

EAST HAGBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING DULY CONVENED AND HELD ON THURSDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 2025

1. ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST:

Present were Chairman I. Duff, Vice Chairman P. Dixon, Cllrs N. Milner, D. Rickeard and C. Shaikh, District Councillors C. Topping and A-M Simpson

Apologies were received from Cllrs C. Gover and R. Jaboor, and County Cllr J. Hope-Smith

In attendance was L. Lloyd (Clerk).

I. Duff indicated there is 1 vacancy for a parish councillor.

2. PUBLIC FORUM AND QUESTIONS: none

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6TH OCTOBER AND THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9TH OCTOBER 2025:

The minutes of the Parish Council Meetings on 6th and 9th October 2025 were approved by Council and signed by I. Duff.

4. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS:

I. Duff confirmed receipt of the County Councillor and District Councillor Reports – please see attachments 2 and 3 for the full reports. The OCC Report includes info on the new Highways Asset Response Teams (HARTs) and the Lane Rental Scheme. A-M Simpson reported that the District Council's Two Council proposal was approved for submission at the Cabinet meeting earlier this evening. Government will likely review all submitted proposals in the new year and put viable options to public consultation. The Joint Local Plan is still at examination stage. Following the Inspector's recommendation to withdraw the plan in late September, the District Council has sent two letters of appeal and is awaiting a full response. Until this is resolved, it is possible that plans for speculative building outside the current plan may be made. As East Hagbourne has a Neighbourhood Plan under 5 years old, a good level of protection is in place to fight any such proposed development. C. Topping noted that the Community Grant Scheme deadline is approaching. There have been a good number of applications including a minor refurbishment for the Community Shop. C. Topping also confirmed he is now a member of the Capital Grants Committee.

5. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

- a) **Footpath 18 flooding remediation:** D. Rickeard confirmed that SCS Oxon Ltd has requested for the drainage works following ongoing investigations and discussions with the neighbouring landowner. The bramble clearance works at the site confirmed there is an adequate gradient and that a longer length of piping is required for the proposed drain. The quote is for £4,595.00. Councillors agreed to speak further with the landowner ahead of a potential decision to proceed in December.
- b) **Parking and Traffic Management on Main Road:** Councillors discussed at length how to move forward with the survey, as there were differing views as to the extent of the issues in the central village with the current parking and volume of traffic, and what solutions may be viable. It was agreed to split the original draft to create two surveys; N. Milner to draft an initial simpler survey to find out the problems residents are facing, to be sent to all residents. This will be followed by a second survey more focused on potential solutions, informed by the views expressed in the responses to the first survey.

6. ITEMS FOR DECISION:

- a) **Future Management of the Pavilion and Recreation Ground:**
 - i) **To agree the Memorandum of Understanding between EHPC and EHSRC and appoint a signatory on behalf of the Council:** Councillors approved the MoU and appointed L. Lloyd as Parish Clerk and RFO to sign the MoU on behalf of the Parish Council.
 - ii) **To agree to the revised EHSRC Constitution which has been updated to reflect the new governance model:** Councillors approved the revised EHSRC Constitution.
- b) **To consider grants to the following organisations:**
 - i) **Oxfordshire Mind:** Councillors resolved to award a grant of £100.00 in accordance with the council's powers under Section 137 (S137) of the Local Government Act 1972.
 - ii) **Citizens Advice Oxfordshire:** Councillors resolved to award a grant of £300.00 in accordance with the council's powers under Section 142(a) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- c) **Dog Bin Collection – To acknowledge the notification from Shield Maintenance of increased dog waste bin collection rates from 1st October 2025:** I. Duff referred to the circulated letter from Shield Maintenance Ltd, confirming the increase from £2.00 to £2.75 per dog bin collection. It was noted that while the terms of the existing contract only allow for an inflationary increase on an annual basis, councillors agreed to accept the increase as the justifications outlined are fair and Shield Maintenance are still offering a competitive and reliable service.

