

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2026
in the Lilac Room, Village Hall commencing at 7.30 pm**

16.26 Parish Councillors Present: David Duthie (Chairman)
Matthew Barker
John Dunsdon
Jo George
Paul Lishman
John Smyth
Sarah Varnom

In Attendance: Steve Smith (Clerk)
Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC)
Sarah Cox (Member of the Public)

17.26 Parish Councillors' Apologies: Peter Almgill
Richard Border

18.26 Public Participation

The opportunity was provided for public participation; however, no members of the public requested to speak, and no comments were received.

19.26 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 7 January 2026:

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

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

Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC) reported:

OXFORDSHIRE BUDGET 2026

As budget setting season is underway in our local councils, at the County Council, the Oxfordshire Alliance have announced some amendments to the County Councils budget which include:

- £1.3 million extra every year for pothole repairs and preventative maintenance so problems are tackled earlier and winter backlogs are reduced.

- £200,000 boost for Fire Cadets over two years investing in young people, skills, and the future resilience of our fire service so fire stations don't have to be closed.
- £50,000 one-off fund to allow Parish and Town Councils to apply for support to display flags or banners for occasions like Remembrance, Armed Forces Day, or national events. Pride in our country has its place, and we make no apology for that.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL MISS POTHOLE TARGETS

The County Council has admitted that approximately **35% of non-urgent repairs** missed their 28-day completion targets, citing a significant surge in reports. While the Council attributes this to seasonal demand, such a spike is predictable during the winter months. We have been actively scrutinising both the Highways Manager and their subcontractors regarding the poor quality and pace of road maintenance this season.

HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE CHANGES NOW IN EFFECT

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

[Book a visit to a household waste recycling centre](#)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW: UPDATE

The UK Government is currently undertaking a consultation of the three proposals to form new local authorities across Oxfordshire. To view the associated documents and to take part in the consultation, please use the link below:

[Proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire](#)

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 an Oxfordshire permit area resident permit](#)

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 below:

[Councillor Priority Fund](#)

36 HOUSES ON STANDLAKE ROAD

Despite residents objections, West Oxfordshire District Council have approved the construction of 36 homes. Some of the developer contributions coming from the development are:

- Healthcare Contribution: £32,623 for additional clinical capacity at GP surgeries in the area.

- Outdoor Pitch Contribution: £71,215.92 for outdoor sports pitch facilities within a 20-minute drive.
- LAP (Local Area for Play) Contribution: £29,448 for the enhancement and maintenance of Glebelands play area in Ducklington.
- Swimming Pools Contribution: £19,952 for improvements to swimming pools within a 20-minute drive.
- Sports Halls Contribution: £16,539 for sports halls (most likely Ducklington Sports & Social Club) within a 20-minute drive.
- District Waste Contribution: £3,546.19 for household waste and recycling containers (subject to final dwelling mix).
- Biodiversity Net Gain Monitoring Fee: £3,500 for monitoring compliance with biodiversity net gain requirements.
- Artificial Pitches Contribution: £2,813 for artificial pitches within a 20-minute drive.
- Tennis Courts Contribution: £1,274 for improvements to tennis courts within a 20-minute drive.

DOG BIN REQUEST FOR MILL MEADOW

After the last meeting, I inquired about whether WODC would fund a dog waste bin. They're currently reviewing the request, so when I hear more, I will let the Council know.

STANDLAKE ROAD DITCH

Following on from some flooding on the Standlake Road outside Fritillary Mews, I have reported the drains on the road and the ditch. Highways Officers will be coming out for inspections in the coming weeks.

NB Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC) is a member of the opposition Conservative political group

Cllr Adrian Walsh (WODC) was not present and had not sent a written report

21.26 Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items

Cllr Smyth declared an Other Registrable Interest in item 9 d) on the agenda as a Trustee of the Ducklington Sports Club.

In accordance with the WODC Member Code of Conduct and Parish Council Standing Order 13, Cllr Smyth withdrew from the meeting room at the commencement of this item. He did not participate in the discussion nor the subsequent vote. Cllr Smyth re-entered the meeting following the conclusion of this item.

22.26 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 Council noted that Outline Planning Permission has been granted for the construction of up to 36 dwellings, including a new vehicular access point off Standlake Road and the provision of public open space.

Planning Requirements and Conditions: It was noted that while "access" is approved, all other matters (layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping) are reserved for future approval. Key conditions of the outline consent include:

- Design Constraints: Buildings are restricted to a maximum of 2 storeys; units must align with the existing building line on Standlake Road.
- Access and Buffers: Only one vehicular access point is permitted, with no direct property access onto the A415. A 10-metre landscaping buffer must be maintained on the southern boundary.
- Environmental Standards: A 10% Biodiversity Net Gain is required, alongside a detailed Sustainable Drainage Scheme (SuDS) and a pre-commencement archaeological investigation.
- Infrastructure: Provisions include bird/bat boxes, "hedgehog highways," upgrades to local bus stops, and the protection of existing Public Rights of Way.
- Construction Management: A formal Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) must be approved prior to commencement to manage HGV routing, wheel-washing, and contractor parking.

Member Comments: Cllr Lishman provided a report on the application process, noting the following points:

- CIL Implementation: It was noted that WODC was keen to reach a decision prior to the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 31st January 2026.
- Council Position: Cllr Lishman observed that the application was highly likely to be approved, which informed the Parish Council's decision not to formally oppose the development at the outline stage.
- S106 Agreement: The Section 106 developer contribution package was described as "quite good" for the benefit of the village.
- Future Consultation: As this was an outline application only, Cllr Lishman reminded the Council that there will be further opportunities to comment on the specific details during the "Reserved Matters" stage.

- 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

The Council received a comprehensive update regarding planning application 24/02878/RES and the ongoing technical challenges surrounding the site's flood vulnerability.

