

EAST HAGBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING DULY CONVENED AND HELD ON THURSDAY 12TH MARCH 2026

1. ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST:

Present were Chairman I. Duff, Vice Chairman P. Dixon, Cllrs R. Jaboor, N. Milner, D. Rickeard and C. Shaikh. District Councillors A-M Simpson and C. Topping joined the start of the meeting and left after item 3. Apologies were received from Cllr C. Gover and County Councillor J. Hope-Smith. In attendance were L. Lloyd (Clerk) Ric Avery (Flood Warden) and 6 members of the public. I. Duff indicated there is 1 vacancy for a parish councillor.

2. PUBLIC FORUM AND QUESTIONS:

MOP1 noted that following a previous Parish Council meeting, no feedback had been provided regarding the possibility of resurfacing Great Mead beyond the recreation ground entrance. D. Rickeard noted that the car park is designated for booked events, resulting in ad-hoc users parking in the layby and occasionally further along Great Mead, particularly during football matches when the car park is full. A possible highways encroachment at 6 Great Mead was also reported. Council agreed to investigate both matters. Ric Avery queried progress on the drainage channel blockage following the clearance works along FP19 in January. C. Shaikh confirmed that she has not received an update from Leigh Travers and will follow up directly with OCC. A-M Simpson also offered to follow this up.

Four members of public attended in relation to item 5.n) – Post Office Closure. A draft Parish Council statement was handed out to MOPs on arrival. It was noted that the shop is likely to remain viable without the Post Office in the short term. The closure reasons relate to recent operational issues and reduced income although no figures have been shared with the shop committee. Residents will be encouraged to submit responses to the Post Office. Sally Barksfield will be speaking on Radio Oxford next week and an article in the Herald next has been requested. Support has been confirmed from district and county councillors and Olly Glover MP.

3. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS:

I. Duff confirmed receipt of the County Councillor report (Attachment 1) and District Councillors' report (Attachment 2).

A-M Simpson highlighted SODC's response to the NPPF consultation, the Joint Local Plan progressing towards adoption next year and improved accessibility at Earth Trust & Wittenham Clumps. There are a number of grant schemes available - C. Topping confirmed that the Capital Grants Scheme reopens on 1st June to fund buildings and facilities.

C. Topping also spoke on the possible re-emergence of the Grainger/Nurton development proposal (c.750 homes in the fields to the east of New Road). Cathie Scotting (now Head of Major Applications, and involved with the previous application for this location) confirmed that there has been no pre-application made at this stage but it is possible that the planning application may be submitted without pre-advice. Key concerns include the scale of the development and access arrangements.

4. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 12TH FEBRUARY 2026:

Following an amendment from 6-seater to 4-seater benches under item 6.e), the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 12th February 2026 were approved by Council and signed by I. Duff.

5. ITEMS FOR DECISION:

- a) **Insurance Renewal: To consider insurance quotes received ahead of renewal on 1st April:** Decision: Councillors reviewed the Clerk's summary of 3 insurance quotations and resolved to renew with Clear Councils on a 3-year FRA at a cost of £1684.11.
- b) **Membership Renewals:**
 - i) **To approve the council's membership of OALC for the year 2026-27 at a cost of £267.45 (+ VAT):** Decision: Councillors approved the expenditure.
 - ii) **To approve the clerk's membership of SLCC for the year 2026-27 at a cost of £200 (+VAT):** Decision: Councillors approved the expenditure.
 - iii) **To consider renewal of the council's CFO membership for 2026-27 at a cost of £70.00:** Decision: Councillors approved the expenditure.
- c) **To note the renewal of the council's ICO membership at a cost of £47.00 (DD instruction):** Decision: Councillors approved the expenditure.
- d) **Training Courses: To approve Breakthrough Communications Courses x 3: Boosting Your Council's Identity, Communicating with Your Community Parts 1 & 2 – N. Milner to attend at a cost of £35.00 (+VAT) per course:** Decision: Councillors approved the expenditure.
- e) **Grass Cutting: To confirm renewal of the existing contract with BGG for 2026-27:** Decision: Councillors confirmed the renewal of the grass cutting contract with BGG for 2026-27. Members noted that BGG's pricing remains competitive and BGG's familiarity with the details of the current grass cutting schedule is beneficial.

The council is therefore satisfied that the contract continues to represent good value for money without the need to seek 3 quotes.

