

**MINUTES OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 JUNE 2025
in the Lilac Room, Village Hall commencing at 7.30 pm**

67.25 Parish Councillors Present: David Duthie (Chairman)
Matthew Barker (Vice Chairman)
Peter Almgill (from 8.45 pm)
John Dunsdon
Jo George
Paul Lishman
Sarah Varnom

In Attendance: Steve Smith (Clerk)
Thomas Ashby (Oxfordshire County Councillor)

68.25 Parish Councillors' Apologies: Richard Border

69.25 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 7 May 2025:

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

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

Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC) reported:

BICESTER MOTION INCIDENT

On Thursday 15th May, a major incident was declared following the fire at Bicester Motion. It is with great sadness that Oxfordshire County Council confirmed the death of two fire fighters and one member of the public: Jennie Logan and Martyn Sadle (Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue) and Dave Chester.

I have relayed our best wishes and thoughts on behalf of our community.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION – UPDATE

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

VOLUNTEERS WEEK 2ND JUNE – 8TH JUNE

This week we celebrate volunteers who work tremendously hard giving back to their local community. My thanks go to all volunteers living in the village who give up their spare time for their local communities. As a volunteer myself, I know how much work goes into any role – thank you! A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Wonderful Volunteers in Witney, Ducklington & Curbridge

PRIDE MONTH

In June we celebrate Pride Month, commemorating the rights that have been fought for by the LGBT community. Gay Pride Day is observed on 28th June. Oxford Pride will be celebrated on Saturday 7th June: Oxford Pride UK.

GULLY CLEANING

Oxfordshire County Council will be clearing gullies in all parts of the county over the next twelve months. Gully clearing across Ducklington was carried out between April-June. Parish Councils are encouraged to report gullies needing cleared to FixMyStreet and to the County Councillor.

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

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

- A415 roundabout: Lamp-column replacement will lead to a lane closure between 5th June 20:00 – 6th June 06:00
- Park Road: Thames Water works on Park Road will lead to some carriageway incursion between 30th May – 6th June
- Sealham Road: Thames Water works on Sealham Road will lead to some carriageway incursion between 5th-6th June

WITNEY SPLASH PARK IS OPEN

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

VE DAY CELEBRATION

The VE Day Celebration was truly remarkable. From the morning's reflective service at the memorial to the evening's festivities, the entire day was exceptional. My sincere gratitude goes to everyone involved in organising such a splendid event.

DUCKLINGTON BEER FESTIVAL

A great weekend to enjoy a drink and meet people down at the Sports and Social Club. Some great drinks and entertainment, I'm thoroughly looking forward to next year.

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. You can read the policy paper going to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee here:

<https://meetings.westoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1372&MId=2556>

West Oxfordshire District Council - Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 4th June, 2025, 5.30 pm

EV / INNOVATION TEAM

I am going to be arranging a meeting with the EV/Innovation Team to learn more about the EV Microhub project on a larger, Oxfordshire scale, as well as a hyper-local scale here in Ducklington. Therefore, I hope to be able to report back next time.

FIXMYSTREET SUPERUSER TRAINING

I am undergoing a training course to become a FixMyStreet Super User in late June, so can continue to support our local area in a greater capacity when it comes to reporting highways issues.

In answer to a question from Cllr Barker: Cllr Thomas Ashby advised that the reason the Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee scheduled for Monday, 9th June has been cancelled is because two applicants have withdrawn their applications.

In response to a follow-up question from Cllr Barker: Cllr Lishman advised members that he has spoken to James Nelson, the case officer for the Moors application, and been told that WODC have agreed an extension of time until early-August to enable the applicant to respond to the Environment Agency's comments. WODC's position remains that the application is unacceptable due to the flood risk.

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

71.25 Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items

None declared

72.25 PLANNING

Application No: **25/01018/HHD** - 2 Lovell Close, Ducklington - Erection of single storey rear extension and installation of ground floor window in existing side (NW) elevation

Applicant: Mr Steve Jones

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors had no objections to the application.

Application No: **25/01142/S73** - 5 Macray Road, Ducklington - Removal of condition 4 of permission 24/00738/HDD to allow for the window on North elevation to be fitted with an opening mechanism (retrospective)

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Gibbs

Town and Country Planning Act

Councillors had no objections to the application, other than to express their disappointment at having to deal with a retrospective application and instructed the Clerk to notify the planning officer (WODC) accordingly.

Neighbourhood Plan update

Cllr Lishman reported that he is reviewing the feedback from the Survey Report and will convene a meeting of the informal Neighbourhood Planning group to consider the next steps and report back to council in due course.

73.25 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

a) Hotel

Councillors noted Cllr Varnom's report set out in the Briefing Pack.

