

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 16th January 2025

Present: Cllr Ian Burton, Cllr David Corney, Cllr Peter Rose, Cllr Mark Thompson, Cllr Liz Yuille, RFO Clifford Bosley, Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, County Cllr Pete Sudbury.

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk) and 2 members of the public.

In the absence of Chairman Brown, Cllr Yuille took the chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2025/001 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chairman Steve Brown, Cllr Steve Bolton.

2025/002 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Resident Prew Bowtell and her daughter Ola were present to raise two items:
 1. This year's Village Fun Run will take place on Sunday 27th April.
 2. Ms Bowtell had emailed before the meeting asking if anything could be done to improve the mobile phone signal in the village. The clerk had asked Jim Brown to advise her of his findings from his survey in November. As the PC has no powers to influence the location of mobile phone masts, it was suggested that if residents have particular problems, they should approach their providers.

2025/003 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

2025/004 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 19th December 2024.

2025/005 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None.

2025/006 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye's report, sent by email, is attached in appendix A.

2025/007 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr Sudbury reported that he has set-up a Flooding Task Force. He also confirmed that the HIF1 planning application has been approved.

2025/008 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P24/S2764/O Land off Sires Hill southeast of B4106 Didcot OBJ
- The council lodged its objection to this application in September. There are concerns that there is activity at the site before planning permission has been granted. Cllr Casey-Rerhaye said that this is probably in response to the planning officer's request to the applicant to provide more technical details. Cllr Yuille reminded the council that, if the application goes to the planning committee, the PC will need to send someone to present its objections.

2025/009 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Rose reported that, at a meeting with Thomas Homes in December, OCC promised that the final draft of the S106 legal agreement would be available in early January. As it has not been received, he said that he will ask our MP Olly Glover to chase OCC.



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2025/010 CIL PROJECTS

● Acklings Playground

Cllr Rose reported that FCC is not happy with the tender process that was carried out for this project and has suggested that the process should be repeated. The SODC grant is available but is less than that originally offered by FCC. Cllr Rose will appeal the FCC decision. However, if their offer of a grant is withdrawn, any shortfall could be funded from CIL monies.

2025/011 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN PERMISSIVE PATH

Cllrs Thompson and Corney had evaluated the three quotations for installing the gates on the path and awarded the contract to RJ Groundcare. The cost will be £2,950 plus VAT. The gates are expected to be installed on 3rd February.

Cllr Corney had circulated by email his suggestions for publicising the opening of the path when completed. It was agreed that he should invite the Clifton Hampden Parish Council and our MP. He has drafted an article to go in The Bridge for the March issue.

2025/012 HIGH STREET CHICANES CONSULTATION

Cllr Yuille had circulated the draft consultation leaflet before the meeting. A two week deadline for responses was agreed. There were concerns raised over the way in which responses will be evaluated and whether individuals will be allowed to respond or only households. There was also discussion about whether the consultation should take place at all. Cllr Thompson agreed to revise the leaflet and circulate a new version for comment.

Actions: Cllr Thompson to revise and circulate the chicane consultation leaflet.

2025/013 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Six contractors had tendered for the contract. Cllr Brown's assessment of the tenders had been circulated before the meeting. His recommendation to give the contract to Logs Unlimited was approved.

2025/014 BODKINS SLIDE MAINTENANCE

Creative Play had provided a quotation of £425 plus VAT to replace the rotting platform on the slide at Bodkins. It was suggested that Jim Brown be approached to find out if he would carry out a repair at a lower cost.

Actions: Clerk to ask Jim Brown to quote for replacing the rotting platform on the slide at Bodkins.

2025/015 COUNCIL & CHAIRMAN 2025-26

All councillors confirmed that they are happy to continue on the council for the foreseeable future. Cllr Yuille reminded them that a new chairman will need to be elected at the May meeting and she asked them to consider taking on the role. Although she would be prepared to take it on, she is concerned that doing it while her husband is the clerk is not ideal. If she had to take it on, she would want someone to stand as vice chairman.

2025/016 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

None.



2025/017 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- Playground Equipment Replacement Budget
Cllr Bolton had suggested by email that it would be useful if the council's budget included an allocation for the replacement of playground equipment as it becomes necessary. Agreed. It was suggested that Cllr Bolton identifies an appropriate budget and a plan for equipment replacement over the next few years.
- VE Day
Cllr Yuille suggested that she should contact village groups to encourage them to mark VE Day in some way on Thursday 8th May. Agreed.

Actions: Cllr Bolton to create a budget and plan for playground equipment replacement.
Cllr Yuille to contact village groups with regard to the VE Day anniversary.

2025/018 FINANCIAL REPORT

- 3rd Qtr Accounts 2024-25
The RFO had circulated 3rd Quarter Accounts before the meeting. Approved.
- Expenditure during December

10/12/2024	Community Heartbeat Inv 23532 (LWAC Defib Support)	£162.00
10/12/2024	OALC Inv W-3646 (Course Booking Liz Yuille)	£72.00
16/12/2024	Clerk's Salary December 2024	£358.25
19/12/2024	The Boston Bulb Co Ltd Inv 96659 (Bulbs)	£229.50
	December Expenditure Total	£821.75

2025/019 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

Cllr Burton agreed to provide a Footpath Warden Report at the next meeting.