- f) **Dog and General Waste Bin Collection: To confirm renewal of the council's contract with Shield Maintenance Ltd for 2026-27:** Decision: Councillors confirmed the renewal of the Dog and General Waste Bin collection contract with Shield Maintenance, noting that the contract is for a 24-month period until end March 2028. Members noted that the contractor's pricing remains competitive, and both the collection service and communications remain good. The council is therefore satisfied that the contract continues to represent good value for money without the need to seek 3 quotes.
- g) **Local Government Reorganisation Consultation: To consider the Parish Council's response:** I. Duff noted that the Parish Council has previously written a letter to SODC supporting the Two Councils proposal. Decision: Councillors agreed to support the two unitary proposal as its preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire, and to respond to the Government consultation to give reasons why we are strongly supporting the two unitary proposal as our preferred option, using the initial support letter as a starting point. Councillors were encouraged to respond to the Government consultation in their role as a Parish Councillors. It was also agreed to send the Parish Council's response to OALC to help shape their own response to the consultation.
- h) **ICO Model Publication Scheme: Review and adoption:** Decision: Councillors reviewed and approved the updated publication scheme.
- i) **Data Protection and Information Governance Policy: Review and adoption:** Decision: Councillors reviewed and approved the policy. The Clerk noted that the council's existing IT Policy will be updated to complement the Data Protection Policy.
- j) **Asset Register additions:**
- i) **Transfer of additional land forming part of the Parish Council owned village car park - June 2025:** Decision: Councillors approved the update to reflect the transfer of 0.06ha of additional land, recorded at a nominal value of £1.
- ii) **Cemetery Bench (75% of total cost, in line with joint ownership arrangements with West Hagbourne Parish Council) - September 2025:** Decision: Councillors approved the addition of the bench, at a cost of £302.10 for the 75% share.
- k) **Pavilion Car Park next steps:**
- i) **To approve the drawings and specification prepared by Glanville Group and agree to proceed to tender for the car park resurfacing works:** D. Rickeard confirmed that the final drawings and specification package have been reviewed and proposed that councillors approve the spec and to proceed to tender. Decision: Councillors approved the drawings and specification and resolved to proceed to tender.
- ii) **To agree the approach for inviting tenders for the works:** Councillors noted that Glanville had undertaken preliminary market engagement and identified contractors with the capacity and interest to undertake the works. It was resolved that the three contractors identified through this process be invited to submit tenders based on the approved specification and tender documentation. Councillors confirmed that Glanville will issue the tender documentation and respond to contractor queries ahead of the submission deadline. Tenders will be sent to a dedicated parish council email address, opened after the deadline and evaluated in accordance with Financial Regulations.
- iii) **To agree to instruct Glanville Group to undertake Phase 3 – Tender Evaluation:** Decision: Councillors approved the expenditure, noting that the budget figure within Glanville's fee proposal for this phase is £850.00.
- l) **Installation of picnic benches at the recreation ground:**
- i) **To agree the location for the two benches:** Decision: Councillors agreed to site the benches between the playground and the slide mound, taking care to ensure access to the playground and not encroach too close towards the football pitch.
- ii) **To consider bench options and select the preferred model:** Decision: Councillors considered the three suggested bench options and agreed to purchase two 4-seater benches from Fenton Timber at a cost of £389.90 +VAT (incl delivery)
- iii) **To consider the quotation for £539.96 to install the selected benches and decide whether to instruct Noel Carter to complete the works:** Decision: Councillors agreed to instruct Noel Carter to complete the bench installation. The Clerk noted that three quotations were obtained for similar works in July 2025 with Noel Carter appointed following consideration of cost and recommendation. Given the value of the current installation (£339.96 for fixings and £200 for labour) and the recent competitive process, councillors are satisfied that value for money is demonstrated and that further quotations were not required.
- iv) **To note receipt of written confirmation of funding from the Oxfordshire County Council Councillor Priority Fund for the picnic bench project and to agree to formally accept the grant, subject to receipt of the formal award letter:** Councillors noted written confirmation of funding from and resolved to formally accept the grant, subject to receipt of the formal award letter. Thanks were extended to J. Hope-Smith for supporting the project.
- m) **Facebook Page: To consider launching a Parish Council Facebook page and if agreed, appoint an administrator:** N. Milner proposed that the Parish Council create a Facebook page separate to the East Hagbourne Villagers Group, with the intention to use it as a digital noticeboard, for information and updates from the Parish Council, and sharing information from bodies such as SODC and OCC. Decision: Councillors

agreed to set up a Parish Council Facebook page, and that N. Milner should be appointed as administrator to work closely with the Clerk.

