

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL 2025
in the Lilac Room, Village Hall commencing at 7.30 pm**

40.25 Parish Councillors Present: David Duthie (Chairman)
Matthew Barker (Vice Chairman)
Peter Almgill
Richard Border
John Dunsdon
Jo George
Sarah Varnom (from 8.00 pm)

In Attendance: Steve Smith (Clerk)
Thomas Ashby (Conservative Party Candidate (OCC))

41.25 Parish Councillors' Apologies: Paul Lishman

42.25 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 5 March 2025:

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

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

Nothing to report. Neither Cllr Ted Fenton (OCC) nor Cllr Adrian Walsh (WODC) were present.

44.25 Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items

Cllr Duthie declared a pecuniary interest in items 6) b) and 6) c) in his professional capacity.

Cllr Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6) b) as a neighbour.

Cllr Dunsdon declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6) c) as a neighbour.

Cllr Barker declared a pecuniary interest in item 6) d) in his professional capacity.

45.25 PLANNING

New Planning Applications:

- (a) Application No: **25/00479/HHD** - 34 Beanhill Road, Ducklington - Single storey rear extension to replace existing conservatory

Applicant: Mr and Mrs P Wastie

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors had no objections to the application.

- (b) Application No: **25/00660/HHD** - 1 Moors Close, Ducklington - Conversion of existing garage along with two storey and first floor extensions to south west elevation. Construction of an adjoining two vehicle carport to the north east elevation with first floor living space above and associated works

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Day

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors had no objections to the application.

- (c) Application No: **24/03154/FUL** - 2 Manor Road, Ducklington - Erection of a bungalow and creation of a new access (amended description and plans)

Applicant: Mr Alan Townsend

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors objected to the application on the basis the proposed development will negatively impact on neighbouring properties insofar as it is disproportionate and out of scale with the surrounding area, failing to maintain the character and visual amenity of the location (overshadowing or overbearing) and is therefore considered to be overdevelopment and incongruous to street scene.

- (d) Application No: **25/00757/HHD** - Honeypot Lodge, 2 Church Street, Ducklington - Replacement windows

Applicant: Mr Stuart Powling

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors had no objections to the application.

- (e) Application No: **25/00847/HHD** - The Bell Inn, 21 Standlake Road, Ducklington - External alterations to include replacement and repairs to existing roof covering along with installation of insulation

Applicant: Mr Adam Nutton

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act

Councillors had no objections to the application.

Existing Planning Applications:

- (f) Application No: **25/00423/OUT** - Land to the South of Standlake Road, 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 accessibility to the site, for vehicles in terms of positions and treatment of access to the site.

Applicant: Jenny Hutchings

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors noted the contents of an email from Rachel Biles, Strategic Projects Lead (Leisure) West Oxfordshire District Council.

The Clerk reported that Oxfordshire County Council (highway authority/transport) has objected to the outline application on a number of grounds.

- (g) Application No: **25/02878/RES** - Land East of Witney Road, Ducklington (The Moors) - Reserved Matters application for Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale together with associated works

Applicant: Mr John Brooks (Ainscough Strategic Land)

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors noted the contents of a letter from the Environment Agency (EA) dated 24 March 2025.

Cllr Barker highlighted the fact that the site lies within the 3.3% annual exceedance probability (AEP) flood outline in accordance with the New National Model (NNM), which is identified by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as within Flood Zone 3b (the functional floodplain).

Councillors were also gratified to note that the letter from GWP Consultants (ref 241216, dated 23 December 2024), which was commissioned by the parish council, was taken into account by the EA in their submission to West Oxfordshire District Council.

Planning Appeal Decision:

- (h) Appeal Reference: **APP/D3125/W/24/3345619** - Notification of Appeal Decision - Mutchmeats Ltd Abattoir, New Close Lane, Ducklington, Witney OX29 7GX - Appeal made under s78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a decision of West Oxfordshire District Council to refuse to grant planning permission for the semi-permanent siting of 2 x portable self-contained, single storey sleeper cabins. The original application ref is 23/02197/FUL.

Appellant: Mutchmeats Ltd

Decision: The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the semi-permanent siting of 2 x portable self-contained, single storey sleeper cabins at Mutchmeats Ltd Abattoir, New Close Lane, Ducklington, Witney OX29 7GX in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/02197/FUL, and the plans submitted with it, subject to conditions

Councillors noted the outcome of the applicant's appeal against the local planning authority's decision.

Neighbourhood Plan update

- (i) In the absence of Cllr Lishman this item was deferred to the next meeting.

