

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2 JULY 2025
in the Lilac Room, Village Hall commencing at 7.30 pm**

79.25 Parish Councillors Present: David Duthie (Chairman)
Matthew Barker (Vice Chairman)
Richard Border
Peter Almgill (from 8.45pm)
John Dunsdon
Jo George

In Attendance: Steve Smith (Clerk)
Cllr Adrian Walsh (WODC)

80.25 Parish Councillors' Apologies: Paul Lishman
Sarah Varnom

81.25 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 4 June 2025:

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

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

Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC) reported:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

Oxfordshire Councils have proposed options for local government re-organisation across the County.

West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, South & Vale District Councils and West Berkshire Council are proposing Two Councils:

- Oxford and Shires Councils – West Oxfordshire, Cherwell & Oxford City (name subject to change)
- Ridgeway Council – South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse & West Berkshire (name subject to change)

Website for Two Councils: <http://www.twocouncils.org>

Oxford City Council are proposing options for Three Councils:

- Greater Oxford Council – covering Oxford City and the green belt (Oxford City, Kidlington, Cumnor, Wheatley, Kennington, Berinsfield)
- North Oxfordshire Council – covering most of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire
- Ridgeway Council – covering most of the existing South Oxfordshire & Vale of the White Horse Council and West Berkshire

Website: <https://greateroxford.org/>

Oxfordshire County Council is proposing One Council:

- Oxfordshire Council – one unitary authority encompassing Oxfordshire as it is today, with the abolition of the City & District Councils

Resident Drop-In Sessions:

- Tuesday 8th July: 15:00-19:00, Bampton Village Hall, Market Square, OX18 2JH
- Thursday 10th July: 15:00-19:00, Unit 14a, Marriotts Walk, Witney, OX28 6GW

All Oxfordshire Councils will draw up final proposals once public engagement sessions have concluded, in readiness for a decision by the Government in 2026.

New Councils are expected to be created in 2028.

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND IS BACK

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 and May 2027. Further information will be shared when this is made available.

ROAD SURFACE DRESSING COMMENCES

Road surface dressing has commenced throughout Oxfordshire. You can find out which roads are being surface dressed here:

https://oxfordshire.highway-iams.uk/Live/PBLC_ANON/PIP/?cg=scheme

UPCOMING ROAD WORKS

- Witney Road – 30th June – 2nd July – Openreach Roadworks – expect delays

WITNEY SPLASH PARK IS OPEN

The newly renovated Witney Splash Park is now open daily between 12:00-18:00.

WITNEY CARNIVAL 12TH JULY

11:00 – Procession begins
11:30 – Music Tent Opens
12:15 – Main Arena Opens

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN: UPCOMING POLICY & VISION CONSULTATION

WODC will soon be launching a consultation on the proposed vision and policy position for the new local plan. This presents the Preferred Policy Options Paper for the Councils thinking and shape for content in the local plan.

This paper does not include potential future sites, however, we already know the councils' initial thoughts on sites, as they published a list of likely options in 2023. The council will again seek input later this year about potential sites the public think should be included for development.

<https://yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/folders/your-plan-for-the-future>

EV MICRO-HUB

The Innovation Team has concluded the procurement process for the EV Micro-Hub project. Therefore, once contracts are signed in September, real progress will start to happen which is where they should get in contact with Ducklington Parish Council to discuss next steps. Overall, OCC have procured a Charge Point Operator (CPO) to run concession contracts with Town and Parish Councils. This means that DPC will get a usable ev charger for the community and will not be liable for the up-keep, however, this also means that DPC will not receive any income.

Councillors instructed the Clerk to write to Cllr Thomas Ashby to ask him if he wouldn't mind submitting a written report for the next edition of the village newsletter

Cllr Adrian Walsh (WODC) reported: Nothing to add to Cllr Thomas Ashby's report.

Councillors asked Cllr Adrian Walsh if he wouldn't mind submitting a brief report for the next edition of the village newsletter informing parishioners of current issues likely to have an impact on the village.

83.25 Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items

None declared

84.25 PLANNING

- a) Application No: **25/01297/HHD** - 9 Manor Road, Ducklington - Proposed single storey rear extension

Applicant: Mr M Clarke

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors had no objections to the application.