- n) **East Hagbourne Post Office Closure: To note the current closure of the post office and consider any actions the Parish Council may take to respond to the situation:** I. Duff introduced the topic for councillor discussion, following on from the discussion in the public forum. The proposed draft statement was very well received, with a couple of tweaks to wording for the final submission. The draft has also been sent to Olly Glover MP. C. Shaikh asked whether a face-to-face meeting might be possible to state our case. Community Shop volunteers noted that the Post Office personnel dealing with the process are not inclined towards an in-person meeting. The financial review used for the basis of the decision has not been shared and an FOI request takes 20 days so is beyond the 1st April deadline. Justification is needed as to why the decision has been made, and whether it is based on recent data only. Parish, District, County and MP area all supportive of challenging the decision. Councillors felt strongly that justification should be requested as a supplementary email from the Parish Council. The Minister for the Post Office, Blair McDougal, stated in his Green Paper (February 2026) "protecting branches has always been our priority" and it was agreed that C. Shaikh would send additional text to incorporate this into the original draft before sending.
- o) **To consider planning applications received since the last meeting:**
- P26/S0307/HH 43 New Road, East Hagbourne - Proposed double storey side and rear extension, the insertion of a new dormer window, rooflight and changes to the fenestration:** Councillors approved the circulated response, noting that the extension is potentially overbearing leading to overlooking and loss of light.
- P26/S0348/HH 7 The Crescent, East Hagbourne - Erection of a two-storey side and rear extensions. Removal of chimney:** Councillors agreed a response of No Objection.
- P26/S0247/S73 Lower Cross Farm, East Hagbourne - Discharge of conditions 4 (culverting and surface water drainage scheme) and 6 (lighting strategy for bats) on application ref P24/S1468/FUL (Demolition of existing barn and outbuildings and creation of new self-build dwelling):** Councillors approved the circulated response asking that the District Council ensures that the revised drainage plan is fully adequate given the proximity of the development to a flood plain. The Parish Council does not itself have any objection to this plan.
- P26/S0001/HH Willowbrae Barn, Main Road, East Hagbourne – 1st Amendment to plans for four bay open-sided car port:** Councillors approved the circulated response which notes that the revised plan does not include measurements but hopes that the planning officers will ensure that concerns over the original plan will be met by the revised plan.

Planning applications received after the posting of the agenda may also be considered at the meeting

6. ITEMS FOR REPORT:

- a) **Recreation Ground and Pavilion:** D. Rickeard confirmed that the annual fire alarm check and the 10-year electric check will both be completed on Monday.
- b) **Cemetery Committee:** P. Dixon reported that the current proposal is to complete the first part of the drainage scheme with an enlarged soakaway – costs to amend Option 1 are now being investigated. The Clerk will also continue to try and get permissions from OCC/RET. R. Jaboor confirmed he will be the Cemetery Committee Chair for 2026-27.
- c) **Employment Committee:** Nothing to report.
- d) **Butts Piece Allotments:** Nothing to report.
- e) **Community Speedwatch and Traffic Monitoring:** I. Duff confirmed that a meeting with J. Beale of OCC to discuss VAR locations has been arranged for 23 March.
- f) **Public Art Project:** The Clerk confirmed that the S106 application for the Sculpture piece has been submitted. TMS Local Handyman has confirmed his intention to complete the bus shelter renovations starting the week after Easter.
- g) **Town and Parish Council Planning Training sessions:** I. Duff and P. Dixon attended planning training: I. Duff circulated a report on his session ahead of the meeting, noting that it was set up as small group discussions with representatives from each of the following 5 departments:
- Heritage: There are around 5,000 listed buildings and 120 conservation areas in Oxfordshire
 - Commenting on Planning Applications: Non-material comments are essentially ignored, but any material considerations are taken seriously
 - Ecology and Trees: There are around 1,700 TPOs and although all works within conservation areas must be notified, they can only be refused if a TPO is placed on the tree
 - Neighbourhood Planning: The importance of Neighbourhood Plans is likely to increase with the introduction of Unitary Councils. P. Dixon noted that at his session, the advice for the EH Neighbourhood plan is to wait until the end of the year and update after the new NPPF.
 - Enforcement: A team of 10, with 400 open investigations and currently serving 20-30 notices, mostly on travellers. Confusion over permitted development causes many retrospective planning applications. The team can enforce clearing up of untidy sites and intervene in cases of high hedges.

h) Matters raised at the Chairman’s Surgery and OALC Councillor’s Forum: I. Duff had circulated a report to ahead of the meeting Key points included:

- Concerns that the works to the footpath and fields by Park Road might indicate potential future planning applications.
- Concern over the planning application for 89 New Road.
- Parsonage Lane – potential need to increase flow capacity under the bridge if the footpath level is raised.
- Blocked surface drains on Main Road near the Fleur.
- Footpath 8 (Bakers Lane to The Croft) – offers of volunteer support for surface improvements
- Enquiries about the use of AI in council business
- Reports of litter on approaches to the village
- Ongoing concern over potholes and complaints about the Thames Water closure on New Road.

