

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL URGENCY
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 AUGUST 2025
in the Lilac Room, Village Hall commencing at 7.30 pm**

91.25 Parish Councillors Present: David Duthie (Chairman)
Matthew Barker (Vice Chairman)
Peter Almgill
John Dunsdon

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

92.25 Parish Councillors' Apologies: Richard Border
Sarah Varnom

93.25 Public Participation:

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

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

Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC) was not present, but had submitted a written report prior to the meeting, which is reproduced below:

OXFORD CITY CONGESTION CHARGE CONSULTATION

The County Council are currently consulting whether to introduce a congestion charge zone for residents driving in and out of Oxford. The charge would be £5 a day. To respond to the consultation and read more information, follow the link below:

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestion-charge>

OXFORDSHIRE HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE (TIP) CONSULTATION

The Council want to close our tips up to two days a week and change the opening times to those when most people are out working hard. Please do have your say to keep our tips open by using the following link:

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

WITNEY HIGH STREET

Construction has been delayed by the County Council to January 2026. ANPR cameras outside the Como Lounge and Santander ends of the High Street are due later in 2025 dependent on TRP requirements.

So far over £500,000 has been spent on consultations, consultants and plans. The estimated total spend on the High Street project could reach £3,400,000.

BUTTERCROSS LANE FLOODING

Buttercross Lane suffers from a significant amount of flooding every time it rains. The County Council did undertake some work in April 2025, but this did not have the effect of stopping the flooding of the road. M-Group are currently working on proposals to fix this situation.

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-May 2027. As soon as it opens, I will share the information with you.

GULLY CLEANING

Gully clearance across Oxfordshire is currently three weeks behind schedule. A reminder of the schedule for Witney:

- South & Central – April & May
- North & East – July/August
- West & Ducklington – February (I am currently trying to bring this forwards)

A schedule for gully clearance can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/roadworks/planned-road-maintenance>

Gully's that need cleared can be reported to FixMyStreet here:

https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/?utm_source=FURL-1&utm_medium=reporting&utm_term=nil&utm_content=&utm_campaign=reporting

TREE PLANTING PROGRAMME

The County Council has a number of new locations where trees will be planted along the OCC Highway this autumn. These include sites in Curbridge, Deer Park, Burwell, Station Lane, Tower Hill, Ducklington Lane, Welch Way, Burford Road, Cogges, Hailey Road and Woodstock Road.

VEHICLE ACTIVATE SPEED SIGN

A new vehicle activated speed sign has been installed on the Downs Road (if you were driving towards Witney Lakes). This is to raise drivers' awareness of their speed when entering the 30mph zone, in order to get them to slow down to the appropriate speed. Thank you to Curbridge Parish Council for purchasing this sign.

WELL LANE, CURBRIDGE

I have had multiple discussions with Officers about traffic calming along Well Lane. Despite a lack of current funding for a consultation, I have instructed officers to work on a plan, so that there is something ready to go, as and when funding is made available. I will look to catchup with officers for an update in September.

DUCKLINGTON SPORTS CLUB – GRANT FUNDING SUCCESS

I am pleased that Ducklington Sports Club have been successful in their application for funding from Witney Town Council. This funding will go towards supporting young people with their physical and mental wellbeing – so, thank you to those who worked very hard to put this successful grant application together.

SALT BINS

The County Council will soon be considering new locations for salt/grit bins in the area. If you have any suggestions, please do let me know.

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

Cllr Adrian Walsh (WODC) reported that the deadline to take part in West Oxfordshire District Council's Preferred Policy Options consultation for the new Local Plan 2041, is this Friday, 8th August.

This consultation is a key opportunity for residents, businesses, community groups and organisations to influence the direction of the next Local Plan – shaping the policies that will guide how the district grows and develops over the next 15 years.

WODC is asking for feedback on:

- Their proposed vision for West Oxfordshire in 2041;
- A set of revised objectives based on earlier consultation feedback; and
- Their preferred policy options covering homes, transport, climate, infrastructure, nature, local jobs and more

The Clerk advised that Cllr Lishman had already responded to the consultation on behalf of Ducklington Parish Council.

Cllr Duthie reported he had attended The Town and Parish Council Briefing on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation organised by WODC on Monday, 4th August.