Environment Agency (EA) Position: It was noted that as of 9 February 2026, the EA maintains its formal objection. The EA stated that the applicant's recently submitted model files and reports are "not suitable for review" and fail to demonstrate that the development is safe from flood risk.

Independent Technical Review (GWP Consultants): The Council recalled that at the end of 2024, GWP Consultants were commissioned to review initial drainage evidence, which definitively identified the site as a low-lying floodplain with inadequate assessments of groundwater and surface water. In response to the applicant's new data, the Council has officially recommissioned GWP to conduct a fresh formal review.

The following obstacles to this review were noted:

- **Data Accessibility:** The modelling data is not currently in the public domain. The Clerk has formally requested this data from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to enable GWP to begin their analysis.
- **Missing Documentation:** GWP observed that the applicant has submitted "evidence" without an updated Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) or a comprehensive modelling report to explain the data.
- **Scope of Modelling:** Initial observations suggest the applicant's model is too narrow, focusing only on Colwell Brook and Emma's Dyke. GWP and the EA 2025 flood map indicate the site is within the wider River Windrush floodplain; therefore, a valid model must consider all branches of the Windrush to be accurate.

Ongoing Actions and Council Strategy: To ensure WODC reaches a decision based on robust, independent evidence, the following actions are underway:

- **GWP Review:** Full analysis will commence as soon as WODC releases the requested modelling data.
- **Technical Liaison:** GWP's final findings will be shared with both the EA and WODC to ensure independent data informs the official statutory commentary.
- **Empirical Evidence:** The Council continues to collate photography of the site during active flood events to provide the EA with "real-world" visual evidence of the site's behaviour.

RESOLVED: To note the proactive steps taken to scrutinise the flood risks via independent experts and to continue pressing WODC for the release of the necessary modelling data.

- c) Planning Permission No: **MW.0165/23** - Details Pursuant to Condition No. 17 (Aftercare 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 Details Pursuant to Condition 17 (Aftercare Scheme for Phase 9) have now been approved for the above development.

The Council reviewed the "Details Pursuant" application regarding the Aftercare Scheme for Phase 9 at Gill Mill Quarry (under Condition No. 17 of planning permission MW.165/23).

The application, submitted by Smith & Sons (Bletchington) Limited, provides the technical specifications for the long-term management and restoration of the land following the completion of mineral extraction in Phase 9.

Council Review: Members examined the submitted aftercare details, noting that the scheme outlines the required steps to return the site to a high standard of environmental or agricultural use. It was further noted that the application was officially approved by Oxfordshire County Council on 28th January 2026.

RESOLVED: That Ducklington Parish Council has **no objections** to the Aftercare Scheme for Phase 9 and formally approves the details as submitted.

d) **Stonesfield Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan**

The Council has received formal notification from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) regarding the Regulation 16 Consultation for the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan. As an interested parish within the district, Ducklington has been invited to submit formal comments by the deadline of Monday, 23 February 2026.

Background and Strategic Importance: It was noted that this is the final formal consultation stage before the plan undergoes independent examination. While Stonesfield is not immediately adjacent to Ducklington, the Council discussed the following "cross-parish" implications:

- Precedent Setting: Policies proposed for Stonesfield regarding affordable housing, biodiversity net gain, and "dark skies" may set a benchmark for future planning throughout West Oxfordshire.
- Best Practice: Reviewing the plan provides an opportunity to identify successful policy language that may benefit Ducklington's own long-term objectives.

Proposed Action and Timeline: The Council reviewed the proposed timeline to ensure a response is submitted before the 5:00 pm deadline on 23 February. It was suggested that a "light-touch" review be conducted to confirm there are no conflicting interests with Ducklington's objectives.

Member Discussion: Members agreed that even if no specific impacts are identified, a formal "No Comment" response should be submitted to acknowledge receipt and maintain a positive working relationship with WODC and neighbouring parishes.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cllr Lishman prepares a draft response following a review of the Stonesfield Plan documents by 18 February 2026.
2. That the Clerk be authorised to submit the final response to WODC by the 23 February deadline.

e) Neighbourhood Plan

The Council received a report from Cllr Lishman regarding the remobilisation of the Neighbourhood Plan following a brief hiatus. The primary strategic focus of the plan remains the strategic land allocation between Ducklington and Curbridge and securing the increased 25% Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.

Revised 2026 Programme: The Council reviewed the revised timetable established in consultation with the Community First Partnership (CFP):

- Feb – March: Completion of Baseline Analysis and drafting of broad vision/policies.
- April: Policy refinement and alignment with the Local Plan.
- May: Presentation of draft policies at the Annual Parish Meeting.
- Summer: Target for Pre-submission (Regulation 14).

Baseline Analysis Workstream: To provide the necessary evidence for the plan, specific leads were identified to provide 1–2 paragraphs of descriptive text for their respective areas by Friday, 20th February 2026:

- Village Hall: Cllr Varnom
- Allotments (Church & A415): Cllr Barker / Cllr Dunsdon
- Sports Club: Cllr Smyth
- Green Spaces / Nature: Cllr George
- School: A School Governor (to be requested)
- Church: The Rector, Andrea Colbrook
- History Group: Mark Collishaw

Funding and Financial Risks: Cllr Lishman reported a shift in the financial landscape, noting that approximately £3,000 in grant funding was returned at the end of the last cycle. Furthermore, the national grant programme for Neighbourhood Plans has ceased. While CFP has remaining fees to continue support in the short term, a funding gap exists for the full scope of the project.

RESOLVED:

1. To formally adopt the 2026 Neighbourhood Plan programme as presented.
2. To approve the Baseline Analysis workstream, with identified leads providing their submissions by 20 February 2026.
3. To address the funding shortfall, requesting the Clerk to review the current budget and identify potential internal funds or alternative grants to cover the Community First Partnership's fees.

