

MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF DUCKLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 1 July 2026 at 7.30 pm in the Main Hall, The Village Hall

Thom Rhodes, Clerk and Proper Officer

MINUTES**Members Present:**

Cllr. David Duthie (Chair)

Cllr. Jo George

Cllr. Matthew Barker

Cllr. John Dunsdon

Cllr. Angela Dowley

Cllr. Paul Lishman

Cllr. Peter Almgill

Also in Attendance:

Thom Rhodes (Clerk and RFO)

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. John Smyth, Cllr. Sarah Varnom, Cllr. Liam Mackenzie (West Oxfordshire District), and Cllr. Thomas Ashby (Oxfordshire County).

Public Participation

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to address the Council. *No members of the public were present.*

87.26 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 3 June 2026 were proposed by Cllr. Barker and seconded by Cllr. Duthie. The Minutes were approved as a correct record. It was noted that, going forward, the minutes of the previous meeting will be included within the briefing pack and agenda to ensure members have clearer access to the relevant documents ahead of each meeting.

88.26 County and District Council Matters**County Councillor Report – Cllr. Thomas Ashby**

No report was received from Cllr. Ashby this month.

District Councillor Report – Cllr. Liam Mackenzie

Cllr. Mackenzie sent his apologies and circulated a written District Councillor's report for July 2026, the key points of which were noted:

Land East of Witney Road (The Moors) (24/02878/RES): Cllr. Mackenzie clarified that the assessment recently submitted by the developer and under review by the Environment Agency is a new Hydraulic Modelling Assessment, not a Flood Risk Assessment as previously reported. The Environment Agency has identified missing files and is awaiting further submission by the developer. Oliver at the Environment Agency has asked the modelling team whether the Gill Mill Quarry works should be included in the flood model. If the new modelling matches the original Flood Risk Assessment, the developer may not be required to submit a further assessment.

Local Plan 2043: The latest version of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan has been released for further public consultation. Members were advised that any feedback should be supported by evidence, with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Positively, officers have confirmed that the Moors development is no longer included in the planned housing numbers in the Local Plan, strengthening the argument that the development is unnecessary, particularly given its location in a flood risk area.

21 Mill Meadow (26/00508/HHD) and Oxlease Barn, Course Hill Lane (26/00750/HHD): Both applications for garage extension/conversion have been approved.

Leisure and Tourism: Cllr. Mackenzie will attend an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting with GLL (Better) in September and has offered to raise any questions on behalf of the Parish Council.

Action: *Members to forward any questions for GLL (Better) to Cllr. Mackenzie ahead of the September Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. (All Members)*

It was noted that some members had been unable to open Cllr. Mackenzie's report owing to a file-format issue, possibly related to the operating system. The Clerk agreed to convert the report to Word or PDF and recirculate it.

Action: *Clerk to convert Cllr. Mackenzie's report to an accessible format (Word/PDF) and recirculate to members. (Clerk)*

89.26 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made in respect of items on the agenda.

90.26 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings and Standing Items

15.1 Village Hall

It was confirmed that the Village Hall AGM is booked for September 2026. No further matters to report.

15.2 CCTV Camera Log

Nothing to report.

15.3 Village Newsletter

The next newsletter deadline is 15 July 2026 (brought forward owing to absence; date to be confirmed with EB). It was agreed to move to colour for this issue, published online only. The Council to inform EB, and Cllr. Duthie to speak to printers.

Action: *Clerk to inform EB of the move to online colour for this issue; Cllr. Duthie to speak to the printers. (Clerk / Cllr. Duthie)*

15.4 Projects Committee

The Art Trail website is now live and the leaflet has been proofread and amended; the invoice has been received. Printing costs are to be investigated for runs of 200 to 500 copies. Seven QR-code plaques are to be produced, with Cllr. Barker to follow up. The Art Trail will be launched on Saturday 19 September 2026 with a ribbon-cutting at the Sensory Garden. The participating artists, two WODC representatives, and Martin Whittle (who carried out the hard landscaping) are to be invited to the launch, and grass cutting is to be arranged in August ahead of the day.