- d) **To consider quotes for Renovations to the War Memorial Bus Shelter:** L. Lloyd confirmed she had approached three contractors for quotes; two subsequently made site visits and provided quotes which were circulated ahead of the meeting. Councillors reviewed the two quotes that were received and agreed to accept the quote from TMS Local Handyman Service at a cost of £4,400 (plus a 10% contingency as noted on their estimate). L. Lloyd to contact and confirm availability to complete the works.
- e) **Pavilion Car Park - To consider quotes for investigative works to inform Phase 2 – Preparation for Tender:** Deferred due to lack of information.
- f) **To consider correspondence regarding appropriate use of playground equipment:** Councillors reviewed a draft letter circulated ahead of the meeting. D. Rickeard noted in particular that the age limit and certification of equipment as noted was overly prescriptive and he was not supportive of this approach. Following an animated discussion, it was agreed that a less formal approach to this sensitive situation was required, and that the letter would be revised and recirculated to councillors for approval, with a stronger emphasis on engagement, inclusivity and potential solutions to the current lack of recreation facilities for older children and adults.
- g) **To consider correspondence to SSE regarding poor communication in relation to the recent planned power outage in the village:** Councillors reviewed and approved the draft letter of complaint. L. Lloyd to send to the Complaints Department.

7. ITEMS FOR REPORT:

- a) **Planning Applications:** P25/S3138/HH P25/S3141/LB 2 Church Close – New below ground swimming pool and building. Councillors agreed to submit a No Objection response, with a request to check the impact on drainage.
P25/S3387/FUL St Andrews Church – Remedial works to gable between Nave and Chancel – Councillors agreed to submit a No Objection response.
- b) **Recreation Ground and Pavilion:** D. Rickeard reported that the replacement playground gates have finally arrived. L. Lloyd has been in touch with the contractor and will confirm an installation date ASAP.
- c) **Cemetery Committee:** P. Dixon confirmed that following the Cemetery Committee meeting on 10th November, it has been agreed that the drainage design is now ready to go out to tender for quotes.
- d) **Employment Committee:** Nothing to report.
- e) **CIL Project Progress:** I. Duff noted that initial consideration is now underway for equipment that could be suitable for older children and adults in the recreation ground. Some tarmac works have been completed by OCC on the Main Road footways, ahead of the planned slurry sealing which it is believed is due to happen in early 2026. Once these are complete other areas in the village will be reviewed – tarmac footpaths that are not footways adjacent to roads are more straightforward for the Parish Council to action with OCC approval.
- f) **Butts Piece Allotments:** Nothing to report.
- g) **Flood Management:** Nothing to report.
- h) **Community Speedwatch and Traffic Monitoring:** I. Duff confirmed that the results of the 5 speed surveys were received today and need to be reviewed. On initial reading, it is clear that speeds over the 20mph limit are common throughout the village. There is a speed limit correction needed on the current speed limit for the southern Blewbury Road location to ensure the data for that location is accurate.
- i) **St Andrews Crescent:** I. Duff confirmed that obtaining permission from the landowner for the S106 Public Art Sculpture has not yet been successful, despite sending information and a formal letter to Deanfield Homes. Assistance has now been sought from SODC to move this forward.
- j) **Public Art Project:** I. Duff confirmed that S106 funding for the Recreation Ground Gates and Bus Shelter has been received, and the Steering Group has met with both artists to discuss the briefs ahead of initial design works. D. Rickeard noted that the locking mechanism for the recreation ground gates needs careful consideration, and suggested that a simple sliding metal lock to enable a combination padlock would be a better than a keypad which is less practical and more expensive to replace.
- k) **Footpath Management:** I. Duff noted that the Parish Path Warden update circulated in October was really useful and expressed hope that the PPW group may be able to make progress with OCC on the several unresolved issues.
- l) **Matters raised at the Chairman’s Surgery and OALC Councillor’s Forum:** I. Duff confirmed the following points were discussed at his October surgery:
 - Queries on the FP2 fencing at Butts Piece.
 - Positive feedback for the new FP12 extension, including from a resident of West Hagbourne in an invalid buggy who also noted that access to FP4 at the top of Wilcher Close is tricky due to the height of the kerb.
 - Queries as to when improvements may be made to FP13 (causeway), Shoe Lane path and FP1 between Didcot and West Hagbourne.
 - Lack of grass cutting at the top of Wilcher Close (this is SOHA’s responsibility, not the PC).
 - Complaints relating to speeding in the village.
- m) **Fencing on unregistered land along Footpath 2 at Butts Piece:** I. Duff reported that OCC have issued an Enforcement Notice which has been posted on site with a deadline of 22nd November, after which OCC will be able to take action and remove the fencing and gate.

8. CORRESPONDENCE: I. Duff noted a number of correspondence items:

Thames Water Reservoir Proposal – It was agreed that the Parish Council should encourage residents to respond on an individual basis.