- b) Application No: **25/00423/OUT** - Land to the South of Standlake Rd, Ducklington - Outline planning application for up to 38 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

Applicant: Jenny Hutchings

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors noted the contents of a letter from Fern Lynch, Principal Planner, West Oxfordshire District Council advising "I have received significant amendments to the above [application]". Councillors await further details in due course.

c) **Neighbourhood Plan**

Nothing new to report. Cllr Lishman was not present.

d) **West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 - Preferred Policy Options Consultation**

Cllr Lishman to be invited to draft a response to the consultation on behalf of the council.

The consultation closes on 8th August and there are various events across the District in July.

Cllr Lishman's initial thoughts: "It's a large, wide ranging document and I think the focus of our response should be making sure the nature of the draft objectives and policies are supportive of our aspirations for Ducklington, rather than tackling every aspect of the local plan we have an opinion on!"

If anyone wants to review the plan in the next few weeks, and feed back thoughts, that would be welcome.

85.25 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) **Hotel**

Nothing further to report. Cllr Varnom was not present and had not sent a written report.

b) **Village Hall**

Cllr George reported that the energy efficiency survey had been booked and would be carried out on Wednesday, 20th August.

Cllr George requested that Cllr Varnom report to future meetings in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Ducklington and Hardwick Village Hall Committee.

c) **CCTV Camera Log**

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

d) **Village Newsletter update**

The Clerk reminded councillors that the deadline for articles to be published in the August/September Village Newsletter is 16 July 2025.

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

e) **Projects Committee**

Cllr George updated members on progress of the Art Trail project.

Cllr Duthie to instruct the Clerk regarding purchase orders for approved works.

Councillors discussed purchase of benches. Cllr George offered to obtain quotes and to report to the September meeting.

Cllr Barker has met with Christopher Townsend and confirmed he remains on course to meet the deadline of 12th October.

Local schoolchildren will have the opportunity to observe the artist at work in Bartholomew Close Open Area.

f) **Nature Plan**

Cllr George has written to Jeff Murphy, Gill Mill Quarry Manager of Smith & Sons Bletchington Ltd to request boulders / rocks to be placed on the edge of the grass verge in Starnham Road to prevent vehicles from driving over it, and is presently awaiting a reply.

Cllr Duthie offered to speak with Smith & Sons Bletchington Ltd regarding the Himalayan balsam growing on the other side of the river/ditch at Bartholomew.

g) **Village Events Committee (a.k.a Village Celebration Group)**

Cllr Barker reported that the group was planning to arrange a village event to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) on Friday, 15th August 2025. This day marks the formal surrender of Japan, effectively ending World War II.

The 80th anniversary of VJ Day will be marked by a National Commemorative Event organised by The Royal British Legion and the Government. This event will be held at midday.

Cllr Barker outlined that locally the plan was to raise a flag on a temporary pole close to the War Memorial preceded by a short service involving local schoolchildren. Further details will be reported to the next meeting.

After a discussion Cllr Dunsdon proposed and Cllr Border seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to fund the event and associated costs from the earmarked reserve, Parish Celebration Group. The Clerk reported that the current balance held in reserves is £994.89.

h) **Parish Boundaries**

The Clerk reported that the council has powers under section 144, Local Government Act 1972 to put up signs to inform visitors that they are entering the Parish of Ducklington. Councillors discussed proposed wording and agreed upon 'Welcome to the Parish of Ducklington'. It was agreed that four such signs would be needed.

The Clerk advised that the ability to erect signs on or near highways is specifically regulated. The placement of any sign on or near the public highway falls under the control of the highway authority, Oxfordshire County Council. While a parish council has general powers to act for the benefit of its community, the specific act of erecting "Welcome to the Parish of Ducklington" signs at the four entrances to the parish, particularly if they are to be placed on or near the public highway, requires express permission from the relevant highway authority. Failure to obtain this consent could result in the signs being removed and the parish council incurring fines and removal costs.

After a discussion the council **RESOLVED** to instruct the Clerk to contact Oxfordshire County Council regarding the council's plans and follow the formal application procedure for such signage, and subject thereto, to seek quotes from sign suppliers.

i) **Wild Ducks**

Nothing further to report.

j) Training on Storing and Sharing files in Google Drive

Cllr Almgill reported that he will have time to do this during the school summer holidays. He is proposing to conduct maybe two training sessions, in the afternoon and early-evening, sometime between late July and early August.

k) EV Microhubs

Nothing further to report. Cllr George offered to write to Stuart Cole, Oxfordshire County Council for an update.