In respect of the Sensory Garden, the Council queried whether the Thames Water supply could be met from the Sensory Garden budget (see item 16.3); Cllr. Duthie to update the spreadsheet of costs. The garden is currently under its projected spend. A budget of £150 for approximately 40 plant labels for the planters was approved. Future projects discussed included the play park, with the Clerk to chase the solar farm monies, and a secondary plan for utilising the sports and recreation allocation should it be required (circa £23,000), to be reviewed at year end.

Action: *Cllr. Barker to follow up production of the seven QR-code plaques. (Cllr. Barker)*

Action: *Cllr. George to invite the participating artists, two WODC representatives, and Martin Whittle to the Art Trail launch. (Cllr. George)*

Action: *Clerk to arrange grass cutting at the Sensory Garden in August ahead of the launch. (Clerk)*

Action: *Cllr. Duthie to update the spreadsheet of Sensory Garden costs. (Cllr. Duthie)*

Action: Clerk to follow-up the solar farm monies in respect of playground funding. (Clerk)

15.5 Nature Plan / Wild Ducks

Nothing to report.

15.6 Village Pond

Nothing further to report. The newly planted tree is doing well and has attracted very positive comments, as has the memorial bench. The PVC tree irrigation tube will need to be replaced in approximately a year.

15.7 Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr. Lishman reported that Community First has made good progress and that policies are being worked on. The plan is expected to be consulted upon around 5 September 2026, with local plan feedback to be submitted to WODC. The latest version is to be circulated to councillors before the September meeting for final comments. It was agreed to use the Art Trail launch on 19 September 2026 as a public consultation opportunity, with a gazebo set up to gather feedback. No planning applications required consideration this month.

Action: Cllr. Lishman to circulate the latest Neighbourhood Plan to all councillors before the September meeting. (Cllr. Lishman)

91.26 New Business

16.1 New Village Defibrillator

Following confirmation that the defibrillator housing at the Village Hall is empty, Members unanimously approved the purchase of a new defibrillator (estimated at approximately £1,500 plus VAT), together with associated costs, taking into account the required siting and design. Assistance with the architectural drawings needed for the planning application is to be sought (from SD GDPR), and Cllr. Varnom is to be kept informed. Cllr. Lishman is content to submit the planning application once the drawings are available.

Action: Assistance with the architectural drawings for the planning application to be sought (from SD); Cllr. Varnom to be kept informed; Cllr. Lishman to submit the planning application once the drawings are available. (Clerk / Cllr. Lishman)

Resolved: The purchase of a new defibrillator and associated installation costs was approved.

16.2 Playground Equipment Removal – Contractor Quotes

Three quotes were received for removal of the condemned play equipment: £3,245 plus VAT, £3,700 plus VAT, and £5,392 plus VAT (Sovereign). It was proposed by Cllr. Duthie, and agreed by all, to defer removal so as not to disrupt the school summer holidays, during which the slide will remain in use. As an interim measure to eliminate the trip hazard, sand is

to be used to address the gap in the matting. It was noted that, although hazard tape has been applied to the slide, it continues to fall down. A RoSPA inspection is due. Cllr. Duthie to ask Darren to carry out the interim works.

Action: *Cllr. Duthie to ask Darren to fill the matting gap with sand to mitigate the trip hazard. (Cllr. Duthie)*

Action: *Clerk to obtain updated equipment quotes (including from Hags) and review placement of any new scheme. (Clerk)*

16.3 Water Supply – Sensory Garden (Thames Water)

It was agreed to proceed with the Thames Water application and to make the required payment of £420 so the project can move forward. The precise tap location and design requirements are to be finalised on site before submission; Cllr. Barker, and Clerk to attend.

Action: *Cllr. Barker and the Clerk to attend the on-site visit to finalise the tap location and design, after which the Clerk to submit the application and the £420 payment to Thames Water. (Cllr. Barker / Clerk)*

Resolved: Expenditure of £420 to Thames Water was approved.

16.4 DSC S106 Funding – Sports Pavilion

The Section 106 allocation for sports and recreation stands at circa £27,347 and is due to expire on 28 December 2028. The sports club is seeking assistance with a VAT shortfall on its pavilion project. As per the lease clauses, the agreed terms must be met before the works can proceed, which will incur professional costs (surveyor, structural engineer, solicitor). The total project cost is understood to be in the region of £48,000 plus VAT. It was agreed that the Council will assess the available methods of supporting the shortfall, inclusive of VAT.