Alternative communication methods were briefly discussed by councillors, including encouragement for verbal comments to be subsequently made to the Council through formal means such as emailing the Clerk as a formal record.

7. CORRESPONDENCE:

Abandoned vehicle reported on Main Road, having relocated from St Andrews Crescent – this was reported to both SODC, and Thames Valley Police who were able to authorise its removal.

SODC Deep Cleanse in April – The Clerk invited councillors to consider any areas in the parish to prioritise for the Deep Cleanse.

Several complaints have been received about the patching works along Main Road to Coscote which have caused considerable traffic issues without a formal closure.

R. Jaboor noted the poor traffic management in place at the Fieldside entrance while the footway reconstruction is underway on Blewbury Road - this was reported to Carl Stallwood on Monday and has now been resolved.

8. FINANCE:

a) Expenditure and receipts since the last meeting and account balances:

i) Payments since last meeting: **NB: Payments pending are shown in yellow and are not included in the account balances shown**

| Payee | Item | Auth | Amount | VAT | Total | Date |
|------------------------------|--|--------------|-----------|---------|-----------|------------|
| Nest | Pension Contributions January | DD | £66.55 | £0.00 | £66.55 | 13/02/2026 |
| Shield Maintenance Ltd | INV9853 Dog Bin and General Waste Bin collections January 2026 | CG / DR | £201.49 | £40.30 | £241.79 | 20/02/2026 |
| Dark White Digital | INV002097 Web Hosting February 2026 | CG / DR | £30.00 | £0.00 | £30.00 | 20/02/2026 |
| EHSRC | INV101-25 Community Room Hire 15/01/2026 | CG / DR | £25.00 | £0.00 | £25.00 | 20/02/2026 |
| OALC | INV 6018 Data Protection Part 1 training course (Breakthrough Comms) | CG / DR | £35.00 | £7.00 | £42.00 | 20/02/2026 |
| PATAS | IA/0214/25 Interim Internal Audit 2025-26 | CG / DR | £165.00 | £0.00 | £165.00 | 20/02/2026 |
| Laura Lloyd | Expenses - Google One Storage | CG / DR | £13.33 | £2.66 | £15.99 | 20/02/2026 |
| Grundon Waste Management Ltd | Cemetery Bin Collections January 2025 | DD | £60.34 | £12.07 | £72.41 | 20/02/2026 |
| GeoIntegrity | INV 1660 CBR tests at East Hagbourne Pavilion car park | CG / DR | £1,625.00 | £325.00 | £1,950.00 | 25/02/2026 |
| Laura Lloyd | February Salary + WFH Allowance | CG / DR | £978.44 | £0.00 | £978.44 | 27/02/2026 |
| Unity Trust Bank | Service Charge | Auto Payment | £8.10 | £0.00 | £8.10 | 28/02/2026 |
| Scribe Accounting | INV16681 Accounting Software Monthly Fee March | DD | £35.00 | £7.00 | £42.00 | 02/03/2026 |
| Shield Maintenance Ltd | INV9969 Dog Bin and General Waste Bin collections February 2026 | | £201.49 | £40.30 | £241.79 | |
| Dark White Digital | INV002126 Web Hosting March 2026 | | £30.00 | £0.00 | £30.00 | |
| Dark White Digital | INV002145 Web Accessibility Review (Completed 7 March 2026) | | £168.00 | £0.00 | £168.00 | |
| EHSRC | INV109-25 Community Room Hire 12/02/2026 | | £25.00 | £0.00 | £25.00 | |
| Hagbourne Village Hall | INV1824 Hall and Meeting room hire Q2 Dec 2025 - Feb 2026 | | £26.00 | £0.00 | £26.00 | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|-----------|---------|-----------|--|
| Glanville Consultants | INV51460 Topographical Survey, Underground mapping and Phase 2 of the tender process | | £4,800.00 | £960.00 | £5,760.00 | |
| Laura Lloyd | March Salary + WFH Allowance | | £978.44 | £0.00 | £978.44 | |

ii) Receipts since last meeting:

| From | Item | Amount | Date |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Banbury Memorials | A048 Memorial second inscription | £55.00 | 25/02/2026 |
| Nationwide | Interest February 2026 | £92.22 | 28/02/2026 |
| NatWest Bank | Interest February 2026 | £183.89 | 28/02/2026 |
| Redwood Bank | Interest February 2026 | £237.44 | 28/02/2026 |
| Edward Carter Funeral Directors | C082 Full Burial | £186.00 | 10/03/2026 |
| | Total | £754.55 | |

iii) Transfers since the last meeting:

| From | To | Amount | Date |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------|------------|
| Unity Trust Instant Access Savings | Unity Trust T2 Account (under Clerk's delegated authority) | £3,000.00 | 25/02/2026 |

iv) Accumulated Account Balances (reconciled online 11/03/2026)

