Funding Investigation:** Explore the availability of Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds to offset capital costs.
5. **Business Case:** Present a comprehensive report to the Council detailing total capital expenditure and projected annual standing charges.

d) Litter Picker's Report

Councillors noted the Litter Picker's report in the Briefing Pack.

The Council considered a request from the current Litter Picker to transition from a paid employee to a voluntary role. It was noted that the individual is keen to continue their service to the village but prefers to do so on a voluntary basis.

RESOLVED:

1. **Acceptance of Resignation:** To formally accept the resignation from the paid post with the Council's sincere thanks for the individual's dedicated service.
2. **Volunteer Appointment:** To enroll the individual as a formal Council volunteer, ensuring continued insurance coverage and the provision of all necessary safety equipment and bags.
3. **Future Provision:** To formally record that, should the individual change her mind in the future, the Council would warmly welcome her return to the paid payroll.
4. **Documentation:** That the Clerk be authorised to finalise the necessary volunteer agreement and update the relevant risk assessments.

e) Village / School Car Park - Drainage Issues

The Council considered the Clerk's report regarding the competitive tender for the installation of a new gully and soakaway system at the village car park. The Clerk presented three quotes for comparison:

- G. Hill & Sons Ltd: £2,537.00
- M.P Whittle Groundwork & Construction: £4,730.00
- TW Hardscaping: £4,975.95

It was noted that G. Hill & Sons Ltd represented the best value for money and that the work had been provisionally scheduled for the February 2026 half-term to ensure public safety and minimise disruption near the school.

It was proposed by Cllr George, seconded by Cllr Almgill, and **RESOLVED:**

1. To formally accept the quote from G. Hill & Sons Ltd in the sum of £2,537.00 (+ VAT).
2. To authorise the Clerk to take all appropriate actions to facilitate the installation.

3. To approve the scheduling of works for the period of 16th–20th February 2026 (if possible), with the Clerk to manage site safety and car park access arrangements with the contractor.

f) Village Green - Damaged Bollard & Tarmac

The Council considered a report from the Clerk regarding a requirement for small-scale resurfacing on the Village Green at the site of a former bollard (currently marked by a safety cone).

It was noted that incorporating this repair into the upcoming drainage works due to be carried out in the village car park, hopefully in February (see minute no. 12.6 e)) in a single visit would reduce costs.

RESOLVED: 1. To authorise the Clerk to obtain a formal quote from G. Hill & Sons Ltd for the resurfacing of the specified tarmac area. 2. To delegate authority to the Clerk to approve and action the works, provided the quote is competitive and the repairs can be completed concurrently with the February drainage project to maximise cost-efficiency.

g) Village Green - Damage to Memorial Copse

The Council considered a report from the Clerk following correspondence from a resident regarding damage to saplings and established trees within the copse near the War Memorial and Village Pond. The report detailed observations of snapped branches, the construction of shelters, and the presence of a wooden pallet within the tree canopy.

Members discussed the resident's suggestions for site inspections, public notices, and "Respectful Play" signage. During the debate, the following points were noted:

- The Council's general support for children engaging in outdoor, imaginative play within the village's open spaces.
- The difficulty of monitoring or enforcing specific play activities in a public copse.
- The potential for signage to clutter the aesthetic of the area near the War Memorial.

RESOLVED: That, having balanced the concerns regarding environmental impact against the value of outdoor play, the Council will take no further action in this matter at this time.

h) Sports Pavilion - Insurance Renewal

The Council considered a report from the Clerk and a market review conducted by the Council's broker, Howden (Witney), regarding the insurance renewal due on 14 January 2026.

The report detailed a recommendation to move the Council's cover to Pen Underwriting, as the most cost-effective provider following a competitive exercise. The Council also debated the inclusion of a specific Terrorism Insurance extension in light of the emerging "Martyn's Law" (The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025) and the Clerk's assessment of risk management for public spaces.

RESOLVED: 1. To accept the recommendation of the broker and move the Council's insurance contract to Pen Underwriting for the 2026/27 policy year. 2. That the additional quote for Terrorism Insurance be declined at this time, noting that the relevant legislation (Martyn's Law) has not yet come into force. 3. To authorise the Clerk to take all necessary actions to go on cover before the expiry of the current policy to ensure continuity of indemnity.

i) **Allotments - Water Meter**

The Clerk reported that the water meter, which was previously obscured or difficult to locate, has been found and a current reading has been taken.