86.25 New Business

a) Gigaclear Event on 23rd / 24th June

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. The Clerk reminded councillors that it was important to support such events as a way of showing our appreciation to Gigaclear for providing free wi-fi in the Village Hall.

b) Speed Indicator Device - Battery Charging and Replacement

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. After a short discussion, Cllr George proposed and Cllr Duthie seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to instruct the Clerk to accept the quote from D&S Garden Services and to issue a purchase order accordingly.

c) Part-Night Lighting Public Consultation

Councillors noted the public consultation on the proposed Part-Night Lighting Implementation Framework is now live on 'Let's Talk Oxfordshire'. The Consultation is running until midnight on Sunday 6th July. Councillors decided that it should be left to individuals to respond to the consultation as they see fit.

d) Invitation to PCSO Helen Keen

PCSO Helen Keen was invited to attend this meeting, but did not respond to the invitation and was not in attendance. The Clerk was instructed to write to Victoria Ball, the Thames Valley Police's Neighbourhood Inspector with overall responsibility for the entire neighbourhood policing team to ask why we didn't seem to have an active PCSO covering Ducklington. Her team is responsible for delivering on neighbourhood policing strategies, directing the deployment of the team and developing relationships with partners and key stakeholders to enable the neighbourhood policing team to work effectively.

e) Grants Policy - Publicity / Application Form

Councillors noted the Grants Policy Publicity Document and Grant Aid Application (the documents) set out in the Briefing Pack.

After a discussion, Cllr Duthie proposed and Cllr Dunsdon seconded and the Council unanimously **RESOLVED** (1) to agree to set aside up to 15% of its budget for the award of discretionary grants, and (2) to approve the Grants Policy Publicity Document and Grant Aid Application and to instruct the Clerk to ask the editor to include the documents in the next edition of the village newsletter, and to instruct the Clerk to post the documents on the council's website.

f) Workplace Pensions Re-Enrolment

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. Cllr Almgill, the chairman of the council's personnel committee confirmed that the council does not currently have a pension scheme, but has set aside funds in the budget to set up a scheme if requested to do so by either of the council's employees. Neither employee had expressed a wish to join a pension scheme. The Clerk was instructed to complete the re-declaration of compliance and submit to The Pensions Regulator (TPR) before the deadline of 13 August 2025.

g) Provision of Outside Electric Socket at Village Hall

Councillors agreed with Cllr Duthie's suggestion of installing a double socket on the outside wall of the Village Hall to facilitate power supply to stalls / equipment etc during village events on the Village Green. Cllr George offered to bring the matter up at the next Village Hall Management Committee meeting and to report back to a future parish council meeting.

87.25 Playgrounds, Litter, Open Spaces, Sports Pavilion, Sports Field, Allotments

a) Playgrounds - Inspection Reports

The Clerk has not received a report this month from John Nixon (Playgrounds Inspector).

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. Cllr Barker and Cllr Duthie offered to organise repairs to the surface surrounding the slide at Chalcroft Play Area.

b) Zipwire at Glebelands Playground

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack: (1) Councillors instructed the Clerk to ask the council's grass cutting contractor if he could pull out any weeds seen growing through the play bark underneath the zipwire area when strimming the grass and (2) Cllr Barker offered to remove the screws sticking out of the zipwire deck.

c) **MUGA - Private Hire Policy**

The Clerk has drafted a MUGA hire use policy for private bookings. It is not intended that this will impact existing arrangements (i.e. use by DSC teams, ladies netball etc)

After a discussion, Cllr George proposed and Cllr Dunsdon seconded and the Council unanimously **RESOLVED** (1) to formally adopt the policy and (2) to instruct the Clerk to ask the editor to include the policy in the next edition of the village newsletter, and to instruct the Clerk to post the policy on the council's website.

d) **Village Car Park - Emergency Repairs / Drainage Problems**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. Councillors approved the Clerk's quick action in respect of the emergency repairs and the council authorised payment of the invoice from G. Hill & Sons Ltd.