Annual Review of Playing Pitch Strategy – Response not required at this time

Science and Vale Movement and Place Consultation – Councillors to review and agree whether to respond

Street Cleansing Consultation – Deadline 23rd December. L. Lloyd and I. Duff to complete

SODC Deep Cleanse – It has been confirmed that East Hagbourne has been scheduled for January 2026

9. FINANCE:

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

a) Payments since last meeting: NB: Payments pending are shown in yellow and are not included in the account balance shown in c)

| Payee | Item | Auth: | Amount | VAT | Total | Date |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Nest | Employers Pension Contribution Jul-Sep 2025 | DD | £293.34 | £0.00 | £293.34 | 09/10/2025 |
| The CDS Group | INV75877 Cemetery Drainage - Detailed Design Drawing | DR/CG | £2,400.00 | £480.00 | £2,880.00 | 10/10/2025 |
| Noel Carter | East Hagbourne PC Bench Sept 2025 - Cemetery Bench installation | DR/CG | £269.98 | £0.00 | £269.98 | 10/10/2025 |
| EHSRC | INV067-25 Community Room Hire 11/09/25 | DR/CG | £25.00 | £0.00 | £25.00 | 10/10/2025 |
| Shield Maintenance Ltd | INV9418 Dog Bin and General Waste Bin collections September 2025 | DR/CG | £151.67 | £30.33 | £182.00 | 10/10/2025 |
| Dark White Digital | INV001984 Web Hosting October | DR/CG | £30.00 | £0.00 | £30.00 | 10/10/2025 |
| Connect Installations | INV 25-0106 Pavilion Car Park Lighting | DR/CG | £820.85 | £164.17 | £985.02 | 10/10/2025 |
| SCS Oxon Ltd | INV SB839 Interim Payment for FP12 Continuation Works | DR/CG | £8,321.50 | £1,664.30 | £9,985.80 | 10/10/2025 |
| Royal British Legion | S137 Grant | DR/CG | £100.00 | £0.00 | £100.00 | 13/10/2025 |
| Clean Slate | S137 Grant | DR/CG | £100.00 | £0.00 | £100.00 | 13/10/2025 |
| The Abingdon Bridge | S137 Grant | DR/CG | £100.00 | £0.00 | £100.00 | 13/10/2025 |
| Sound Reduction Systems Ltd | INV36050 Acoustics at the Pavilion | DR/CG | £2,892.00 | £578.40 | £3,470.40 | 15/10/2025 |
| Castle Water Ltd | INV10007760373 Allotment Water bill date 2 October 2025 | DD | £57.34 | £11.47 | £68.81 | 16/10/2025 |
| SCS Oxon Ltd | INV SB845 Balance for FP12 Continuation Works and FP12/13 Connecting Path | CS/RJ | £10,976.50 | £2,195.30 | £13,171.80 | 17/10/2025 |
| HMRC | P30 Q2 NI Contributions | DR/CG | £312.34 | £0.00 | £312.34 | 20/10/2025 |
| Grundon Waste Management Ltd | PSI-1358804 Cemetery Bin Collections September 2025 | DD | £57.68 | £11.54 | £69.22 | 20/10/2025 |
| Unity Trust Bank | Bank Service Charge | Automatic Payment | £8.70 | £0.00 | £8.70 | 31/10/2025 |
| Laura Lloyd | October Salary + WFH Allowance | DR/CG | £994.04 | £0.00 | £994.04 | 31/10/2025 |
| Scribe Accounting | INV13484 Accounting Software Monthly Fee November | DD | £35.00 | £7.00 | £42.00 | 03/11/2025 |
| Shield Maintenance Ltd | INV9524 Dog Bin and General Waste Bin collections October 2025 | | £215.58 | £43.12 | £258.70 | |
| Dark White Digital | INV002013 Web Hosting November | | £30.00 | £0.00 | £30.00 | |
| BGG Garden and Tree Care | INV0981/25 October grass cutting, hedge cutting and FP18 clearance | | £1,845.00 | £369.00 | £2,214.00 | |
| EHSRC | Community Room Hire 09/10/2025 | | £25.00 | £0.00 | £25.00 | |
| Julie Grose | 1st Installment for Recreation Ground Gates Art Project | | £1,800.00 | £0.00 | £1,800.00 | |
| Scorpion Signs Ltd | INV4511 Car Park Signage | | £325.00 | £65.00 | £390.00 | |
| Laura Lloyd | November Salary + WFH Allowance | | £994.04 | £0.00 | £994.04 | |

b) Receipts since last meeting:

| From | Item | Amount | Date |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------|------------|
| Greens Funeral Services | Ashes Interment CM083 | £180.00 | 17/10/2025 |
| Allotment Tenant Plot 2A | Allotment Rent 2025/26 | £15.95 | 20/10/2025 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------|------------|
| SODC | S106 Payment - Bus Shelter and Recreation Ground Gates | £10,000.00 | 24/10/2025 |
| A.L.Sole & Son Ltd | Interment A048 | £186.00 | 27/10/2025 |
| Redwood Bank | Interest October 2025 | £194.66 | 31/10/2025 |
| Nationwide | Interest October 2025 | £105.10 | 31/10/2025 |
| NatWest Bank | Interest October 2025 | £237.16 | 31/10/2025 |
| Brooke-Taylor | EROB CM86,87,88 AND ASHES CM086 | £750.00 | 04/10/2025 |
| Allotment Tenant Plot 7 | Allotment Rent 2025/26 | £30.70 | 06/11/2025 |
| | Total | £11,699.57 | |

c) Accumulated Account Balances (reconciled online 12/11/2025)

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Unity Trust Bank - T1 current account | £19,757.82 |
| Unity Trust Bank - Instant access account | £61,611.03 |
| Redwood Bank - 35 Day Notice Savings Account | £85,000.00 |
| Nationwide - Instant Access Business Savings Account | £82,598.12 |
| Natwest - Liquidity Manager 95 Day Notice Account | <u>£87,497.03</u> |
| Total | <u>£336,464.00</u> |

d) The Special Project Balances (as of 12/11/2025) are:

| | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| Community Infrastructure Levy Fund | Received 28/04/23 so requires spending by 27/04/28 | £15,790.66 |
| | 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 | <u>£8,330.18</u> |
| | Total CIL money | £250,303.37 |
| Community Projects Reserve Fund | | £2,762.91 |
| Planned Development Support Fund | | £5,303.15 |
| Cemetery Fund | | £10,783.67 |
| Climate and Biodiversity Reserve | | £2,500.00 |
| Reactive Works and Emergency Response Reserve | | £4,000.00 |
| Asset Maintenance Reserve | | £8,490.66 |
| Election Reserve | | £1,000.00 |
| S106 Funds | | <u>£10,000.00</u> |
| | Total | <u>£295,143.76</u> |

e) General Reserve (as of 12/11/2025)

£41,320.24

b) Review and approval of pending payments: Councillors reviewed the pending payments and approved those without prior minuted approval.

10. ITEMS FOR REPORT AND INCLUSION ON THE DECEMBER AGENDA:

Draft Budget 2026/27

The meeting closed at 21.54pm.

Items for consideration for the December agenda must be received by the clerk no later than Wednesday 3rd December.

The next meeting will be held at 6.00pm on 11th December 2025 at The Pavilion, Great Mead, East Hagbourne.

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

ATTACHMENT 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 finally completed. Restriction removal still requires action. |
| 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/ | May 2025 C. Stallwood emailed for update on the areas that were added to the list for slurry sealing Main Road footways 01/07/2025 This matter has now been referred to Johnny Hope-Smith for assistance. White markings along Main Road footways are in preparation for slurry seal works later this year 13/11/2025 Some tarmac works have been completed by OCC on the Main Road footways, ahead of the planned slurry sealing which it is believed is due to happen in early 2026. |
| 2023-10-03 | Weed management on Main Road | LL/ID | 15/05/2025 Weed treatment now complete at raised footway near Lower Cross. Dead vegetation still present in road channel. 01/07/2025 This matter has now been 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) 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 C. Shaikh to obtain quotes for works on FP15 and FP8. Volunteer labour still 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. 13/11/2025 Investigate solution to FP4 access issue due to kerb |
| 2023-12-09 | Community Speedwatch | RJ/ID | New coordinator and team members needed to move this forward. 11/09/2025 Follow up two expressions of interest. 09/10/2025 One interested party not currently available |
| 2024-02-01 | Pavilion Lease Renewal | DR/ID/ LL | 13/11/2025 Memorandum of Understanding approved - complete |
| 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) 28/08/2025 OCC Volunteer Flood Warden scheme – confirm whether we have any Flood Group members interested in signing up |
| 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 and the S278 agreement was only to maintain and repair Main Road in the immediate vicinity of the site. 01/07/2025 This matter has now been referred to Johnny Hope-Smith for assistance and the road will be reviewed by an officer 13/11/2025 FixMyStreet report update indicates that potholes along this stretch have been flagged for attention within 28 days |
| 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 |
| 2025-03-01 | Rymans Crescent Wildflower Area | LL | Assist with comms between SOHA and BGG if needed |

ATTACHMENT 2:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| TITLE | COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT |
| AUTHOR | CLLR JOHNNY HOPE-SMITH |
| PARISHES | CHOLSEY, EAST HAGBOURNE, LITTLE WITTENHAM, LONG WITTENHAM, MOULSFORD, NORTH MORETON, SOUTH MORETON, WEST HAGBOURNE |
| DATE | NOVEMBER 2025 |
| CONTACT DE-TAILS | 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, 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 Parishes to consider advertising or acting upon



Best wishes,

Johnny

HART of the Community – Tackling Local Highways Issues

Oxfordshire County Council has launched new Highways Asset Response Teams (HARTs) to deliver fast, visible improvements to local roads and footpaths - directly responding to resident concerns.