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Unity Trust Bank - T1 current account | £4,228.06 |
| Unity Trust Bank - Instant access account | £23,930.20 |
| Redwood Bank - 35 Day Notice Savings Account | £120,000.00 |
| Nationwide - Instant Access Business Savings Account | £83,002.00 |
| Natwest - Liquidity Manager 95 Day Notice Account | £88,314.92 |
| Total | <u>£319,475.18</u> |

v) The Special Project Balances (as of 11/03/2026) are:

| | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| Community Infrastructure Levy Fund | Received 28/04/23 so requires spending by 27/04/28 | £14,728.78 |
| | Received 27/10/23 so requires spending by 26/10/28 | £106,843.63 |
| | Received 26/04/24 so requires spending by 25/04/29 | £4,165.09 |
| | Received 24/10/24 so requires spending by 25/10/29 | £115,173.81 |
| | Received 25/04/25 so requires spending by 24/04/30 | £8,330.18 |
| | Total CIL money | £249,241.49 |
| Community Projects Reserve Fund | | £1,625.00 |
| Planned Development Support Fund | | £5,303.15 |
| Cemetery Fund | | £10,263.11 |
| Climate and Biodiversity Reserve | | £2,500.00 |
| Reactive Works and Emergency Response Reserve | | £4,000.00 |
| Asset Maintenance Reserve | | £6,936.64 |
| Election Reserve | | £1,000.00 |
| S106 Funds | | £8,200.00 |
| | Total | <u>£289,069.39</u> |

vi) General Reserve (as of 11/03/2026)

£30,405.79

- b) Review and approval of pending payments:** Councillors reviewed the pending payments and approved those without prior minuted approval. The Clerk noted that an internal transfer of £7,000 would be necessary to allow all pending payments to be made following receipt of the Glanville invoice; Councillors approved the transfer.

9. ITEMS FOR REPORT AND INCLUSION ON THE APRIL AGENDA:

None noted

The meeting closed at 9.28pm.

Items for consideration for the April agenda must be received by the clerk no later than Wednesday 8th April.

The next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on 16th April 2026 at The Pavilion, Great Mead, East Hagbourne.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on 30th April at Hagbourne Village Hall.

Signed.....Dated.....

APPENDIX 1: ACTION LIST (FOR INFORMATION ONLY: ITEMS WILL NOT BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING UNLESS FEATURED ON THE MAIN AGENDA)

| Action No | What | Who | Status |
|------------|--|-----------------|---|
| 2023-03-01 | Deanfield Homes Car Park Land Transfer | LL | 19/06/2025 Transfer complete. Restriction removal still requires action. 05/03/2026 Clerk to follow up with OCC Legal team on Land Registry progress |
| 2023-06-02 | Parking and Traffic Management on Main Road | NM | 13/11/2025 Two surveys to be drafted |
| 2023-06-03 | Footway repairs in the parish | ID/PD/RJ | 4-5/12/2025 Slurry seal repairs completed along Main Road and Higgs Close. 11/12/2025 Follow up with OCC on damage/missed stretch of slurry seal 15/01/2026 Parts of Blewbury Road footways are scheduled for repairs in March 2026, the stretch outside Green Shutters will hopefully be completed at the same time. Snagging (damage repairs) will be completed on the Main Road slurry seal this Spring. 12/03/2026 Blewbury Road footway repairs are underway using traffic light controls |
| 2023-10-03 | Weed management on Main Road | LL/ID | 01/07/2025 Referred to Johnny Hope-Smith for assistance |
| VARIOUS | Footpath accessibility: 2023-12-02 FP10 MFL to West Hagbourne 2023-12-03 FP12 Church Lane to Fieldside (FP25 towards Church last remaining stretch) 2023-12-04 FP13 Parsonage Lane 2024-01-01 FP1 West Hagbourne to Didcot 2024-03-02 FP15 Grange Footpath 2024-03-03 FP8 Bakers Lane to The Croft 2024-04-01 FP30 Village Hall 2025-11-01 FP9 Shoe Lane 2025-11-02 FP4 Wilcher Close | LL/CS/PD/ ID | 03/10/2024 FP30 – Initial review of possible surface improvements undertaken by Chloe from the Highways Engagement team 05/12/2024 FP15 surface between Fieldside and the bridge would be better finished in tarmac to withstand flooding. This is under consideration. 17/07/2025 Volunteer labour available if required for FP8 10/10/2025 Surfacing options for FP12 stretch from FP25 towards Church need consideration. Rest of path and tarmac FP13 connecting slope now complete. 13/11/2025 Push for OCC review of FP9 Shoe Lane, speak to SCS Oxon about possible resurfacing works. 15/01/2026 Advice being sought from SCS Oxon Ltd on FP4 access, FP8, FP9, FP12, FP13, FP30 12/02/2026 Agreement to move forward with FP13, FP9 and FP30 subject to permissions and quotes. |
| 2023-12-09 | Community Speedwatch | RJ/ID | New coordinator and team members needed. 12/02/2026 New volunteer, needs to undertake training |
| 2024-02-04 | Flood Management in the Parish | CS/DR/PD | 26/02/2025 Leigh Travers and Carl Stallwood completed a walkabout to assess the rest of the watercourses in the parish with input from the flood group 29/04/2025 Leigh Travers visited the parish to meet with P. Dixon (cemetery) and Jane Bell (Flood Group) 15/01/2026 Ric Avery confirmed as an OCC Flood Warden 15/01/2026 Concern about debris in the drainage channel following recent footpath works – C. Shaikh to follow up with L. Travers at SODC |