In answer to questions from councillors:

Cllr Varnom said it was gratifying that the local community continues to support the residents at the hotel.

She said their prospects were improved by migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, being welcomed in Oxfordshire as a place of sanctuary.

The local authorities (OCC and WODC) are committed to creating a culture of safety, inclusion, and support for all vulnerable groups, particularly those fleeing conflict or persecution. This involves creating a welcoming environment, providing access to services, and promoting integration within the local area. To achieve this, the local authorities are working closely with partner organisations, local communities, and government bodies to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers can live with dignity and contribute positively to our society.

b) Village Hall

Councillors noted the minutes of Ducklington and Hardwick Village Hall Committee Meeting held on 20 May 2025 set out in the Briefing Pack

Cllr Varnom reported that replacement tables and new chairs are being ordered. The Clerk commented that more comfortable chairs are required. The current chairs are uncomfortable if sat upon for any length of time. The Clerk said he has experienced lower back pain due in part to poor posture, but exacerbated by use of the chairs in the Village Hall.

Cllr George reported that she has been assured that the Village Hall is now top of the list for a free energy efficiency survey.

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 for publication in the August / September Village Newsletter should be submitted to Emma Buckard: newsletter@ducklingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk]

e) **Projects Committee**

£27k Dec 2028 Sports and Recreation

Nicky Mellings (WODC) has confirmed the sports club has expressed their intention to apply for this fund directly. The Projects Committee had expected to use some of these funds towards the sensory garden. Cllr Duthie estimates that the garden would need £8.5k approx from this fund for this purpose. After a discussion councillors decided not to submit a S106 claim to WODC for use of this fund for the sensory garden and instead to utilise funds from reserves to complete this project.

Art Trail

Cllr George updated members on progress of the Arts Trail project and reported on decisions made by the Projects Committee at its meeting on 21st May, as follows:

- Willow Pond Saw Mill is to deliver the oak wood to Bartholomew Close Open Area (Bartholomew) for the artist Natasha Houseago. Also quoted £690 to install concrete base. The Projects Committee agreed to instruct them ASAP.
- Cllr Barker has been to see Christopher Townsend and given him a deadline of 12th October.
- Cllr Varnom is proceeding well with mosaic planters.
- Leaflets to be designed after the Art Trail is open to allow for photos of artwork.
- It is suggested that the cost of maintenance of the Art Trail be met from the precept / annual budget (to be decided by full council in due course).
- Cllr Barker to co-ordinate installation of the sensory garden.
- Cllr Duthie has updated the budget sheet - circulated.
- Sensory garden possibly named Queen Elizabeth or King Charles or no name.
- Cllr Duthie to provide OG Stonemasonry with Pam Ayres poem and get timescales.
- Cllr Duthie has accepted a quote from Martin Whittle (excluding Bartholomew) and provisionally booked us in for this summer subject to paving stones.

Cllr George further reported that the wooden totem poles at Bartholomew were being installed on 25th June.

Cllr Duthie advised members that the project was on budget, save for the sensory garden.

Cllr Varnom queried the budget for the mosaic planters and mentioned a shortfall. Cllr Duthie assured her this was not the case.

Cllr George is reviewing potential for grant funding from TOE and other sources. She is hoping to secure funding of up to £1k for planting.

f) **Nature Plan**

Cllr George reported that Himalayan balsam had been removed at Bartholomew. Himalayan balsam's botanical name is *Impatiens glandulifera* (its other common names include Indian balsam, policeman's helmet, ornamental jewelweed and touch-me-not). It is a tall-growing annual and spreads by seed. Himalayan balsam is an invasive non-native plant listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is deemed a Species of Special Concern. It is illegal to cause Himalayan balsam to spread, and there are restrictions on growing, cultivating, selling and transporting it. Himalayan balsam can be controlled with non-chemical methods.

Cllr Barker reported that further damage to the grass verge in Starnham Road had been caused by a vehicle being driven over it. Councillors reiterated the need to source and place boulders / rocks on the edge of the land to physically prevent this happening again. Cllr Duthie reported he had previously given Cllr George the contact details for Smiths of Bletchington and Cllr George agreed to follow this up to see if the company was willing to donate some boulders / rocks for this purpose.

g) **2024-25 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)**

The Clerk reported he had received requests for certain documentation and further information from the Internal Auditor and Cllr Duthie and Cllr Almgill agreed to assist the Clerk in complying with these requests. Cllr Almgill assured the Clerk that the council's use of the subscription service, Scribe meant that the council was in a better position than in previous years. AGAR discussed. Cllr Duthie proposed and Cllr Almgill seconded and the council unanimously **RESOLVED** to: (1) receive and note the Internal Auditors report, (2) approve the AGAR annual governance statement (section 1), and (3) approve the AGAR accounting statements (section 2).