4. To confirm the strategic focus of the plan regarding land allocation and the 25% CIL uplift.

Proposed: Cllr Lishman **Seconded:** Cllr Barker **All in favour.**

23.26 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) Hotel

The Council received a verbal report from Cllr Varnom regarding the current status of the local hotel and its residents.

Key Report Highlights:

- **Occupancy:** It was noted that there are currently 119 residents staying at the hotel.
- **Operational Status:** Cllr Varnom reported that there are no significant issues or concerns to bring to the Council's attention at this time.
- **Future Planning:** The hotel is currently earmarked for closure for its current purpose in 2027 / 2028.
- **Educational Support:** It was observed that there is strong and effective support in place for the educational needs of the residents within Witney.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

b) Village Hall

Cllr George provided a verbal report following the Village Hall Committee meeting held on 6 February 2026.

The Village Hall website is generating bookings, but it is still early days for the new website.

Maintenance and Facilities:

- **Boilers:** The Committee is currently seeking quotes for the installation of two new boilers. It is anticipated that works will take place in late February, which will likely require the hall to be closed for up to four days.
- **Access Control:** A new keyless entry system is proposed. This will replace physical keys with a code-entry system to streamline access for hirers.
- **Digital Presence:** The revamped website has been well received and is successfully generating a higher volume of new bookings.

Defibrillator Installation:

A discussion took place regarding the progress of the defibrillator installation:

- **Project Lead:** Cllr Duthie understood that Pete Godwin was organising and obtaining quotes, though Cllr George indicated this may no longer be the case. Cllr George understood the Council had agreed to investigate the costs using the company

instructed for previous installations. Cllr Duthie agreed to investigate and report to the next meeting.

- Planning Requirements: Cllr Lishman offered to research the necessary planning requirements, specifically to determine if Listed Building Consent is required for the installation.
- Site Location: Further research into the optimal site location to be conducted.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

c) **CCTV Camera Log**

The Council noted the Clerk's report regarding police interaction involving the Council's CCTV system.

Incident Details:

- Date/Time: Friday, 30 January 2026, at 10:10 am.
- Location: Car Park (monitored by Camera 6).
- Police Interaction: PC Josh Reeve (Thames Valley Police) attended the site to review footage.
- Crime Reference Number: 43260046876.

Action Taken: The police request for footage was facilitated by Mr. Edward Todd (Secretary, Ducklington Welfare). PC Reeve has confirmed he will maintain contact with Parish representatives should further downloads or formal statements be required for the ongoing investigation.

Compliance and Audit: The Clerk has updated the Parish Council's internal incident log. This ensures a clear audit trail of data access in accordance with the Council's CCTV policy and GDPR requirements.

RESOLVED: That the Council notes the report and the successful cooperation between the Parish Welfare team and Thames Valley Police.

d) **Village Newsletter**

Councillors are reminded to submit articles for publication in the April / May Village Newsletter (Issue 237) to Emma Buckard: newsletter@ducklingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Please note the deadline for entries is 13 March 2026.

The Council reviewed and approved the draft notice prepared by the Clerk highlighting the recent refresh of the website.

The Council considered a report from the Clerk based on research conducted by Cllr Lishman regarding the selection of a printing provider for the village newsletter.

Newsletter Printing Quotes: Members noted that while online providers offer savings of over £600 per issue, these suppliers require immediate card payment at the point of order. The Clerk reported that the Council's current lack of a corporate purchase card is a significant barrier.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the draft text for the website promotional notice in the next newsletter.
2. To defer the selection of a preferred printer pending further investigation into the Council's ability to facilitate online transactions.
3. That the Clerk investigates the acquisition of a Council purchase card (with associated spending limits and oversight) and reviews the Financial Regulations to ensure compliance with audit requirements.
4. To verify if the credit terms mentioned by online suppliers (specifically Mixam) are compatible with the Council's existing financial procedures.

e) **Projects Committee**

Village Sculpture: Bartholomew Close (Maintenance and Insurance)

The Council received an update regarding the long-term care and protection of the newly installed wooden sculpture at Bartholomew Close.

Insurance Coverage:

The Clerk confirmed that the sculpture has been successfully added to the Council's insurance policy with Gallagher (AJG).

- Insured Value: £7,000.
- Classification: Added under the "War Memorial" section (appropriate for outdoor monuments).
- Cost: No additional premium was required for this inclusion.

Maintenance Agreement:

The artist, Natasha Housego, has been formally instructed to provide annual maintenance (sanding, re-scorching, rot treatment, and re-oiling) at a rate of £400.00 per annum.

Discussion and Actions:

- Scheduling: Cllr George advised that maintenance should be carried out after spring, specifically in May or June, to ensure the wood is dry before treatment and protected ahead of the summer sun.
- Additional Sculptures: Cllr Barker is to follow up with Chris Townsend regarding the progress of further sculptures.
- Asset Management: The sculpture will be formally added to the Asset Register at the next internal audit.

Sensory Garden Project:

The Council discussed several requirements to progress the Sensory Garden, including procurement and infrastructure.

a) Procurement of Topsoil

The Council reviewed three quotes for two tonnes of topsoil:

RESOLVED: To purchase topsoil from Travis Perkins at a cost of £127.18.

Proposed: Cllr Duthie | **Seconded:** Cllr Varnom | **Vote:** All in favour.

b) Plinth Sculpture/Feature

The Council discussed the purchase of a decorative metalwork feature from Black Country Metalworks Ltd to be installed on the existing stone plinth.

RESOLVED: To approve the purchase of the sculpture for £175.00.

Proposed: Cllr Varnom | **Seconded:** Cllr Duthie | **Vote:** All in favour.

Note: Cllr Barker to send final product details to the Clerk.

c) Progress and Infrastructure

- Hedge: Cllr Barker reported that the hedging works will be finished shortly.
- Posts: Cllr Duthie agreed to provide the large posts required for the site.
- Planting: Cllr Barker will obtain three quotes for plants and report back at the next meeting.

d) Funding

Cllr Barker noted that funds may still be available from a previous year's Councillor Priority Fund (Cllr Ted Fenton).