Cllr. Duthie proposed that the Council might offer an interest-free loan over a period of approximately five years. Cllr. George expressed the view that a loan should be a lender-of-last-resort option, only once all other funding routes are exhausted. Cllr. Dunsdon cautioned that the Council should not waive standard lease requirements and highlighted the risk of setting a precedent. It was agreed that the Clerk would re-review the lease, seek solicitor advice (via Steve), and confirm with Nicola Mellings (WODC) that all other funding options - including FCC (out of radius) and a possible FA grant - have been exhausted before any loan is considered, as per local government financial regulation(s).

Action: *Clerk to re-review the lease, seek solicitor advice, and obtain confirmation from Nicola Mellings (WODC) that all other funding options are exhausted so that criteria for the loan opportunity is met. (Clerk)*

16.5 Water Feed for Garden

This item was resolved (as of 16.3), but will be kept on the agenda(s) until complete.

16.6 Winter Preparedness 2026/27

The grit bins are to be checked; it is likely that no additional grit will be required. The Clerk to check the salt bins.

Action: *Clerk to check the salt bins ahead of winter. (Clerk)*

92.26 Playgrounds, Cemetery, Litter, Open Spaces, Sports Pavilion, Sports Field and Allotments

Playgrounds

Covered under item 16.2. New equipment quotes to be obtained (including from Hags), and placement of any new scheme to be reconsidered.

Cemetery Management

The Scribe cemetery management software has been approved and is expected to be accessible to councillors shortly, with integrated automated invoicing and dashboard reporting.

Litter Picker's Report

Litter Picker's report was noted, and gratefully received by the Council.

Allotments

There remains unresolved confusion with Thames Water over the allotment water meters. The Council believes there is a single meter serving the allotments, located in the bushes near the Lidl entrance; Thames Water (TWA) now believes there are two. Cllr. Dunsdon noted that the allotment-holders turn the supply off over the winter months when it is not required.

One vacant plot has been filled. The tenant of an unmaintained plot (details withheld) has been chased and some community clearance has taken place; a secondary and final chase is to be issued, with the agreement to be rescinded in the event of no response. The Clerk to resend the details of prospective tenants to Cllr. Dunsdon due to technical issue.

Action: *Clerk to issue follow-ups to the tenant of the unmaintained plot and resend prospective-tenant details to Cllr. Dunsdon. (Clerk)*

Sports Field – Marquees

The Council considered a request from Ducklington Sports Club to leave the marquees in place for the World Cup and, subsequently, for the Flower Show.

Resolved: The request from Ducklington Sports Club to retain the marquees for the World Cup and, subsequently, the Flower Show was approved.

93.26 Finance

18.1 Account Balances / Bank Reconciliation / Debts

The internal auditor, Stephanie Zollman, reported that the books reconciled and that variances were within acceptable limits. The Council acknowledges the report again and that the AGAR has already been submitted by the deadline. The transition of Unity Trust Bank access from the former Clerk remains pending, but expected to be actioned the coming week.

Action: Clerk to complete the Unity Trust Bank access transition from the former Clerk. (Clerk)

18.2 Invoices for Payment

The payments schedule circulated with the briefing pack was reviewed and approved, including the Art Trail invoice of £217.50 (to JG), added to the schedule below, with the note that full priced quotes should be secured before future work. The Peak Playgrounds quotation was deferred (see item 16.2).