There are ongoing discussions over what local governance will look like in Oxfordshire in the coming years. The changes that are coming are necessary to meet the plans laid out in the UK Government's White Paper on devolution released in December 2024.

What changes will we see?

The White Paper sets out the Government's intention to create a number of Strategic Authorities across the country. These will sit above the current councils and either be designated as a Foundation Strategic Authority or Mayoral Strategic Authority. The latter will be led by an elected mayor.

In the areas – like Oxfordshire – where a two-tier system for principal authorities remains, this must be abolished for a single unitary authority. The two-tier system is when two different councils handle different services, as is the case in Oxfordshire (i.e. we have a District Council and a County Council, both handling different responsibilities.)

The various Councils that operate in Oxfordshire have been discussing options and are preparing proposals for what the single unitary authority could be and how areas/populations can be divided. Proposals must be submitted by November.

What are the proposals?

There are currently three options being developed for local government in Oxfordshire. It is likely that all three proposals will be submitted to the Government, which will ultimately make the decision for our area.

Option 1: One authority

Oxfordshire County Council is proposing a single unitary authority for the county of Oxfordshire. More details about the rationale and potential benefits of this approach are available here: <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/>

Option 2: Two authorities

Five councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire have collaborated on the proposal for two authorities. The proposal would divide the five existing councils into two new authorities: Oxford & Shires Council and Ridgeway Council.

Oxford & Shires Council would include Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire. Ridgeway Council would include South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire.

More details are available on this proposal here: <https://twocouncils.org/home>

Option 3: Three authorities

Oxford City Council is proposing three unitary authorities be created to cover Oxfordshire and West Berkshire:

Oxford Council - comprising Oxford on expanded boundaries

Northern Oxfordshire Council - comprising much of the existing West Oxfordshire and Cherwell districts

Ridgeway Council - comprising much of the existing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts combined with the existing West Berkshire unitary.

More information about the proposal and its potential benefits is available here:

<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/future-local-government/greater-oxford>

When will all this happen?

The proposals are currently being developed and will be submitted by 28 November 2025, with decisions expected to be made during 2026. Shadow councils will be established during 2027 to start the transition process, with the new councils being formally created (or vested) in 2028.

What should we do now?

Keep an eye out for updates from the various councils. The principal authorities are engaging with their communities and we'd encourage you to get involved, ask questions and find out more about what is planned and what it will mean.

At this stage, little has been said explicitly about the role of town and parish councils, such as Ducklington Parish Council, within these future governance structures, but we will keep monitoring the situation.

Cllr Dunsdon reported that Starnham Lane again needs resurfacing. There are numerous potholes and the edges are breaking up. Cllr Walsh responded saying this was a matter for the highway authority (Oxfordshire County Council) and suggested raising the matter with Cllr Ashby.

Cllr Adrian Walsh gave notice that he will be away from 20 September 2025 until February 2026.

95.25 Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items

None declared

96.25 PLANNING

- a) Application No: **25/01653/HHD** - Course Hill Barn, Course Hill Lane, Ducklington - Erection of single storey extension to existing garage and store together with installation of photo voltaics on roof

Applicant: Mr James Grace

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors had no objections to the application.

Cllr Barker reported there was no further update on The Moors planning application.

97.25 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) CCTV Camera Log

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

b) Village Newsletter update

The Clerk reminded councillors that the deadline for articles to be published in the October/November Village Newsletter is 12th September 2025.

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

c) Projects Committee

In the absence of Cllr George, Cllr Duthie updated members on the progress of the Art Trail project:

- The Cotswold Artist, Natasha Housego is continuing to work on her sculpture at Bartholomew Close Open Area.
- MPW Construction Groundwork Limited have laid the concrete bases at Fritilary Lane, underneath the Beacon on the Village Green, and for the installation of new Picnic Benches at Glebelands Play Area. The Clerk mentioned that the contractor had left the dismantled bench at Glebelands Play Area beneath a tree next to the school railings. Cllr Almgill offered to forward details of a 'white van man' who could take it away as scrap metal.
- Work is due to start on the Sensory Garden in September.

d) Village Events Committee

Cllr Barker updated members on the 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 the VJ 80 day flag on a temporary pole close to the War Memorial at 9.00 am and the Rector will lead us in prayers. VJ wreaths will be placed on the War Memorial. Everybody is welcome to attend.