Action: The Clerk to investigate the status of these funds to determine if they can be applied to current garden costs.

Section 106 and Art Trail Update

Cllr George reported on a recent site visit with Martha Holland (WODC), who is responsible for the allocation of Section 106 monies. During a walk around the village, the various "Art Trail" projects were reviewed. Martha Holland provided positive feedback on the initiatives and the impact of the artworks on the community.

f) **Nature Plan / Wild Ducks**

The Council received a verbal report from Cllr George regarding upcoming community engagement and strategic plans for the village's natural environment.

Community Engagement: Meeting at The Bell - Cllr George informed the Council that she and Marilyn Morris will be in The Bell on Thursday, 19 February 2026, at 7:00 pm; all welcome.

- Purpose: An informal session to gather residents' ideas for improving Ducklington's green spaces and to recruit further volunteers for "Green Gym" activities (planting and gardening tasks).

- Context: The initiative is driven by the State of Nature Report (2023), which highlights that UK species have declined by 19% on average since 1970, placing the UK in the bottom 10% globally for biodiversity.
- Village Goals: Ideas to be discussed include creating "hedgehog highways," supporting declining bird and insect species, and potentially encouraging more garden ponds across the parish.

Village Pond Restoration: A focused discussion took place regarding the health and appearance of the village pond. Key requirements identified include:

- Maintenance: The need to pollard surrounding trees and dredge the pond to improve water quality.
- Enhancements: General tidying and new planting to improve the area's aesthetic and ecological health.
- Consultation: Cllr Duthie advised that Danny Patching and Terry Hunt should be consulted during the planning phase, as they have significant historical knowledge and have performed extensive work on the pond in the past.
- Wildlife Management: The Council noted that the health of the pond may require a review of the current duck population to ensure biodiversity is balanced.

RESOLVED: 1. That the report be noted. 2. That Cllr George prepares a formal proposal for the pond restoration works to be presented at a future Council meeting.

g) **Village Events Committee**

The Council received a detailed report regarding the statutory requirements and planning progress for "The Big Lunch," scheduled for Sunday, 7 June 2026.

Event Overview and Progress: Members noted that the event is shaping up to be a community-led, family-oriented celebration.

- Entertainment: Ryan Buckard is currently sourcing live bands.
- Attractions: Plans include various stalls, face painting, and an ice cream van.
- Logistics: A temporary road closure will be required to facilitate the event safely.
- Refreshments: It was noted that The Bell may potentially set up a mobile bar.

Licensing and Legal Compliance: The Clerk provided a summary of the regulatory framework required for the event:

- Temporary Event Notice (TEN): As the event location is an unlicensed open space, the exemptions for music under the Live Music Act 2012 do not apply. A TEN is required to permit "regulated entertainment." The cost for a TEN application is £21.00.
- Capacity Limits: A TEN strictly limits attendance to 499 people at any one time (including performers and staff). If attendance is expected to exceed this, a full Premises Licence would be necessary.
- Copyright (PPL/PRS): The Council must ensure "TheMusicLicence" is in place to cover the public performance of live and/or recorded music.
- Safety Advisory Group (SAG): While not statutory, submitting an Event Notification Form to WODC is recommended to allow police and fire services to review risk assessments.

RESOLVED:

1. That the decision regarding the TEN application be deferred to a future meeting once attendance volumes and music types are more clearly defined.
2. That Cllr Barker liaise with the Clerk to ensure all recommended action points (including the SAG notification and road closure application) are carried out in a timely manner.
3. That further updates on band bookings and the mobile bar be presented as they become available.

The Clerk confirmed that the current balance held in the Parish Celebration Group earmarked reserve is £2,231.53.

h) Training on Storing and Sharing files in Google Drive

Item deferred due to Cllr Almgill being absent.

i) EV Microhubs

The Council received a progress report on the EV Microhub project following the successful conclusion of the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) tender process by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

Delivery Partner Appointment: It was noted that Connected Kerb has been awarded the delivery contract. Introductory meetings have taken place, and formal contract signing is currently pending.

Cluster Member Agreement (CMA): The Council reviewed the summary of the CMA, which serves as the legal framework between participating councils (including Ducklington, Brize Norton, and Witney) and OCC. Key points noted include:

- **Council Obligations:** To provide site access for installation and maintenance, participate in the Cluster Board, and assist with local promotion.
- **OCC Obligations:** To manage the contract with Connected Kerb, oversee funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV), and handle technical power agreements.
- **Liability:** The agreement includes indemnities to protect the Parish Council from liabilities arising from the delivery partner's negligence during installation.

Upcoming Technical Meeting: A cluster-wide meeting with Connected Kerb and Stuart Cole (OCC) is scheduled for Tuesday, 24 February 2026. The meeting will address technical requirements including:

- Commercial terms for power agreements.
- Energy connection specifications.
- Network connectivity assessments for the charging units.

Council Action and Representation: Cllr George confirmed her attendance at the meeting on 24 February, having initially indicated she may have to miss the meeting. Following a review of the

risks and operational logistics, she informed the Council that she would specifically raise queries regarding:

1. Response Times: Clarification on guaranteed "call-out times" for repairs and maintenance to ensure the hardware remains functional for residents.
2. Insurance: Confirmation of the specific Public Liability Insurance provisions held by the contractor and how they interface with the Council's own coverage.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted and the progress toward the pilot launch be welcomed.
2. That Cllr George represents the Council at the meeting on 24 February and reports back on the outcomes regarding maintenance and insurance.

k) Lone Worker Policy for Employees and Volunteers

The Council reviewed the updated Lone Worker Policy, which has undergone significant revision following the January 2026 meeting to ensure a higher standard of safety for all individuals representing the Parish Council.