h) **Insurance Renewal**

Councillors noted the Clerk's report set out in the Briefing Pack. The Clerk advised a 1-year renewal at a premium (including IPT and all fees) for the year of £2,196.88. This is less than last year's premium as the sports pavilion is now covered by a separate policy paid for by the sports

club. Cllr Duthie proposed and Cllr Barker seconded and the council unanimously **RESOLVED** to instruct the Clerk to accept the recommended renewal quote from Hiscox Insurance Company Limited for the period from 1st June 2025 to 31st May 2026.

i) **Village Event Committee**

Cllr Barker reported that the village event to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day had been a great success and had been very well supported by the village. Highlights included an appearance and a speech from the Prime Minister of the day, Winston Churchill. A donation of £504.25 was made to the Royal British Legion from the sale of tea and cakes at the event. The pork rolls, which were keenly priced to make it affordable for families, sold out within 1 hour and 10 minutes! Cllr Barker asked that the council formally record its appreciation to everybody involved for their tremendous efforts in making the day so special and memorable.

Cllr George proposed and Cllr Barker seconded and councillors unanimously approved the following payments be made from the cost centre, Payments Celebration Group:

Nicholas Gill - VE Day Songs at the Piano (8/5/25) - £100

J A Shackell - Installation of new Community Events store at Glebelands playing field and Electric supply for VE80 Day event - £184.91

Cllr George reported that she had paid in the following amounts to the Unity Trust Bank Current T1 account for credit to cost centre, Payments Celebration Group, on the dates shown:

9 May 2025 - £163.23 (pork rolls)

13 May 2025 - £258.00 (VE Day)

74.25 New Business

a) **Parish Boundaries**

Cllr Duthie stated he would like to affix physical markers (signs) at the four entrances to the parish with the legend 'Welcome to the Parish of Ducklington' or similar. The Clerk was instructed to investigate costs and permissions needed and to report back in due course. The general opinion was that this was a good idea and would help strengthen the identity of the parish and potentially help ward off any changes to our boundaries.

b) **Defibrillators - Responsibilities**

Cllr Barker asked whether the two defibrillators in the village were regularly checked for battery power etc and who performs this task and how often?. The Clerk advised that the former parish councillor, Edward Todd voluntarily undertook the role. The batteries were replaced last year.

The Clerk has recently received an email from a charity that offers "some friendly support regarding community defibrillators.". The email states that many parish councils installed their defibrillators some years ago, and if the device is now over 10 years old it may be out of

manufacturer warranty. Most defibrillators come with a warranty of around 8–10 years from the manufacturer, after which manufacturers may no longer support them with parts or servicing. While the unit may still appear in working order, it might not operate reliably in an emergency, which is obviously something we all want to avoid.

The charity (AEDdonate) can offer the following services:

- Friendly advice on the age and status of your defibrillator
- Guidance on replacing older or out of warranty devices, where needed
- Access to maintenance plans to help keep your equipment in good working order
- Support with sourcing consumables such as pads and batteries
- Assistance with community fundraising or part-funding, if budget is a concern

There is absolutely no obligation. They are simply keen to support parish councils in keeping their defibrillators safe, reliable, and ready to use when needed most.

Cllr Thomas Ashby (OCC), who remained at the meeting as an observer, mentioned that he believed the British Heart Foundation offered grants and / or other financial incentives relating to provision of community defibrillators. Cllr Duthie thought this may be of interest to Ducklington and Hardwick Village Hall Committee who have previously expressed a desire to install a defibrillator at the Village Hall.

c) **MUGA - Usage Policy**

The Clerk reported that the parish council can charge for the use of the MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) as it is considered to be a discretionary service related to a specific statutory function. The parish council has a statutory function to provide a wide range of recreational facilities for the community - Section 19, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976).

Parish councils are allowed to charge for discretionary services related to specific statutory functions. The power to charge for discretionary services is set out in Section 93, Local Government Act 2003 - this gives local authorities the power to charge for services which they have a power, but not a duty to provide.

The level of income is restricted to the amount it costs to provide the services. However, local authorities are not constrained as to how they calculate costs, so they can include the full cost of all aspects of service provision. This means that they can take the opportunity to invest in the infrastructure for services and recover the costs through charging.

Differential charging is permitted, so local authorities can use the power to bring in income from those who it believes are in the best position to pay, whilst providing services at a lower cost or no cost to people who need the services, but are not so well placed to pay for them.

This allows parish councils to recover some of the costs associated with maintaining the MUGA, such as repairs, upkeep of the surface, and lighting if floodlights are used. Parish councils are

able to set fees for using the MUGA, including floodlights, and even offer different rates for adults and school children / youths, team and individual bookings. Fees may be charged for booking a MUGA for specific sessions or events, either for informal use or for organised activities like sports sessions.