The reading has moved from 135 to 336, representing a total consumption increase of 201 units. It was noted that this significant increase will likely result in a substantial utility bill in the coming month.

j) **Allotments Management Issues**

The Council considered a report from the Clerk regarding the administration of allotment rents for the 2024–2025 period, including current arrears and proposed administrative corrections to the allotment map.

RESOLVED: 1. That the Council formally writes off the outstanding debts of **Kevin Henshaw** (£37.07) and **Steve Merchan** (£27.34), as both tenants have vacated their plots and further recovery action is deemed uneconomical. 2. To note the outstanding balances for **Mat Appleton**, **Keith Durham**, and **Alan Lee**, and to authorise the Clerk to issue formal reminders and corrected invoices as specified in the report. 3. To approve the updated allotment numbering and the correction of tenancy records regarding **Plot 14** to ensure accurate invoicing for the 2025/2026 period.

k) **Allotments Security Cameras**

The Council discussed a proposal to address security concerns and deter anti-social behavior at the Parish Allotments.

Cllr Duthie's original motion concerning a matched-funding grant for allotment holders to purchase and manage their own security cameras was **NOT** seconded.

Members discussed the importance of maintaining proper oversight and legal compliance regarding surveillance on Council property. It was noted that for the Council to fulfill its legal obligations, it must act as the primary authority for any surveillance equipment installed.

It was proposed by Cllr Almgill, seconded by Cllr George, and **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Clerk be authorised to purchase two (2) CCTV string cameras for the allotment site at a total cost not exceeding £200.
2. That Ducklington Parish Council formally assumes the role of Data Controller for these devices, ensuring full compliance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation.

3. That the Clerk ensures appropriate statutory signage is clearly displayed at the allotment site to notify the public of the surveillance.
4. That the Clerk coordinates the installation and management of the devices.

13.26 FINANCE

a) Account Balances, Debts due to Council and Bank Reconciliation

Account Balances

The Clerk advised members that the sum currently held in the Unity Trust Bank Current T1 account is £783.00 (as at 31 December 2025) and in the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account is £53,041.68 (as at 31 December 2025).

Debts due to Council

The Council received (i) a payment of £217.00 from the Treasurer of Creditor 1 on 4th December 2025 and (ii) a further payment of £217.00 from the Treasurer of Creditor 1 on 29th December 2025 to reduce the outstanding balance to £1,953.00

Bank Reconciliation

The Clerk circulated a Bank Reconciliation to councillors at the meeting which was signed by the Vice-Chair.

b) Invoices due for payment

Councillors considered the schedule of proposed payments set out in the Briefing Pack and **RESOLVED** that all be paid. Cllr Duthie, Cllr Barker or Cllr Almgill to authorise the payments.

14.26 Other comments/Matters for next Agenda

- a) The Clerk reported that the date of the next meeting has been put back one week due to the Chairman and Vice-Chair both being away. It will now take place on 11th February.
- b) The Clerk will commence the formal tendering process for the next grass cutting contract. This action includes (a) reviewing and updating the current maps and schedules of work to ensure all required areas are included, (b) inviting competitive bids from suitably qualified contractors in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, and (c) presenting a comparison of the received tenders at a future meeting for the Council's consideration and award of the contract.

c) Cllr Dunsdon commented that residents have concerns regarding inconsiderate parking on the stretch of Witney Road adjacent to the Chalcroft Recreation Ground, extending to the bus stop layby, and in Curbridge Road. This issue is primarily driven by visitors from outside the village accessing the Witney Lake (Duck Lake) area. This parking obstructs the highway and creates safety concerns for local traffic movements and pedestrians.

Proposed Actions for Council to Consider:

1. OCC Highways Liaison: That the Clerk contacts OCC Highways to request a site assessment for the installation of formal road markings (Double Yellow Lines or a Single White Line) to deter parking in this vicinity.
2. Enforcement/Education: To consider requesting "Civil Parking" or "Inconsiderate Parking" stickers from the local Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) at Thames Valley Police. These would be used as a non-damaging deterrent to be placed on the windscreens of offending vehicles to highlight the impact of their parking on the community.

Requested Action: That the Council authorises the Clerk to initiate formal contact with OCC Highways and the local Neighbourhood Policing Team to explore these options.

Clerk's Note for the Agenda:

- OCC Process: Note that formal yellow lines usually require a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), which can be a lengthy and sometimes costly process involving public consultation.
- PCSO Stickers: These are often "advisory" stickers used by TVP to educate drivers rather than issue formal fines, but they can be a highly effective immediate deterrent.

15.26 Date of Next Meeting: Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday, 11 February 2026 - 7.30 pm, Lilac Room, Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 10.25 pm.

Signeddated.....2026
Vice-Chairman