Key Revisions:

- Broadened Scope: The term "the Clerk" has been replaced throughout the document with "employees and volunteers." This ensures that any Councillor or volunteer performing site visits, locking up the Village Hall, or conducting inspections is covered by the same safety framework.
- Operational Safeguards: The policy formalises several practical measures, including:
 - The "Red Folder" Code: A discreet emergency phrase for requesting assistance via telephone without alerting a potential aggressor.
 - Nominated Person System: A requirement to check in with a designated contact regarding location and expected return times.
 - High-Risk Restrictions: A total ban on high-risk activities (e.g., working at height or using power tools) while working alone.

Council Discussion: Members welcomed the transition from a "Clerk's policy" to a comprehensive Council-wide safety standard. It was noted that the policy applies to all environments, including the Village Hall, home offices, and outdoor site inspections.

RESOLVED:

1. To formally adopt the January 2026 Lone Worker Policy, broadening its scope to include all employees and volunteers.
2. To endorse the specific safety protocols, including the check-in system and emergency safe codes.
3. To instruct the Clerk to distribute the policy to all Councillors and active volunteers to ensure emergency procedures are fully understood.

Proposed: Cllr Varnom **Seconded:** Cllr Barker **Vote:** All in favour.

k) Replacement Speed Indicator Sign

The Council considered a follow-up report from the Clerk regarding the replacement of a faulty speed reminder unit and the enhancement of the newly implemented 20mph zone.

Quotation Analysis (Westcotec Ltd): The Clerk presented Quotation #16627 from Westcotec Ltd, tailored to the Council's specific requirements (excluding data collection and Bluetooth retrofitting):

Item Description	Cost (Excl. VAT)
New 300mm '20mph & Slow Down' Unit	£2,441.00
80W Solar Kit (Required for technical compatibility/warranty)	£1,245.00
Relocation of SN 10740 (to replace faulty unit SN 9941)	£160.00
Total Project Cost	£3,846.00

Warranty and Logistics:

- **Warranty:** The new unit includes a six-year warranty. It was noted that while the faulty unit (SN 9941) is out of warranty, the unit being relocated (SN 10740) remains covered until July 2026.
- **Lead Time:** Delivery and installation are expected approximately 8–10 weeks from the date of the purchase order.

Funding and Financial Impact: The Clerk reported a successful funding application through the Councillor Priority Fund. Councillor Thomas Ashby has committed £1,245.00 (covering the cost of the solar kit) to the project.

Category	Amount
Total Project Cost (Excl. VAT)	£3,846.00
Confirmed Priority Fund Grant	(£1,245.00)

Net Cost to Parish Council	£2,601.00
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Members noted that this net cost represents a significant saving to the Parish while ensuring essential road safety infrastructure is maintained and updated to reflect the 20mph limit.

RESOLVED:

1. To accept Westcotec Quotation #16627 for the sum of £3,846.00 (plus VAT).
2. To authorise the Clerk to submit the formal application for the Councillor Priority Fund grant of £1,245.00.
3. To authorise the Clerk to issue the Purchase Order to Westcotec Ltd immediately to facilitate installation before the summer.

Proposed: Cllr Duthie

Seconded: Cllr Barker

Vote: All in favour.

l) Request for Dog Bin at Mill Meadow

The Council received an update regarding the ongoing request for a new dog waste bin at Mill Meadow to address persistent fouling issues.

Project Costs and Council Position: The Clerk presented a quote from Publica for the installation and servicing of a new unit:

- Installation Fee: £45.00
- Weekly Emptying Charge: £8.37 (£435.24 per annum)

Members reiterated their concern regarding the high recurring service charges. The Council remains committed to the principle that this should be treated as a public health priority by the District Council rather than a Parish expense.

Actions and Advocacy:

- District Support: The Clerk has formally written to District Councillor Adrian Walsh to request his intervention with West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to facilitate the installation at no cost to the Parish.
- Inter-Council Liaison: It was noted that Councillor Thomas Ashby has also proactively followed up on this matter with the relevant authorities, as detailed in his earlier report (Minute 20.26).
- Resident Communication: The resident who initiated the request has been updated on the Council's strategy and the involvement of the District Councillors.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Council continue to await the outcome of the District Councillors' intervention before further financial consideration is given.

24.26 New Business

a) Website Review

The Council considered a comprehensive status report from web consultant Jenny Greenway regarding the final stages of the website refresh. While the technical infrastructure is largely complete, several content and compliance issues require immediate action to ensure the site is legally robust and professional. An Action Plan was approved with actions identified and responsibility aligned.

Statutory Compliance and Policy Updates: The report highlighted that several statutory pages carry outdated review dates, which may present a transparency issue. The Council noted that the following require urgent updates:

- Freedom of Information (FOI): The publication scheme needs a current review date.
- Code of Conduct: The site must display the most recently adopted version.
- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI): The member list is out of date; new forms are required for all members.

Amenities and Byelaws: The Council addressed specific inconsistencies in how village amenities are presented:

- Chalcroft Play Area: The website mentions byelaws, but no document is currently linked.
- Glebelands Play Area: A technical error was noted where the "Guidance to Users" button incorrectly links to a car park document.
- Format Consistency: It was noted that some byelaws are currently displayed as text on a webpage while others are PDFs.

RESOLVED: To standardise all byelaws and Council policies as downloadable PDF documents. This ensures consistency, facilitates official branding, and allows residents to print documents easily.

Visual Assets and Mapping:

To complete the "Council" and "Conservation Area" pages, several digital assets are still required, including high-resolution logos for document headers and a digital map of the Conservation Area.

b) Ducklington Weed Street Spraying

The Council considered a report from the Clerk regarding the weed spraying requirements for the upcoming year. A formal quotation (Ref: HC680) from the current contractor, Complete Weed Control, was reviewed, presenting two service levels for the application of herbicide to kerbs, channels, pavements, and backedges within the village.