Meeting Closed at 9:05pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 20th February 2025

Signed: 

Date: 20/2/25

APPENDIX A

District Councillor Report January 2025

New Homes for those who need them

The first of three new projects to provide 48 new, genuinely affordable and energy efficient homes in Thame and Wheatley to meet local needs is now finished and has welcomed new tenants. The homes are a combination of new builds and conversions and will include one-bed houses and flats at affordable rent or under a shared ownership scheme, as well as independent living

accommodation for over 55 and 60-year-olds. Brought to life through South Oxfordshire District Council's partnership work with Soha Housing, Thame Community Land Trust and Thame & District Housing Association, the homes are largely funded by Section 106 affordable housing grants from developer contributions.

In Thame, the first residents have moved into their new homes and are enjoying energy saving solar roof panels and ground source heat pumps which will help keep energy bills low, as well as access to EV charging points. See what one resident, Tina, says about her home in this video on YouTube.

A newly-built property in Wheatley of 12 one-bed apartments is also welcoming new tenants. The eco features mean the building will achieve zero carbon emissions when in use. In addition, work is due to start on a third project of 31 affordable rent or shared ownership new-build houses and flats in Thame in 2025. The mix of new, affordable homes was established through a housing needs survey specific to Thame and will be available for people with a local connection to Thame.

Housing and homelessness

On 12 November 2024, South and Vale completed its annual rough sleeper count which is an estimate based upon the number of persons known to be rough sleeping on the night. Nine individuals were recorded as rough sleeping at the end of November (S4/V5), a decrease of one on the previous month. When the count took place in November 2023 there were three persons rough sleeping in South Oxfordshire.

The number of housing register applicants in housing need at the end of November was 1,495 in South. The housing team work with people at risk of homelessness, and just in November alone 21 households were prevented from becoming homeless. The Council also assesses applications for grants for Disabled Facilities each month, and in November 2024, 13 households were awarded grants in the District. This helps people remain living in their own homes.

Council Tax relief change

We have extended the period of time that a new claim for council tax relief can be back dated from 6 to 12 months where good cause has been demonstrated. This is part of our commitment to assist residents wherever needed in a cost of living crisis.

Joint Local Plan

The draft development plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 9th December. This is within our revised timetable. We will hear more about the timetable for the inquiry and the matter and issues to be discussed there in due course.

Local Government Reform coming

Just before Christmas, the Labour Government published its proposals for reforming the structure and financing of local government, with a White Paper entitled "English Devolution". There are lots of reasons to welcome reform of local government; our current District/County structure can be confusing and any changes which improve local decision-making and accountability can only be a good thing. However, we have major concerns that the proposed changes could make local authorities **less** accountable to their residents and could take decision-making further away from the communities they serve. District councils are not being consulted either.

Although the White Paper is called "English Devolution" there are no proposals to devolve powers or funding to regions in the same way that they have been devolved to the Welsh or Scottish Governments; much of the detail is still to be determined, but the Government is hoping to press ahead with the first tranche of reorganisations quickly. A decision on whether to postpone the county elections due in May will be taken by the County Council on Thursday.

Thermal imaging camera

A reminder that a thermal camera is available for town and parish councils and community groups to use to identify heat loss in buildings. The infrared thermal imaging equipment can show clearly 'cold spots' where insulation could improve energy efficiency and thereby reduce energy waste and



costs. It can easily locate areas of significant heat loss without invasive techniques affecting the fabric of the building. With the colder weather now the camera could be used for multiple properties in the village.

If the Parish Council or other organisation would like to borrow the equipment (free of charge) please contact the Climate Action team. The camera is only effective during cold weather when the heating is on and is available on a first come, first served basis.

Performing Arts Grant now established

At the end of 2024, a new Performing Arts Grant Scheme was approved by the SODC Cabinet, which will enable community and voluntary organisations to apply for up to £5,000 to support projects that enhance the cultural landscape and improve the quality of life for local residents and communities. The scheme will open for applications on 5th February; applicants must show how their projects meet the community values and priorities of fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable performing arts scene in South Oxfordshire. More details can be found at www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants.

Changes to custom and self-build register

At SODC we keep a register to find out what the demand is for self-build or custom-build plots in the area. We use the information to support negotiation with developers for self-build provision on larger housing sites and to guide future policy making. We've recently made some changes to our custom and self-build register following criteria set by the Government.

As well as basic age and residency, there are now two categories:

1. Part 1 – People or groups of individuals who meet the local connection test.
- Part 2 – Individuals or associations who meet the basic eligibility criteria but do not meet the local connection test.

There is also a nominal £5 annual fee to join the register. This applies to people applying for part 1 or part 2. You can find more information on our Custom and Self Build Register page.

Leader's summary of 2024

If you would like a brief review of what South Oxfordshire District Council was doing during 2024 then see the Leader's summary at <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/a-statement-from-cllr-david-rouane-leader-of-south-oxfordshire-district-council-3/>

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