46.25 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) Hotel

Councillors noted the minutes of Asylum Volunteers Meeting : Tuesday, 25th March 2025 at High Street St Methodist Church, Witney set out in the Briefing Pack.

b) Village Hall

Cllr George reported that the risk assessments had been completed.

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 June/July Village Newsletter is 16 May 2025.

The Clerk suggested a new column called 'Chairman's Notes' outlining the achievements and ambitions of the parish council.

Cllr Border asked whether the local MP, county councillor or district councillor had submitted articles for the newsletter - min ref. 8.25 d) refers. The Clerk responded that requests had been made to all three, but nothing had been forthcoming.

Cllr Almgill proposed that two editions of the newsletter be printed with front and back pages in colour. Cllr Barker remarked that the Christmas edition would be a good choice. Cllr George commented that this will enhance the new photograph section 'Nature Around the Village'. Councillors instructed the Clerk to ask the editor if she would select two editions to be printed with front and back pages in colour, and to suggest that the Christmas edition should be one of them.

Articles for publication in the June / July Village Newsletter should be submitted to Emma Buckard: newsletter@ducklingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

e) **Projects Committee**

Cllr George updated members on progress of the Arts Trail project and reported on decisions made by the Projects Committee at its meeting earlier today (9th April).

Councillors agreed that an oak tree trunk sourced by the artist to be used for the outdoor sculpture trail can be stored at Bartholomew Close open space.

Cllr Varnom handed some invoices to the Clerk for various materials and requested reimbursement at next month's meeting.

f) **Nature Plan**

Cllr George updated members on progress of a number of ongoing rewilding projects.

Councillors approved reimbursement at next month's meeting of the sum of £45.76 to Jennifer Pratley as per copy receipts handed to the Clerk by Cllr George.

Cllr George reported that her hopes of securing a grant from TOE (Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment) for wildflower seed and plug plants have been dashed as the organisation prefer to fund larger initiatives (e.g. creating a pond, or planting a community orchard or new hedges) rather than small-scale planting on small areas in a community.

After a discussion, Cllr Almgill proposed and Cllr Border seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to set aside in the council's budget the sum of £200 to be spent on special nature projects, subject to all expenditure being approved by the full council.

g) **EV Microhubs**

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

In terms of timeline the tender is due to close on the 16th April. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) will then start the assessment process to award the winning bidder.

It is anticipated this will take a number of months given assessment, standstill period and requirement from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) to also approve the winning bid.

All in all, it is hoped the Charge Point Operator (CPO) will be in place in July. Once the CPO is in place, OCC will be pushing for them to engage with the parish council and owners of other microhub pilot sites as early as possible as any delays will have a knock-on effect on the main microhubs programme.

h) **Trees in Cemetery and Church Street**

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

The Clerk reported that Muddy Spades Ltd have completed the works.

After a discussion Cllr Almgill proposed and Cllr Varnom seconded and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to share the cost of the works to the Swedish white hornbeam with the owner-occupier of 16A Church Street and to instruct the Clerk to issue a sales invoice accordingly.

i) **Ash Tree at Bartholomew Close**

Cllr Duthie reported that the council is still awaiting approval from the tree officer at WODC for the tree to be cut down, felled and removed.

Councillors expressed a preference for the work to be undertaken by a local tree surgeon.

j) **Village Memorial**

Cllr Duthie reported that he was still waiting to hear from the preferred contractor regarding cleaning and restoring the lettering on the War Memorial, but was confident the work will be carried out before the 80th Anniversary of VE Day (8 May 2025)

The Clerk confirmed that a purchase order had been issued to O.G. Stonemasonry Contractors Ltd for cleaning the War Memorial, repointing, and removing the existing small plaque and refixing.

The Clerk offered to contact officers at Oxfordshire County Council to try and expedite the repair to the damaged kerbstones on Standlake Road adjacent to the War Memorial.

47.25 New Business

a) **Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)**

Cllr Almgill presented various reports and statements.

The Clerk was instructed to add the value of the Speed Indicator Device (SID) installed on the A415 to the Total Fixed Asset Value.

b) Insurance Renewal

Cllr Duthie reported that he did not have access to the information which the Clerk had requested from him several weeks ago and apologised for not informing him of this sooner.

If time allowed, the Clerk was instructed to try and seek two alternative insurance quotations in addition to the renewal quote from Hiscox.

Item deferred until next meeting.

c) Annual Parish Meeting

Nothing further to report.

d) Grants Policy

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

Cllr Almgill proposed that the grants policy be prefixed as follows:-

"1. Ducklington Parish Council will budget an annual sum for the purposes of grants.