Councillors noted the quote from G. Hill & Sons Ltd to install a gulley and soakaway in the car park. The Clerk was instructed to seek two more quotes in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. Cllr George suggested Martin Whittle and offered to let the Clerk have his contact details. Cllr Duthie suggested TW Hardscaping Ltd.

e) **CCTV - Camera Replacement**

Nothing further to report. The Clerk has heard nothing more from the Secretary of Ducklington Sports Club and is yet to receive an invoice from Broadsword Security Services. However, the Clerk understands that current lead times for installation is approx 5 weeks from the point of acceptance.

f) **Litter Picker's Report**

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

g) **Village Green - Apple Pressing Day**

The Council approved the proposed date for this event, namely Sunday, 12th October 2025 and **RESOLVED** that the event should be treated as a parish council event and associated costs will be met from the earmarked reserve, Parish Celebration Group.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Jim Shackell to request evidence of Public Liability Insurance for the Marshall steam engine and the apple mill and a Risk Assessment.

Cllr Barker suggested that the council apply for a temporary road closure order for this event. Councillors agreed and the Clerk was instructed to make the application on the council's behalf.

h) **Sports Pavilion - Parking Spaces**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report and advice in the Briefing Pack. After a discussion, Cllr Duthie offered to prepare a specification and drawings for the necessary works and send them to the Clerk in order that the Clerk can seek quotations from G.Hill & Sons Ltd, Martin Whittle and TW Hardscaping Ltd to carry out the works.

i) **Allotments - Water Meter**

The Clerk reported that Castle Water had requested a meter reading, but the meter is inaccessible due to overgrown vegetation. Councillors suggested that the Clerk contact Castle Water and notify them that the meter cannot be read.

j) **Allotments - Rent Invoices**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. The Clerk advised members that he is working with one of the allotment holders to ascertain which plot(s) are occupied by which allotment holder, and the full name, address, email address, mobile number and landline number of each allotment holder, in liaison with Cllr Dunsdon.

88.25 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 £57,338.82 (as at 30 June 2025) and in the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account is £20,204.77 (as at 30 June 2025).

Debts due to Council

The Clerk reported he had received a payment of £217.00 from the Treasurer of Creditor 1 on 30 June 2025 to reduce the outstanding balance to £3,255.00.

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.

89.25 Other comments/Matters for next Agenda

a) Cllr Dunsdon commented that there is a lovely display of flower boxes and sunflowers at the allotments.

b) On a less positive note, Cllr Dunsdon also reported : (1) there has been a problem with vermin at the allotments and a deer has also been visiting the site. (2) The grass on the verge outside the allotments is quite high: The Clerk agreed to contact OCC Highways to request that the grass be cut back.

c) Cllr George reported that she had suggested to Gill Long that Warm Welcome Space apply for a Community Activity Grant (CAG) from WODC.

d) Cllr George said that she will try to join the next OALC Councillor Forum on Wednesday, 9th July at 6.30pm. The next forum is due to take place on Tuesday, 12th August at 10.00am if any other councillor is interested. OALC offers the Chair/Councillor Forums at different times of the day so hope they will be accessible to a growing number of people. There is no need to book a space, just turn up! The sessions are open to one nominated councillor from each council (it doesn't have to be the same person every month).

e) Cllr George reported that she has sent photos of the MUGA and Netball team to WODC s106 team to confirm the funds have been spent on the purposes and within the timeline for which the funds were awarded.

f) Cllr George reported that she and Cllr Varnom are due to meet with Nicky Mellings (Leisure Projects Officer, WODC) and representatives of Ducklington Sports Club to discuss any projects the sports club may have in mind, utilising s106 monies.

g) Cllr Barker reported that he had recently met with Ben Morrell Allen to discuss the state of our local rivers and streams as he is in contact with the Cotswold Waterways Trust. They are keen to take this forward with some "citizen science" to gather data to support the need for a clean up. Cllr Barker asked if the council could consider supporting this endeavor and requested an item be included on the agenda for the September meeting so the matter can be discussed.

h) Cllr Barker reported that he is keen to investigate the possibility/cost of having a mains water connection (and lockable tap) to the Sensory garden. If this proves to be unviable then the council may need to look into a bore hole and solar powered pump (similar to the allotments by the church). Either way, the council would need to seek approval from the Feilden Trust. Cllr Barker asked that an item be included on the agenda for the September meeting so that this can be discussed.

90.25 Date of Next Meeting: Urgency Committee Meeting, Wednesday, 6 August 2025 - 7.30 pm, Lilac Room, Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.37 pm.

Signeddated.....2025
Chairman