Some parish councils charge hourly rates for MUGA use, with different rates for adults and youths, and additional fees for floodlights. They might also offer block bookings or regular booking options by the hour, while others may offer block bookings with different rates for different user groups. Some parish councils emphasise the importance of the MUGA as a community space and may offer free or reduced rates for certain groups, such as school children.

Many parish councils have specific terms and conditions for hiring the MUGA, including payment methods, public liability insurance requirements for groups, cancellation policies, and responsibilities for leaving the area clean etc.

After a discussion it was decided to continue the current practices, but in the future to consider requests from non-village organisations to use the MUGA with floodlights and to charge a fee of £20.00 per hour. Regular block bookings will also be considered if they do not interfere with existing users.

75.25 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) as he is on holiday.

Regarding the repaired picnic bench the Clerk had previously asked councillors whether they wanted John to stain the new wood - to be followed up.

There was no update from Cllr Duthie regarding the damaged meter box door - to be followed up.

The Clerk reported that the annual inspection by RoSPA will be carried out in July, or possibly in August if delayed for any reason.

b) MUGA - Floodlit Use

Cllr George agreed to draft a policy for use and fees to be charged to non village organisations.

c) CCTV - Camera Replacement

The Clerk advised members he has been told an order had been placed and we are waiting for a date.

d) **Litter Picker's Report**

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

e) **Village Litterpicking and Planting Workgroup**

Nothing further to report, other than the group is now to be called 'Wild Ducks'.

f) **Sports Field**

Nothing to report. The Clerk has been told the beer festival was very well supported and a great success! The Clerk understands the marquee will be taken down in the next few days.

g) **Allotments**

Cllr Dunsdon reported there have been more thefts at the allotments, including a strimmer taken from a locked shed. There followed a discussion on what if anything could be done to prevent incidents like this in the future. It was suggested that the Clerk contact the Rural Crime Team: <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/rc/rural-crime/>

Cllr Almgill suggested that the council acquire and install motion activated trail cameras on the site.

Cllr Almgill reported that his work on accurate mapping of each plot and linking the same to the name, address and email of each plotholder, was well advanced and would be complete before the next meeting. This will enable the Clerk to raise invoices for the overdue 2024-25 allotment rents.

76.25 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 31 May 2025) and in the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access account is £20,204.77 (as at 31 May 2025).]

Debts due to Council

The Clerk reported he had received a payment of £217.00 from the Treasurer of Creditor 1 on 30 May 2025 to reduce the outstanding balance to £3,472.00.

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.

77.25 Other comments/Matters for next Agenda

- a) Cllr George reported that she has devised an Expenses Reimbursement Form for use when money is requested as expenses from people who help at the village events and there is no receipt.
- b) Cllr George confirmed she will attend the next OALC Councillor Forum on Tuesday, 10th June at 10:00am – please note new joining details below (MS Teams):
[Join the meeting now](#)
Meeting ID: 326 216 240 730 0
Passcode: yn9Ys7oh
- c) Cllr Lishman advised he will attend the forthcoming meeting of Oxfordshire Parish Transport Representatives (PTR) on date t.b.c. Meetings are held three times a year and provide an opportunity for county council officers to keep PTRs up to date on issues and also allow officers to gain feedback from PTRs about issues in their area.

Meetings are held virtually via Microsoft Teams. In line with the county council's desire to reduce travel for meetings. It is unlikely that this approach will change in the near future.

The meetings include updates on local bus services, community transport and school transport provision, with usually two presentations from internal or external invitees.

The main meeting is followed by a specific surgery-style session where PTRs can raise issues related to their individual parishes.

- d) In answer to a question from Cllr Dunsdon, Cllr Duthie confirmed that the Church donated monies received from funeral expenses to the Church Fabric Fund
- e) Cllr Duthie asked that an item be included on the next agenda concerning the provision of an outside socket at the Village Hall.
- f) The Clerk reported he had received a quote from D&S Garden Services for charging and replacing the battery in the SID on A415 from 1st June 2025 - 1st June 2026, in the sum of [REDACTED], which equates to [REDACTED] per month, so roughly [REDACTED] per week. This is [REDACTED] what he charged us last year, but to be fair to Darren I think he was perhaps undercharging. I doubt we will find anyone else to do the job for less. The Clerk will include this as an item on the next agenda with a recommendation that the council accept the quotation and issue a purchase order accordingly.
- g) Cllr Almgill offered to provide training on storing and sharing files in Google Drive to all councillors, when time permits.

78.25 Date of Next Meeting: Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday, 2 July 2025 - 7.30 pm, Lilac Room, Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

Signeddated.....2025
Chairman