2. The awarding of a grant will always be at the discretion of the Council and with reference to the allocated and available budget."

Cllr Duthie seconded the motion and after a discussion the amendment was approved and councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** (1) to agree to introduce a formal grants policy, (2) to agree the four tiers of funding set out in the report, (3) to agree the council's vision set out in the report, (4) to agree the council's community objectives set out in the report, and (5) to agree the criteria for making a grant to any organisation, club or society set out in the report, and to instruct the Clerk to prepare the draft documentation for approval at the next meeting.

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

a) Playgrounds - Inspection Reports

Councillors noted the Inspection Reports in the Briefing Pack.

Regarding the damaged picnic bench Councillors instructed the Clerk to ask John Nixon if he could repair the severely burnt table top.

Cllr Duthie agreed to contact the chairman of the sports club regarding the damaged meter box door.

b) Litter Picker's Report

Councillors noted the litter picker's report in the Briefing Pack.

c) Village Green - VE Day 80th Anniversary

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

The Clerk circulated copies of an email from Chris Hulme, Traffic Management Officer, Hampshire Constabulary & Thames Valley Police Joint Operations Unit in response to the application for a temporary road closure. The application has been sent to consultees for comment. The end date of consultation is 15th April 2025.

Cllr Barker reported that plans for the event to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May 2025 were progressing well.

d) Sports Field - Container

Councillors supported the free acquisition of the container by the village events committee and agreed it can be kept on Glebelands playing field.

Cllr Duthie and Cllr George had found a suitable location and Cllr Duthie agreed to inform the chairman of Ducklington Sports Club as a matter of courtesy.

The container will be used to store bone china tea sets, litter picking tools etc used for village events.

e) Allotments - Castle Water

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

Cllr Dunsdon informed members that more water is used at the allotments during the drier months of the year. The drier months tend to be during the spring and early summer, particularly May and June.

f) Allotments

Cllr Dunsdon reported that an incident had occurred today (9th April) at the site of the allotments involving what the Fire Service believed could be arson, i.e. the crime of intentionally starting a fire in order to damage or destroy something. Cllr Dunsdon circulated an image showing severe fire damage on one of the plots.

Councillors expressed their utter dismay and contempt for what appears to be a wilful and thoughtless act.

Cllr Dunsdon offered to draft a letter for the Clerk to send to the person affected expressing the council's sadness and disappointment for what had happened.

Cllr Duthie and Cllr Dunsdon have measured each plot and passed the information to Cllr Almgill who has agreed to prepare accurate mapping of each plot and to link the same to the name, address and email of each plotholder, in order that the council can raise invoices for 2024-25.

49.25 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 £47,399.71 (as at 31 March 2025) and in the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account is £20,204.77 (as at 31 March 2025).

Debts due to Council

The Clerk reported he had received a payment of £217.00 from the Treasurer of Creditor 1 on 31 March 2025 to reduce the outstanding balance to £3,906.00.

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.

50.25 Other comments/Matters for next Agenda

- a) The Clerk reported he will be out of the country from Wednesday, 7th May 2025 to Thursday, 22nd May 2025 and will not be contactable during this period. He will prepare the agenda and briefing pack for the May meeting, but will not be able to attend and minute the meeting.
- b) The Clerk reported that the sports club had notified him that 3 x banners advertising the Beer Festival were to be put up over the weekend. They are at the 3 entrances to the village (i) by the Roundabout (ii) by the Aston Road Junction and (iii) by the Standlake Rd Entrance. Councillors had no objections.
- c) The Clerk reminded councillors that the County Council Elections will take place on Thursday, 1st May and urged everybody to vote. The election will be the first to be held on the new boundaries, which were brought into force by The Oxfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2025.
- d) Cllr Varnom informed members that she has commissioned Gary Woodley to design the illustrations on the planters to be installed at the entrances to the village.
- e) Cllr George asked for an item on floodlit use of the MUGA to be included on the agenda for the next parish council meeting.
- f) Cllr Almgill offered to provide training on storing and sharing files in Google Drive, which offers an AI-powered cloud storage for seamless file sharing and enhanced collaboration.

- g) Cllr Duthie reported he had held preliminary discussions on ownership of the cemetery, and the respective roles and responsibilities of the church and parish council, and whether it is necessary to review the current arrangements.

51.25 Date of Next Meeting: Annual Parish Meeting, Thursday, 24 April 2025 - 7.30 pm, Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.26 pm.

Signeddated.....2025
Chairman