Cllr Barker reported that plans are being put in place for the Apple Pressing Day on 12th October. Cllr Barker is in the process of preparing the event management plan, risk assessment, and contingency plan to send to the Clerk to enable him to apply for a temporary road closure order.

Cllr Barker proposed and Cllr Duthie seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** that the council would support an application by the Village Events Committee for the award of a grant under West Oxfordshire District Council's Community Activity Grant Scheme 2025 to cover the cost of closing the road and possibly to hire the piano man to come and perform (subject to availability).

After a short discussion, Cllr Barker proposed and Cllr Duthie seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the reimbursement of the cost of a waistcoat for Winston Churchill (a.k.a. Christopher Carson) in the sum of £12.99.

The Clerk reported that the current balance held in reserves is £994.89.

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

a) Playgrounds - Inspection Reports

Councillors noted the reports from John Nixon (Playgrounds Inspector) in the Briefing Pack:

Actions:

- Cllr Barker offered to speak to Dick Rudd about sourcing the "granules" needed to fill the voids between the tiles underneath the slide at Chalcroft Play Area. It is understood the tiles are manufactured by Wicksteed.
- The Clerk reported that the swing seats at Glebelands Play Area were covered in bird droppings. Councillors instructed the Clerk to ask John Nixon if he could remove the same by (i) scraping off any large, dried pieces with a plastic scraper or putty knife. Then, (ii) use a cleaning solution like a mixture of dish soap and water, or a vinegar solution (equal parts white vinegar and water) to soak the affected area. After a few minutes, (iii) scrub the area with a brush or cloth and rinse thoroughly. For stubborn stains, (iv) consider using a specialised bird dropping remover spray or a poultice of baking soda or hydrogen peroxide. Finally, (v) dry the swing with a clean cloth.

b) CCTV Camera Replacement

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack.

c) **Litter Picker's Report**

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

d) **Village Car Park/DSC Parking Spaces - Drainage Issues**

Cllr Duthie reported that he had asked MPW Construction Groundwork Limited to put concrete into the voids by the edge of the tarmac in the parking spaces close to the sports club to improve run off.

Actions:

- Cllr Duthie agreed to prepare a specification and drawings for a permanent solution and send them to the Clerk in order that the Clerk can seek quotations from G.Hill & Sons Ltd, MPW Construction Groundwork Limited and TW Hardscaping Ltd to carry out the necessary works.
- At the same time, the Clerk to seek quotes from MPW Construction Groundwork Limited and TW Hardscaping Ltd, in addition to the quote already obtained from G.Hill & Sons Ltd, to install a gulley and soakaway in the car park.

e) **Ducklington Sports Club Big Fundraiser**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. After a short discussion, Cllr Almgill proposed and Cllr Barker seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the application from Ducklington Sports Club to host The Big Fundraiser event on Glebelands Playing Field on 22 August, subject to payment of the booking fee (£25.00).

f) **Sports Field - Ducklington & Hardwick Produce Association Annual Village Show**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report in the Briefing Pack. After a short discussion, Cllr Almgill proposed and Cllr Duthie seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the application from Ducklington & Hardwick Produce Association to host The Annual Village Show on Glebelands Playing Field on 25 August.

99.25 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 £45,960.49 (as at 31 July 2025) and in the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account is £20,322.95 (as at 31 July 2025).

Debts due to Council

The Clerk reported he had received a payment of £217.00 from the Treasurer of Creditor 1 on 29 July 2025 to reduce the outstanding balance to £3,038.00.

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.

100.25 Other comments/Matters for next Agenda

a) Cllr Dunsdon and Cllr Duthie agreed to meet in order to agree corrections to the list of allotment holders and to provide the Clerk with an accurate list of plots together with the name, address, email address, mobile number and landline number for each plotholder.

b) The Clerk reported he is due to undergo inguinal hernia surgery on 13 August and will need 1-2 weeks off to recover

101.25 Date of Next Meeting: Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday, 3 September 2025 - 7.30 pm, Lilac Room, Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Signeddated.....2025
Chairman