Review of Options: The Council compared the traditional two-spray cycle (Option 1) against a more frequent three-spray cycle (Option 2):

Option	Frequency	Schedule	Cost per Visit	Annual Total (Net)
Option 1	2 Sprays	May & Sept	£368.00	£736.00
Option 2	3 Sprays	Apr, Jun/Jul & Oct	£330.00	£990.00

Discussion: Members noted the Clerk's observations regarding the potential for improved aesthetics with more frequent visits. However, it was felt that the two-spray cycle remained appropriate for the Parish's current needs and budget. The Council noted the contractor's guarantee to re-treat areas free of charge if an application is deemed unsatisfactory, provided notification is given within 30 days.

RESOLVED: To adopt **Option 1** for the 2026 weed spraying programme at a total cost of **£736.00 + VAT**. The Clerk is authorised to instruct Complete Weed Control and issue the purchase order accordingly.

Proposed: Cllr Duthie

Seconded: Cllr Barker

Vote: All in favour.

c) **Potential Foul Discharge / Water Quality Issue – Bartholomew Close**

The Council received a report from the Clerk regarding a water quality incident identified in the ditch located at the Bartholomew Close green space.

Incident Overview:

- Initial Report (20 Jan 2026): Significant discolouration was observed at the footbridge/culvert in the northwest corner of the green space. Water appeared clear upstream but heavily contaminated downstream.
- Escalation (28 Jan 2026): Subsequent observations indicated that the contamination had spread and was visible on both sides of the bridge.
- Environmental Risk: Members noted with concern that the ditch feeds directly into the River Windrush, posing a significant threat to the local ecosystem and biodiversity.

Statutory Response: The Clerk has formally reported the matter to the Environment Agency (EA). The EA has responded as follows:

- Incident Reference Number: 02460884.
- Status: The report is officially registered as a potential environmental incident. The EA is currently reviewing the data to determine the appropriate investigation or enforcement action required.

Monitoring and Next Steps: The Clerk will continue to monitor the site and provide additional photographic evidence to the EA if the situation deteriorates further.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the report and the official Environment Agency incident reference number 02460884.
2. That the Clerk maintains contact with the Environment Agency and provides the Council with further updates as the investigation progresses.

d) Grant Applications

The Council considered grant applications for the 2025/26 financial year. The Clerk reminded Members of the statutory framework under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Council's internal policy, which caps total grant spending at 15% of the annual precept for the 2026/27 financial year (£7,087.50).

Declarations of Interest: Cllr Smyth declared a personal interest in the application from the Ducklington Sports Club and left the room for the duration of the discussion and vote on this item.

Deliberations and Awards: Members reviewed the requested total of over £11,100 against the available budget of £7,087.50. It was noted that while all applicants presented high-quality projects, the awards had to be scaled to remain within the Council's fiscal policy.

The following grants were approved to ensure the maximum community benefit was achieved within the budget:

Applicant	Request	Awarded Amount
Ducklington Sports Club	£6,000.00	£3,700.00
Friends of Ducklington School (FODS)	£5,000.00	£3,100.00
Ducklington Over 60s Lunch Club	£100.00	£100.00
Oxfordshire Citizens Advice	N/A	£100.00
TOTAL	£11,100.00+	£7,000.00

RESOLVED: That having considered the community benefit and the Council's financial policy, the grants totaling £7,000.00 be awarded as listed above.

Proposed: Cllr Duthie

Seconded: Cllr George

Vote: Unanimous (from 6 councillors entitled to vote).

e) **Parking and Safety Concerns: Witney Road and Curbridge Road**

The Council considered a report regarding persistent inconsiderate parking on Witney Road, adjacent to the Chalcroft Recreation Ground, and along Curbridge Road.

Background: Members noted that the issue is primarily driven by visitors from outside the village accessing the Witney Lake (Duck Lake) area. This displacement parking causes significant highway obstructions, narrows the carriageway for emergency vehicles, and creates safety hazards for pedestrians and local traffic. Recent evidence confirms this is now a regular occurrence, even on weekdays.

Enquiries and Proposed Measures: The Clerk presented findings from preliminary enquiries with the relevant authorities:

- OCC Highways: Any formal road markings would require a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), a process involving significant costs and public consultation.
- Thames Valley Police (TVP): PC Josh Bennett has confirmed that while they do not use stickers, they can provide A5 advisory cards for use under wiper blades. They are also willing to task PCSOs for targeted patrols if "peak times" are identified.

Council Discussion: Councillors expressed support for the use of white lines and "Keep Clear" designations at sensitive points. However, a robust discussion took place regarding the potential for "displacement." Members recognised that implementing restrictions in one area might simply divert the problem to other residential parts of the village.

Action and Next Steps: To ensure a holistic solution and understand the financial implications, the Council agreed to further investigate the feasibility of these measures.

RESOLVED: 1. That the Council supports the pursuit of white lines and "Keep Clear" designations in principle. 2. That Cllr Thomas Ashby be asked to investigate the specific Oxfordshire County Council policies regarding white lines and "Keep Clear" designations, with a particular focus on the associated costs, and report back to the next meeting. 3. That the Clerk obtains a supply of A5 advisory cards from TVP and identifies peak parking times to assist with PCSO patrol scheduling. 4. To authorise the Clerk to open a formal case with the OCC Parking Team to determine the viability and projected costs of a TRO, should it be required.

25.26 Playgrounds, Cemetery, Litter, Open Spaces, Sports Pavilion, Sports Field, Allotments

a) Playgrounds - Inspection Reports

The Council reviewed the latest inspection reports and schedule of recommended maintenance.

Councillors were concerned that the reporting and maintenance actions were not being carried out properly. Cllr Smyth offered to meet with the playground inspector, Craig Warner, to conduct a site walk-through to review the inspection protocol and technical requirements of the identified repairs.