| | | | |
|------------|--|-------|--|
| 2024-03-06 | From APM 2024: Main Road to Coscote road surface | OCC | An OCC matter as no agreement was made with the developer during the planning process. 03/12/2025 Further request for assistance sent to OCC Highways Engagement and C. Stallwood. The road has been reviewed recently but its condition will be reviewed again during the winter in poor conditions. 15/01/2026 A number of potholes have been marked up for repairs, red ones (urgent) have been filled today, white markings should be completed within 28 days. 12/03/2026 Further pothole repairs are being completed this week – monitor for longevity |
| 2024-04-01 | CIL Projects Shortlist | ALL | 09/10/2025 Progress being made with Footpaths and Village Sparkle, recreation ground needs consideration as has the potential to use a lot of CIL funds. |
| 2024-10-01 | Blewbury Road Drainage | CS/LL | Initial communications being followed up |

ATTACHMENT 1:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| TITLE | COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT |
| AUTHOR | CLLR JOHNNY HOPE-SMITH |
| PARISHES | ASTON TIRROLD/UPTHORPE, CHOLSEY, EAST HAGBOURNE, LITTLE WITTENHAM, LONG WITTENHAM, MOULSFORD, NORTH MORETON, SOUTH MORETON, WEST HAGBOURNE |
| DATE | MARCH 2026 |
| CONTACT DETAILS | JOHNNY.HOPE-SMITH@OXFORDSHIRE.GOV.UK |

Dear Parish Councillors and Residents,

Here are some updates and news I have gathered for you. Please provide any feedback; or if its too much or not enough and of course any more information on a specific topic I can help with. I have put in **BOLD** the items which I think may be specifically appropriate for the Parish Councils to consider advertising or acting upon

Best wishes,

Johnny



Community Hubs Survey – OCC Asking Groups to Take Part

Oxfordshire County Council and Community First Oxfordshire are working to understand more about what the community hubs there are across the county. This will help us strengthen the visibility and voice of community hubs

Key Details

- The survey is for any organisation that runs or hosts activities in a building used regularly by the community.
- Hubs may provide social, economic, health or environmental benefits and often act as trusted connectors within their neighbourhoods.
- The aim is to strengthen the visibility, voice and role of community hubs as part of work on Community Wealth Building.
- Survey takes no more than 15 minutes.
- Participants can opt into a prize draw for **one of three £100 donations to their hub.**
- Survey runs 16 February – **17 March 2026.**

What Parishes Can Do

- Share the survey with village halls, community centres, churches, youth groups, charities and volunteer-run spaces.
- Encourage local hubs to take part so Oxfordshire can build an accurate picture of community activity.

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/community-hubs-survey>

Flood Warden Scheme – Volunteers Needed

An appeal has been issued for volunteers to help their communities understand flood risks and responsibilities by becoming flood wardens.

Key Details

- Oxfordshire County Council has expanded its flood warden scheme countywide following successful pilots.
- Flood wardens are volunteers who act as local eyes and ears, reporting blocked drains, ditches and issues that could increase flood risk.
- Anyone can volunteer - residents, parish councillors, resilience volunteers or community groups and there is no minimum time commitment.
- The council provides training and support, including an initial one-hour briefing call.
- Flood wardens help raise awareness, work with local landowners, support emergency planning and improve community preparedness.