These mobile teams are designed to “blitz” areas with clusters of small but noticeable issues reported via Fix My Street, such as:

- Cleaning street signs
- Removing damaged railings
- Clearing overgrown vegetation
- Resetting uneven slabs and kerbstones
- Cleaning debris from footways
- Removing fly posters and redundant street barriers
- Patching smaller road defects
- Repairing footway defects

What parishes can do:

- Encourage residents to report issues (preferably with photos) via Fix My Street: <https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk>
- **Highlight local hotspots to the County Council for future HART visits via the questionnaire – Have you received yours?**

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hart-of-the-community-new-teams-target-areas-most-in-need-of-highway-work/>

Have Our Say – Science Vale Movement and Place Plan Consultation

Oxfordshire County Council has launched a public consultation on the new Movement and Place (MAP) Plan for Science Vale — a long-term vision to improve transport, public spaces, and quality of life across the area.

The MAP Plan is a 25-year strategy covering towns and villages including Didcot, Wantage, Harwell, East & West Hagbourne, North & South Moreton, Long & Little Wittenham, Sutton Courtenay, Milton, and others. It aims to support sustainable growth by:

- Improving walking, cycling, and public transport options
- Enhancing public spaces and village centres
- Reducing congestion and improving air quality
- Supporting access to jobs, education, and services

- Making travel safer and more inclusive

The plan is a “live” document, meaning it will be regularly updated to reflect community feedback and future needs.

What parishes can do:

- Encourage residents to take part in the consultation before **1 December 2025**
- Share the MAP Plan summary and survey link locally
- Provide parish-level feedback on transport priorities and public space improvements

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/science-vale-map>

Your input will help shape the final version of the plan, which is due to be presented to the Council’s Cabinet in January 2026.

INFO & ACTION – Electric Blanket Safety Checks – Over One in Three Fail

Following the recent electric blanket testing events promoted by my Septembers CC report, Oxfordshire County Council’s Trading Standards team has reported a concerning increase in failure rates.

Between 22 September and 10 October, over 920 electric blankets were tested at ten events across the county — nearly 200 more than last year. Alarming, 338 blankets failed safety checks, representing a 36.7% failure rate, up from the previous year.

Why this matters:

- Faulty electric blankets pose a serious risk of fire or injury, especially during colder months.
- Even newer blankets can fail safety tests.
- Common issues include exposed or bunched wires, wear and tear, and internal faults not visible to the eye.

What parishes can do:

- Remind residents to check their electric blankets before use
- Share advice from Electrical Safety First on how to spot faults: <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk>
- Encourage safe disposal of old or damaged blankets at local recycling centres

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cpd2y0je4zqo>

INFO - New Lane Rental Scheme to Reduce Roadwork Disruption

Oxfordshire County Council has received government approval to introduce a Lane Rental Scheme (LRS), aimed at reducing the disruption caused by roadworks on the county’s busiest roads.

The scheme allows the council to charge utility companies and developers a daily fee for carrying out works on key parts of the road network during peak times. This creates a financial incentive to:

- Complete works more quickly
- Avoid peak-hour disruption
- Improve coordination between different works promoters
- Use smarter planning and technology to minimise delays

Why this matters:

- Oxfordshire sees around 30,000 roadwork requests per year
- The current permit scheme only allows cost recovery — LRS goes further by encouraging better behaviour
- Roughly 9% of the network (the busiest roads, esp bus usage) will be subject to charges
- Surplus income will be reinvested into improving the highway network

What parishes can do:

- Share this update with residents to explain how the council is tackling roadwork disruption

REMINDER – Free Park and Ride Bus Travel & Temporary Congestion Charge

As shared last month, Oxfordshire County Council is offering free bus travel from park and ride sites until the end of January 2026, alongside a temporary congestion charge in Oxford.