RESOLVED: 1. That the Clerk be authorised to facilitate all necessary maintenance actions. 2. That Cllr Smyth coordinates a site meeting with Craig Warner and reports back to the next meeting. 3. That the Clerk provides a progress update upon completion of the works.

b) Water Source Connection – Sensory Garden, Chalcroft

The Council considered a report from the Clerk detailing the 8-step framework required by Thames Water Developer Services for a new non-household water connection.

Technical and Financial Requirements: The Clerk reported that a formal application and design fee must be paid before Thames Water will identify the nearest mains connection point or provide a formal quote. To proceed with the application, the Council must provide:

- Point of Entry Drawing: A technical map showing the pipe's entry point to the site.
- Water Fittings Table: A compliance list of all intended fittings to ensure backflow prevention.

The Clerk confirmed ongoing investigations into whether Section 106 or CIL developer contributions could be utilised to cover the capital costs of the installation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Clerk be authorised to obtain quotes for the professional production of the "Point of Entry" drawings and the "Water Fittings Table."
2. That a final budget for the Thames Water application fee be presented for formal approval at the next meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Barker **Seconded:** Cllr Lishman **Vote:** Unanimous

c) Cemetery Management

The Council received an update on the transition of cemetery management responsibilities to the Parish Council and the resulting administrative procedures now in place.

Operational and Statutory Progress: The Clerk has implemented a seven-step workflow for burial coordination and has ordered the legally required bound registers from Shaw & Sons, specifically the Register of Public Graves, the Register of Transfers of Exclusive Right of Burial, and the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial.

Activity and Workload: It was noted that January was a particularly busy period, with the administration of two full burials, one ashes burial, and the authorisation of three second inscriptions on memorials. Members acknowledged the significant increase in the Clerk's administrative hours resulting from this transition and the volume of recent interments.

Future Policy and Fee Structure: The Council is currently using the Church of England fee model and Churchyard Regulations as an interim measure. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, is developing a bespoke Ducklington Cemetery Policy and Fee Structure for future adoption.

RESOLVED:

1. To ratify the Clerk's action in procurement of the required statutory registers.
2. To note the high volume of interments and memorial applications processed in January and the associated administrative impact.
3. To authorise the continued use of Church of England Fee Tables and existing regulations as a temporary bridge.
4. To task the Clerk with submitting a bespoke Ducklington Cemetery Fee Structure and Policy for review at the next meeting.
5. To approve the re-erection of a noticeboard in the cemetery to display interim public regulations.

Proposed: Cllr Duthie **Seconded:** Cllr Dunsdon **Vote:** Unanimous

d) Litter Picker's Report

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

e) Village / School Car Park - Drainage Issues

The Council received a status update regarding the installation of a new gully and soakaway system designed to mitigate surface water ponding and ice hazards in the car park.

Contract Award: Following a review of competitive tenders, the Council confirmed the appointment of G. Hill & Sons Ltd, whose quote of £2,537.00 (ex. VAT) was the most competitive. It was noted that this selection represents a saving of over £2,100 compared to other bids received.

Implementation and Scheduling: The Council's objective is to complete the works during the February Half Term (16–20 February 2026) to minimise disruption to the school. The Clerk reported on two key factors affecting the start date:

- Contractor Availability: Gordon Hill is working toward the February window following a recent backlog and health-related delay.

- **Ground Conditions:** The contractor has advised that extreme ground saturation may affect the efficacy of the excavation. The priority is to ensure the soakaway is installed under suitable conditions.

Operational Impact: The project is expected to take two days. The car park will remain open, with the specific works area barriered off to maintain vehicle access.

RESOLVED:

1. To ratify the contract award to G. Hill & Sons Ltd for £2,537.00 + VAT.
2. To note the Clerk's update on the provisional February Half Term start date and the potential for weather-related flexibility to ensure the long-term efficacy of the drainage system.

Proposed: Cllr Duthie **Seconded:** Cllr Barker **Vote:** Unanimous.

f) Village Green - Repairs to Village Green Tarmac

The Council reviewed a report regarding the permanent repair of the damaged surface on the Village Green (at the site of the former bollard).

Operational Update: Cllr Barker reported that a public-spirited member of the community had recently performed a makeshift repair on the damaged area. While the Council expressed its gratitude for this community-minded gesture, it was agreed that a formal, technical repair is still required to ensure the surface is level, durable, and matches the surrounding asphalt.

Contractor and Financials: The Clerk confirmed that G. Hill & Sons Ltd has been appointed to undertake the work at a cost of £150.00 (+ VAT). This competitive rate was secured by scheduling the repair to coincide with the contractor's presence in the village for the larger car park drainage project, thereby eliminating separate mobilisation fees.

Status and Safety:

- **Timeline:** The repair remains provisionally scheduled for the February/March period, subject to the contractor's recovery from a medical procedure and suitable dry weather for bitumen application.
- **Mitigation:** The site continues to be marked with a safety cone to prevent trip hazards until the professional "saw-cut and fill" repair is completed.

RESOLVED:

1. To formally proceed with the professional resurfacing by G. Hill & Sons Ltd at the quoted price of £150.00.
2. To note the temporary repair by a resident and ensure the area remains safely marked until the permanent works commence.

Proposed: Cllr Barker **Seconded:** Cllr Duthie **Vote:** Unanimous.

g) **Ducklington Dash 2026 - Application for Use of Parish Land**

The Council considered an application from Toby Clarke, on behalf of the Ducklington Dash committee, for the use of the cross- and down-valley ways for the annual community running event.

Event Details:

- Date: Wednesday, 15 July 2026 (Evening).
- Status: The event is organised by a UKA-affiliated club and operates under a formal UK Athletics licence.
- Insurance: The event is covered by UK Athletics Public Liability Insurance with a limit of £50,000,000, which exceeds the Council's requirements.

Financials and Documentation: Consistent with the Council's support for charitable community events in 2024 and 2025, it was suggested that the standard commercial hire fee be waived, with only the administrative booking fee applied.