What Parishes Can Do

- Share the opportunity locally and encourage volunteers, especially those in flood-prone areas.
- Direct interested residents to the Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit to sign up. <https://www.oxfordshire-floodtoolkit.com/flood-wardens/>
- Promote reporting of blocked drains/ditches as part of wider flood resilience work.
- Consider linking parish emergency plans with local flood wardens for better coordination

Free '20's Plenty' Stickers Available for Residents

Oxfordshire has now introduced its 275th 20mph scheme, delivered in partnership with town and parish councils since the programme began in 2022. To mark this milestone, residents can now apply for free wheelie bin stickers to encourage drivers to respect the lower speed limit in residential areas. The stickers are being provided jointly by Oxfordshire County Council and the national campaign group 20's Plenty for Us.

What Parishes Can Do

- Share the sticker application link below with residents via newsletters, Facebook pages and email lists. https://www.20splenty.org/oxon_wbs
- Encourage residents to use the stickers to reinforce community support for the 20mph schemes already implemented in your area.
- Remind residents that 20mph schemes are introduced only where requested by parish and town councils, and that community support helps their long-term success.

INFO - Secondary School Offers – Majority Receive First Choice

Almost nine out of ten Oxfordshire children applying for secondary school places across the county have been offered a place at their first choice school for September

Key Details

- 85.4% of Oxfordshire children have been offered their first-choice secondary school for September 2026.
- 96.4% received one of their preferred schools, reflecting strong performance in school place planning across the county.
- Where a school was oversubscribed, some families did not receive their first preference.
- Families can appeal decisions by 31 March 2026 and can join waiting lists from 25 May 2026.

REMINDER - LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

A statutory government consultation on the future structure of local government in Oxfordshire has launched and runs from 5 February to **26 March**.

Key Details

- There are three options being consulted on:
 - One Oxfordshire – a single countywide unitary council (Oxfordshire Council)
 - Two unitary councils – Oxford & Shires Council and Ridgeway Council
 - Three unitary councils – Greater Oxford Council, Northern Oxfordshire Council and Ridgeway Council

Links

- Consultation Link with links to the three proposals <https://oneoxfordshire.org.uk/>

What Parishes Can Do

- Share the consultation link with residents and encourage participation.
- Consider submitting a formal parish council response, as parish-level feedback will form part of government's assessment.

REMINDER: Councillor Priority Fund – Supporting Local Projects – HALF NOW ALLOCATED

The Councillor Priority Fund has reopened, offering each Oxfordshire County Councillor £10,000 to support community projects within their division. This funding is designed to help deliver local priorities and strengthen community initiatives.

Parish councils, community groups, and local organisations are encouraged to apply for funding to support projects that benefit residents. Examples might include:

- Improvements to community facilities
- Local environmental initiatives
- Activities that promote wellbeing or inclusion
- Smaller-scale projects are especially encouraged, as the fund is modest and intended to support a wide range of communities across Oxfordshire

Key details:

- Applications must be submitted by 30 November **2026**
- Grants are typically paid within 28 days of approval
- Applicants must register for an account to apply and track progress
- Monitoring and reporting are required for successful projects

To ensure your project meets the funding criteria, please read the guidance document before applying.

What Parishes Can Do

- **Identify local projects that could benefit from modest funding**
- **Collaborate with community groups to develop proposals**
- **Submit applications early to allow time for review and payment**

Keep records and be prepared to report on outcomes

For more information or to apply, visit the Councillor Priority Fund page.

<https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/councillorpriorityfund>

ATTACHMENT 2:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Title | District Councillors' Report |
| Councillors | Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson & Cllr Crispin Topping |
| Parish | East Hagbourne Parish Council |
| Date | 12 March 2026 |

[Booking link](#) for planning surgeries for town and parish councils

Town and County Planning Association letter

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse have joined a host of other local authorities, businesses and non-government organisations in signing an open letter from the Town and County Planning Association (TCPA). The letter has been sent to The Rt Hon Steve Reed MP Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Named signatories include Cabinet members, Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson and Cllr Andy Foulsham, both with portfolio responsibility for planning policy at the councils.

The letter supports the climate ambitions in the emerging Joint Local Plan, as well as the strategic priorities of both councils, as it urges government to reconsider proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that would prevent local authorities from requiring higher energy efficiency standards for new buildings, as we have included within the emerging Joint Local Plan. The letter warns that by restricting local authorities in this way, the draft

NPPF would halt progress on the delivery of net zero carbon buildings in England, and undermine the ability of councils, including South and Vale, to address climate change locally and meet their climate obligations.

[Read the letter in full.](#)

South Oxfordshire District Council agrees £500,000 towards improvement for nature site

South Oxfordshire District Council has agreed to give £500,000 to fund major improvements at the Earth Trust site in Little Wittenham, making it safer and more welcoming for visitors to enjoy the area's natural beauty.