- Valid for up to 2 adults and 3 children with a park and ride parking ticket
- Applies to all bus services from the five park and ride sites

The £5 daily congestion charge applies to six key roads, but many exemptions and free permits are available — including for carers, blue badge holders, and Oxfordshire residents, 25 per car in our area.

The aim of the scheme is to cut congestion & improve air quality

What parishes can do:

- **Remind residents to take advantage of the free travel offer**
- **Share this informal but helpful guide** with tips and exemptions
<https://oxfordclarion.uk/twelve-easy-hacks-to-beat-oxfords-congestion-charge-2/>
- or/and share official Permit info and applications site: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestioncharge

REMINDER: Councillor Priority Fund – Supporting Local Projects

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 3:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Title | District Councillors' Report |
| Councillors | Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson & Cllr Crispin Topping |
| Parish | East Hagbourne Parish Council |
| Date | 13 November 2025 |

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

Five councils launch ambitious plan for local government reform

Change is coming to local government across England, and five councils have worked together to create a proposal for two new, innovative and locally accountable unitary authorities for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire that will tackle existing inefficiencies, improve services, and support local communities in response to the government's call for reform of council structures.

The proposal is one of three being put forward for the area and has the potential to save the most money of all the options – with possible savings reaching £59.8m a year. It would create authorities that are big enough to be efficient, stable and reliable, but local enough to care and be responsive to communities.

The proposal would create two councils covering the following geographical areas:

- **Oxford and Shires Council** would comprise all of the existing district areas of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire.
- **Ridgeway Council** would be made up of the whole of West Berkshire Council's area and all of the existing district areas of South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.

The proposal has been designed to meet the criteria set out by the government earlier this year. The criteria called for all proposals to be for councils that serve populations of around 500,000, are financially stable, deliver high-quality services, are responsive to the needs of communities, and support positive growth across the region.

The key benefits of the proposal would be:

- Significant cost savings and financial stability – helping to protect key services. Financial modelling indicates this proposal has the potential to generate the highest level of ongoing financial savings and provides the best combined financial resilience among the three proposals being submitted for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.
- Reimagined service delivery, addressing concerns raised by residents during widespread public engagement earlier this year.
- Sustainable growth for Oxford, market towns and rural areas, balancing the needs of different communities and delivering more jobs, better transport and the right homes in the right places.
- A high standard of democratic representation with councils that are the right size to respond to the needs of individual communities.

Financial modelling shows the new councils have the potential to save around £59.8m per year after paying off initial transition costs, which looks like the highest saving of the three models proposed in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. These savings would come from reducing the number of councils and adopting a new, innovative approach to service delivery. It would also help to minimise the disaggregation risks associated with splitting upper-tier services, as the proposal involves two existing upper-tier councils.

The proposal sets out plans to make services more cost-effective while improving outcomes. Oxfordshire County Council is currently responsible for around 85 per cent of the council spending in its area, with a significant proportion of that going on Adults' Social Care and Children's Services. Research shows that these services can often be less efficient across a large area like Oxfordshire, where the average spend per person is above the national average, while demand is low. The proposal includes a new, local approach to these services that would reduce costs while delivering a much more local, responsive, and improved service.

In line with national guidance, each council will have just under 100 councillors providing good democratic representation at a level local enough to allow councillors to understand their communities.

The proposed councils would turbocharge economic growth by focusing on the unique nature of each area. Oxford & Shires would focus on growth linked to Oxford's world-class innovation and knowledge economy and the wider area's world-class engineering sector and booming rural economy. Ridgeway would focus on making the most of advanced research, rural enterprise, and connectivity across the M4 and A34 corridors.

The councils would support sustainable housing growth, combined with much better transport planning, to manage the growth of Oxford and the wider area in a practical way. This would allow Oxford to flourish as a global brand, not just as an island within the county, but as part of the wider region. It will also reduce the requirement to build on the green belt, which itself could place more pressure on Oxford's strained services, increase congestion, and damage the character of the city.

The proposal are currently being considered by councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, before it is submitted to the government by the deadline of 28 November. While the local councils will formally decide which proposal to endorse at their meetings, the ultimate decision on which is taken forward will sit with the government.

It is anticipated that the government will then consult with residents and stakeholders on all proposals for the area in 2026 before deciding which model is put in place in early summer. The new council or councils are expected in 2028.

Residents can read the full proposal or an abridged version on the website <http://twocouncils.org>. The proposal covers all key aspects, including how services will be run, financial modelling, implementation plans and vision for the future.