Supplier	Description	Invoice No.	Date
D&S Garden Services	Churchyard cutting Jun 2026	SI-1517	19/06/2026
D&S Garden Services	Mowing/trimming large areas Jun 2026	SI-1518	19/06/2026
D&S Garden Services	A415 sign battery change & annual charge	SI-1528	23/06/2026
Castle Water	Allotments water supply (Jun 2026)	10010403930	10/06/2026
Broadsword Security	CCTV annual maintenance 08/07/26–07/07/27	1086162	08/06/2026
MPW Construction Groundwork Ltd	Concrete base for bench (previously approved)	INV-0249	10/06/2026
Westcotec Limited	20MPH speed sign, solar kit & sign relocation – ratified (item 18.3)	17969	23/06/2026
Cllr S.J. Varnom (Expense)	Planter bedding plants	—	Jun 2026
Cllr M. Barker (Expense)	Achillea plants, sensory garden	Exp receipt	14/06/2026
Stephanie Zollman	Internal audit 2025/26	—	27/06/2026
Thom Rhodes	Wages (Month 3, Jul 2026)	Payslip	03/07/2026
HMRC	PAYE Period 1 (Apr–May 2026)	—	—
HMRC	PAYE Period 3 (Jun–Jul 2026)	—	—
Peak Playgrounds Ltd	Removal & disposal of climbing frame & mats – DEFERRED (item 16.2)	Peak-10667	26/06/2026
Thames Water	Water connection application fee – Sensory Garden (approved, item 16.3)	DS2041700	—
RoSPA	Annual playground inspections x2 (invoices pending)	pending	Jul 2026
JG (Art Trail)	Art Trail leaflet & website	—	Jul 2026

	design (approved at meeting)		
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Resolved: The payments schedule set out above was approved for payment, with the exception of any items deferred (namely the Peak Playgrounds quotation at item 16.2).

18.3 Westcotec Ltd – Ratification of Payment (Invoice 17969)

The Council ratified the expenditure to Westcotec Ltd (Invoice 17969) for the 20MPH speed sign, solar kit and sign relocation.

94.26 AGAR 2025/26 – Internal Audit Report and Signing

The internal audit report for 2025/26 was noted; the outcome was positive, with the books reconciling and no material issues. The AGAR was acknowledged as submitted, and the Notice of Public Rights has already been posted. The internal auditor's fee was approved. The Council also approved the Clerk's professional training (ILCA, FILCA and SILCA) to strengthen organisational competence.

Resolved: The internal audit report was noted; the auditor's fee and the Clerk's ILCA/FILCA/SILCA training were approved.

95.26 Other Comments and Matters for Next Agenda

The following matters were raised for noting and/or future agendas:

Local Plan: The Local Plan is to be ratified imminently, with a summer release.

Gill Mill: Cllr. Ashby to advise the Council on Gill Mill in a future report.

Mill Meadow: Signage indicating no public right of way / private road is understood to relate to public open space and may need to be removed. The Clerk to check the Mill Meadow planning history to establish the public rights over the land and the position regarding the signage. It was noted that, where a sign purporting to withdraw the public's permission to enter land has been erected without legal right to do so, the party responsible (whether a body or an individual) may be acting unlawfully and be held accountable.

General: A query regarding a local premises, raised with Cllr. Lishman by a member of the public, is to be checked, and Cllr. Mackenzie to contact the relevant officer to understand certain planning decisions. A number of estate-agent / UWE boards around the village were noted, including a sign in the car park to be removed. An incident of damage to a residential property in the village was also noted.

Action: Clerk to check the Mill Meadow planning history and report on the public rights and signage position. (Clerk)

Action: Cllr. Ashby to advise the Council on Gill Mill in a future report. (Cllr. Ashby)

Action: Cllr. Mackenzie to contact the relevant officer regarding the planning decisions queried. (Cllr. Mackenzie)

Action: Clerk to arrange removal of the redundant sign in the car park. (Clerk)

96.26 Clerk's Comments

Grass Cutting: Tenders have not yet been sent out. It was agreed to retain the current contractor for the current year, following an expected uplift in pricing, and to send tenders in December for a three-year contract. The Clerk to check the grass-cutting areas (paperwork).

Trees: It was noted that a tree at the cut-through between Lovell Close and Peel Close is subject to a Tree Protection Order and cannot be worked on without prior clearance from the TPO officer, informed by the Council's three-year survey (next due in the coming year). Maintenance of the tree(s) is expected next year as per the TPO Officer and survey. The Clerk to check the tree survey position.

Action: *Clerk to check the grass-cutting areas and tree survey position, and prepare the three-year grass-cutting tender for December. (Clerk)*

97.26 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Ducklington Parish Council will be held on Wednesday 5 August 2026.
The meeting closed at 21:29.

Signed: Date:

(Chair, Ducklington Parish Council)