Environmental charity Earth Trust looks after the largest free-to-access green space in Oxfordshire, at Wittenham Clumps. Each year around 200,000 people visit this area of open countryside including around 6,500 education visits. New housing in the area has increased the numbers visiting this public open space, which has had a significant impact on the small country lanes and parking nearby.

The charity has secured planning permission for the improvements which include building a new junction and access road and 80 new parking spaces, including disabled spaces.

In addition, there will be new hedgerows and sustainable drainage installed. These upgrades aim to reduce traffic, resolve parking issues, and improve access to the site.

New safe walking and cycling routes will also be added, encouraging people to get outdoors and stay active. The project will create new jobs and volunteer opportunities, helping to strengthen the local community and economy.

The upgrades will make it easier for families, schools, and residents to visit, improving their health and wellbeing. It will also allow Earth Trust to become an even better space for learning about nature, with more opportunities for children and families to connect with the environment.

South Oxfordshire District Council agreed at a meeting this month to allocate £500,000 in funding for Earth Trust's plans. This money comes from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from developer contributions.

The wider scheme also includes a café and adventure playground, delivered through other sources and not through CIL.

By supporting this project, the council is helping to create a lasting community resource that will provide free access to nature and educational activities for years to come.

Earth Trust has a long history of successfully working with South Oxfordshire District Council. It manages council-owned Castle Meadows and Riverside Meadows in Wallingford and Mowbray Fields in Didcot and uses traditional meadow management approach to encourage more plants, insects, and birds to the areas.

The work at the Little Wittenham site is due to start this spring with completion anticipated in the summer. Future plans for the site also include some EV charging points in the new car parking area.

Over £1.5m grants funding available for community organisation

Community groups and non-profit organisations in South Oxfordshire will be able to apply for grants totalling £1.5M over the next year.

The range of grant schemes will give a financial boost to projects that improve community facilities, enhance the health and wellbeing of residents and support the fight against climate change across the district.

The schemes coming up this year and their provisional launch dates are as follows:

- **Everyone Active Grant:** £50,000 launches 30 March – for projects that improve the health and wellbeing of residents
- **Capital Grant Scheme:** £320,000 launches 1 June – for projects such as play areas, community and sports facilities, and sustainability projects
- **Performing Arts Grant Scheme:** £60,000 launches 20 July - designed to enhance the cultural landscape and support local performing arts groups

- **Councillor Community Grant Scheme:** £270,000 launches 17 August – for projects and activities that offer community benefits including sports equipment, trees for community orchards, events for the elderly
- **Climate Action Fund:** £100,000 launches 28 September – aimed at projects that help to tackle climate change and nature recovery.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy Grant:** £750,000 launches 15 February 2027 – for organisations to deliver infrastructure for their community

There are a number of opportunities for organisations to find out more about the grants available and the criteria for applications, at events taking place across the district over the coming months. Grants officers from South Oxfordshire District Council will be on hand to answer questions and offer advice:

- **Connecting Local Action - climate and sustainability event:** 5 March Thame Barns – midday to 2.30pm
- **Didcot Garden Town Community Update Meeting:** 18 March 5-7.30pm
- **Partnership event with OCVA and Oxfordshire Community Foundation:** 15 April District Community Centre in Didcot 11am – 4pm and 6 May Holton Village Hall 12.15 until 6pm

Information about the drop-in events and the grants can be found on the council website southoxon.gov.uk/grants.

Places are limited so there is a booking form on the website where organisations can advise which session(s) they wish to attend.

Organisations can also contact the Community Enablement team by emailing grants@southandvale.gov.uk if they would like an initial discussion.

Incredible theatre coming to Cornerstone

From Shakespearean drama to dystopian thrillers and darkly funny satire, there's some unmissable theatre heading to Cornerstone Arts Centre this March.

Experience **NTLive's Hamlet** on **Wednesday 18 March (7pm)**, with a Relaxed and Captioned screening on **Saturday 21 March (2.30pm)**. Olivier Award-winner Hiran Abeysekera (Life of Pi) stars in this new staging of Shakespeare's famous tragedy.

On **Thursday 19 March** Box Tale Soup returns to the centre with Orwell's chilling vision to life in **1984**. This gripping adaptation captures a world where Big Brother is always watching.

Then on **Tuesday 24 March**, celebrate 10 years of the darkly hilarious **Meet Fred**, from inclusive theatre company Hijinx. Packed with biting satire and unexpected tenderness, this critically acclaimed hit asks what independence really means when the system pulls the strings.

Find out more and book your tickets on the **Cornerstone website**.