Cllr David Hingley, Leader of Cherwell District Council, said: "Our proposal for two new unitary councils will create authorities that are designed around what our communities truly need. They will be locally accountable to their residents and underpinned by sound finances, positioning them to serve and empower future generations.

"By drawing from the strengths of all parts of Oxfordshire, Oxford and West Berkshire, these councils will be the right size to deliver for our residents and businesses – enterprising, connected and ready to meet local priorities."

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "Residents have been clear; they want councils to be efficient while delivering better services. They also need to represent their communities and deliver on their behalf. This is the opportunity to address current problems, and this proposal creates councils that will deliver better services, save money, and positively tackle big topics such as infrastructure and housing growth in a way that works for local communities.

Cllr Bethia Thomas, Leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council, said: "This is a once in a generation opportunity – and we need to think about what will truly deliver for our communities both now and in the future.

"We believe that means basing the councils on existing communities and a shared history and sense of identity while also being forward-thinking and innovative. It is an opportunity to be bold and to redesign councils, so they are fit for the future and fit to serve the places we hold dear."

Cllr Jeff Brooks, Leader of West Berkshire Council, said: "It's important that through LGR we deliver the best option for our residents. This proposal is about creating councils that are big enough to cope, but small enough to care. It could save the most money of all the proposals and take a modern and innovative approach to service delivery, learning from our good work locally but also from other areas.

"It will help us proactively tackle the financial challenges facing West Berkshire as a small unitary authority whilst preserving the character and communities we hold dear."

Cllr Andy Graham, Leader for West Oxfordshire District Council, said: "We were clear that residents needed to come first in any discussions around future options for local government. The feedback we have received over the last several months has shaped this proposal, so it truly reflects our communities, both now and in the future.

"We wanted to build on the obvious benefits of a two-unitary option while creating something that is new, forward-thinking and makes the most of this change in approach to deliver more for local people while protecting the services they currently value."

More information on the proposal is available at <https://twocouncils.org>

Councils to take positive steps to represent communities despite concerns with Inspectors' Local Plan decision

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have written two letters to the Inspectors in response to the Planning Inspectors' letter published last month, which recommended the councils withdraw their Joint Local Plan from the examination process based on a single issue – the 'duty to co-operate' with Oxford city.

Their most recent letter was written in light of the Ministerial letter of 9 October 2025. Inspectors acknowledged receipt of this and confirmed that a more substantive response will be provided in due course.

In their first response to the Planning Inspectors the councils have defended the processes carried out to develop the plan. They go on to explain to the Inspectors that any decision on whether to withdraw the plan from examination would need to be taken at full Council meetings.

Despite the significant concerns with the Inspectors' conclusions, the councils' leaders have both committed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that future development in the areas remains sustainable, appropriate and well-planned.

Joint Local Plan background information

Over the past four years, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have worked tirelessly together to prepare new planning policies in an innovative, forward-looking Joint Local Plan to guide sustainable development across both districts.

The Joint Local Plan was developed through extensive consultation and deep engagement with our residents, community groups, neighbouring authorities, developers, infrastructure providers and government agencies. It gained unanimous cross-party support at both councils before submission for examination in December 2024, a rare level of political alignment that demonstrated shared commitment to a plan-led future for South and Vale's communities.

Despite this, the Inspectors examining the Joint Local Plan wrote to South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils on 26 September 2025 following Stage 1 of the Joint Local Plan Examination Hearing Sessions. This letter advised the councils withdraw the plan from examination, citing a single technical matter, the Duty to Cooperate, specifically with Oxford City Council. Their letter is available in the Examination Library ([ID10](#)). On 1 October the Councils issued a joint Press Release, available here: [South Oxfordshire](#) and [Vale of White Horse](#).

On 6 October the Councils wrote to the Planning Inspectors about their letter - the [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

On 20 October the Councils wrote a second letter to the Inspectors in light of the Ministerial letter of 9 October 2025 – [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

The Inspectors have written to the Councils to acknowledge receipt of their letter of 20 October 2025 and confirm that a more substantive response will be provided in due course - [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

Community grant scheme: one month to go

The Councillor Community Grant Scheme closes for applications at midday **Friday 5 December**.

There's still funding available for organisations to apply for, and for organisations to submit their applications, so please help us spread the word.

And if you know of any organisations that have previously applied that you weren't able to support, why not reach out to them and see if they still need funding?

If you wish to discuss your grant allocation with our Community Enablement team, or have questions about eligible projects, please email grants@southandvale.gov.uk

Magic awaits in Didcot as Beauty and the Beast opens in six weeks

With just six weeks to go until opening night, excitement is building as Polka Dot Pantomimes brings the much-loved classic Beauty and the Beast to Cornerstone Arts Centre this Christmas.