RESOLVED:

1. To formally grant permission for the Ducklington Dash to take place on 15 July 2026.
2. To waive the standard hire fee, charging only the £25.00 administration fee.
3. To delegate authority to the Clerk to finalise the booking upon receipt of the completed Hire Application Form, a satisfactory Risk Assessment, and a valid Insurance Certificate.

Proposed: Cllr Barker **Seconded:** Cllr George **Vote:** Unanimous.

h) **Ducklington Flower Show 2026 - Application for Use of Parish Land**

The Council considered a formal application from the Ducklington Flower Show committee for the use of the Parish Field (Sports Field) on the August Bank Holiday.

Consultation and Permissions: It was noted that the Ducklington Sports Club, which holds a licence for organised sport on the field, was consulted regarding the date. John Smyth, representing the Sports Club, has formally confirmed that there are no scheduling conflicts or objections to the event taking place on Monday, 31 August 2026.

Financials and Compliance: As this is a long-standing, non-commercial community event, the Council agreed to waive the hire fee in accordance with standard practice. The committee is only required to pay the standard £25.00 administration/booking fee.

To ensure public safety and regulatory compliance, the organisers are required to submit a comprehensive documentation pack, including:

- Site-specific Risk Assessment and Event Management Plan.
- Medical Emergency Plan and Contingency Plan.
- Public Liability Insurance certificate (minimum £10 million).

RESOLVED:

1. To formally grant permission for the Ducklington Flower Show to utilise the Parish Field on 31 August 2026.
2. To waive the hire fee, accepting only the £25.00 administrative booking fee.
3. To delegate authority to the Clerk to finalise the booking once the committee has provided the completed Hire Application Form and all required safety and insurance documentation.

Proposed: Cllr Varnom **Seconded:** Cllr George **Vote:** Unanimous.

i) **Allotments - Purchase and Installation of CCTV Trail Cameras**

The Council received a report on the procurement and deployment of security cameras for the Parish Allotments, following the decision to assume direct responsibility for surveillance to ensure legal and GDPR compliance.

Procurement and Equipment: The Clerk, in consultation with allotment representative Chris Woodward, has selected and ordered two Naturepar 4G Trail Cameras. These units were chosen for their suitability for outdoor environments lacking a fixed power supply, featuring night vision and motion detection. The total cost was £250.00, representing a £50.00 variance above the initial £200.00 budget. This was necessary to secure units with 4G connectivity and superior night vision essential for the site's needs.

GDPR and Data Compliance: In accordance with statutory requirements:

- Data Controller: Ducklington Parish Council formally assumes the role of Data Controller. The Clerk is preparing the necessary data management and access protocols.
- Signage: Statutory CCTV warning signs will be installed at entry points simultaneously with the cameras to ensure full transparency and GDPR compliance.

Implementation: To ensure effective placement and operational readiness, a site meeting has been scheduled.

RESOLVED:

1. To ratify the purchase of the cameras at the final cost of £250.00.
2. That the Clerk meets with Chris Woodward on site on 13 February 2026 to identify optimal vantage points and make all necessary arrangements for installation and signage.
3. That the cameras remain non-operational until all statutory signage and data protocols are in place.

j) **Allotments - Allocation of Vacant Plots**

The Council received an update from the Clerk regarding the three vacant allotment plots recently advertised in the village newsletter.

Residency and Allocation: The Clerk reported that three residents expressed interest, matching the number of available vacancies. All applicants have been verified as residents of Ducklington, meeting the Council's primary criteria for allocation.

The plots have been provisionally allocated as follows:



Finalisation: Members noted that as the number of eligible applicants matches the vacancies, no waiting list or further advertising is currently required.

RESOLVED: 1. To formally approve the allocation of the three vacant plots to the residents listed above. 2. To authorise the Clerk to issue formal Tenancy Agreements to each new tenant. 3. That upon receipt of signed agreements and the initial rental payments, the Clerk provides site access and plot boundary confirmation to the tenants.

26.26 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 £1,158.00 (as at 31 January 2026) and in the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account is £48,768.55 (as at 31 January 2026).

Debts due to Council

The Council received a payment of £217.00 from the Treasurer of Creditor 1 on 2nd February 2026 to reduce the outstanding balance to £1,736.00

Bank Reconciliation

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

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.

27.26 Other comments/Matters for next Agenda

- a) The Clerk reported that he will be on holiday from 26th February to 19th March inclusive and will not have access to email during this period. Consequently, he will not be able to prepare the agenda, briefing pack or take the minutes for the meeting scheduled for 4th March. The chairman will endeavour to enlist the services of Miranda and Thom Rhodes to assist, as they have done on previous occasions when the Clerk has been away.
- b) Cllr Lishman reported he had stepped down from the Flower Show organising committee
- c) Note to Councillors: Digital Communication and Correspondence

The Clerk highlighted the following regarding the effectiveness of our internal communications:

- Responsiveness: The Clerk raised concerns regarding the consistency with which Councillors are monitoring and responding to their official emails. It was noted that delays in replies can significantly hinder the Clerk's ability to progress Council business and statutory actions between meetings.
- Engagement: The Clerk expressed frustration that requests for information, views, and urgent decisions often go unanswered by some, but not all councillors. All members are asked to ensure they are engaging with the Clerk's correspondence.
- Technical Challenges: Cllr Dunsdon reported that persistent connectivity issues over the past year have impacted his ability to stay current with digital communications. He has advised that these issues are being addressed and should be resolved shortly.
- Primary Business Channel: The Clerk reiterated that email is the Council's primary and official method for conducting business outside of the monthly meetings. To ensure the Council operates efficiently and stays within legal timelines, all Councillors are formally requested to check their emails on a regular basis.

28.26 Date of Next Meeting: Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday, 4 March 2026 - 7.30 pm, Lilac Room, Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

Signeddated.....2026
Chairman