Running from **Thursday 18 December to Wednesday 31 December**, this spectacular family production promises a festive experience filled with laughter, music and magic. Audiences can look forward to dazzling costumes, impressive special effects, toe-tapping musical numbers and even a few real panto pooches.

Featuring a talented professional cast alongside local young performers, Beauty and the Beast is set to be a true community celebration and the perfect festive treat for audiences of all ages.

Tickets are on sale [now on their website](#).

Council launches 'Winter Campaign' to help residents stay warm, well and connected

As the colder months roll in, South Oxfordshire District Council is launching its 'Winter in South Oxfordshire' campaign - a seasonal initiative packed with practical advice, local events, and support to help residents stay warm, well and connected this winter.

The campaign brings together a wide range of services and resources from the council and partner organisations, including community activities, health advice, and support services to help residents through the winter months.

Highlights of the campaign include signposting to information on:

Minutes November 13th 2025

- **Winter activities and events:** From group walks to performances and workshops, there's something for everyone. Visit the Active Communities page or check out what's on at Cornerstone Arts Centre.
- **Energy-saving support:** Guidance is available on how to make simple home improvements, such as insulation, draught-proofing, and efficient heating, to help residents stay warm and reduce energy costs.
- **Community Hub support:** If people are struggling financially or need advice, the council's Community Hub is here to help — from food and housing support to mental health guidance.
- **Emergency preparedness:** Get ready for winter weather with tips on flooding, power cuts, and emergency kits.
- **Preventing damp and mould:** Tips on how to stop condensation building up in our homes and prevent mould growing.
- **Support for rough sleepers:** The council activates emergency accommodation during severe weather and works year-round to support people at risk of homelessness.
- **Warm spaces:** Local libraries, leisure centres and other venues are offering warm, welcoming places to relax, recharge and connect.
- **Health advice:** The NHS winter health guide offers tips for staying well.

Residents can find all the information and resources on the council's [Winter in South Oxfordshire page](#).

Breaking the cycle of homelessness

Our proactive work to break the cycle of homelessness and improve people's lives is at the heart of our new Joint Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

We support many families and individuals who face multiple challenges in their lives to find sustainable, secure accommodation.

The joint strategy is now live on our webpages [South](#) / [Vale](#) and sets how we prevent homelessness wherever possible and help people access affordable housing which meets their needs. See our media release [South](#) / [Vale](#) for more on this. Please do share our social media posts and signpost people to our website for help with homelessness.

Social housing allocation policy changes now in place

Following a public consultation we've now put in place an updated joint Housing Allocation Policy for both councils. The refreshed policy sets out the criteria on who can join the councils' housing register and the rules for how social housing is allocated. See the policy on our website [South](#) / [Vale](#)

South East Strategic Option (SESRO) consultation

A reminder, following on from our email on 28 October regarding the launch of Thames Water's statutory consultation for the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO).

As well as an online survey available until 13 January 2026, Thames Water is also hosting community drop-in events.

Thames Water is also offering councillors dedicated sessions at the following location (Didcot session was 10 November):

- **The Beacon, Wantage: 26 November 1pm to 2pm**

If you have any questions about the consultation materials or process, please contact Thames Water at info.SESRO@thameswater.co.uk

New Active Communities leaflet

Active Communities has released a new leaflet packed with their free and low-cost sport and wellbeing activities.

The leaflet includes information about:

Minutes November 13th 2025

- Community Walks led by trained volunteers at multiple locations across the district.
- Move Together programme providing tailored support for individuals with health, mobility, or social isolation challenges.
- Family-friendly holiday sessions through the YouMove scheme, along with inclusive sports activities for all ages.
- Nature trails, running groups, Nordic walking, and more.

Download a copy from [\(South\)the Active Communities page](#) / [\(Vale\)the Active Communities page](#) or pick one up from the reception at Abbey House or our venues around the district.

Over £900,000 boost for local infrastructure in South Oxfordshire

Over the last six months, the council has transferred over £900,000 to invest in vital infrastructure delivered by the council, town and parish councils and other community organisations.

As the local planning authority, South Oxfordshire collects financial contributions in the form of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) – this is the funding from housing developers to support the growth of the district when new developments are created.

Follow this link for a breakdown of [S106 funds have been approved and paid out and CIL monies transferred for South](#) (the document should download automatically).

Find out more about [CIL here](#) and [S106 here](#). If you'd like further information, please contact the [Infrastructure and Development Team](#)