

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 20th February 2025

Present: Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr David Corney, Cllr Mark Thompson, Cllr Liz Yuille, RFO Clifford Bosley.

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk).

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

2025/020 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chairman Steve Brown, Cllr Ian Burton, Cllr Peter Rose.

2025/021 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Resident Prew Bowtell had requested by email that the council fund the trophies and medals for this year's Fun Run at a cost of £130.76 (ex VAT). Approved.
Cllr Yuille said that she has been in touch with our insurance company to confirm that the event is covered.
- Cllr Corney had been asked by a resident about the report into the archaeological findings on the Wessex Way site which had been promised but never appeared. It was suggested he contact Janet Haylett of the village History Group to find out if she had more information.
- Cllr Corney had been asked if the PC would want to join with other parishes with concerns about the new Abingdon reservoir. It was agreed that he should express the PC's interest.

2025/022 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

2025/023 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 16th January 2025.

2025/024 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- The platform on the slide structure at Bodkins has been replaced by Jim Brown at a total cost of £152.39. Approved.
- Cllr Yuille reminded the council that the PC will need a new chairman for the May meeting.
- There was discussion about whether to reserve funds in the annual budget for playground equipment replacement, equipment maintenance, or both. To be revisited at the meeting in March.

2025/025 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

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

2025/026 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

None.

2025/027 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P25/S0189/S73	Lovegrove Barn Fieldside Long Wittenham	NSV
P25/S0033/DIS	Barn to the r/o The Little House High Street LW	NRR
P25/S0395/HH	The Red Barn High Street Long Wittenham	NSV



2025/028 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Rose had sent a report by email before the meeting:

OCC released the S106 draft documents on 7th February 2025 and these have now been circulated to relevant bodies (Robert Weavers, ourselves and the Diocese). This means another set of solicitors are now involved so it may take a few weeks to hear their responses. However, Chris Brotherton is confident there are no surprises or major issues in the S106 draft. Cllr Brown has instructed our solicitor Stephen Stratton to scrutinise the document from our point of view. (This was agreed by the PC some time ago).

2025/029 CIL PROJECTS

● **Acklings Playground**

Cllr Rose had sent a report by email before the meeting:

You will be aware that we have now had offers of two grants for this project, totalling 50% from SODC and 60% from FCC. There have been several discussions with FCC since the grant offer questioning some issues of probity. Once we have confirmed that neither Claire Michellis nor any member of the PC has any connection with Jupiter I am confident that FCC will confirm their grant. There is one further issue to decide. You will remember that the FCC offer involves us paying about £6K to their third party funding. Wittenham Warriors have agreed to pay £1500 and we agreed we would pay the rest from CIL. If we only accepted 50% rather than 60% from FCC the third party funding we would have to pay would be reduced by approx £1K. My feeling is we should ask FCC for 60%, accepting the higher third party funding. We might then be able to negotiate with SODC about paying for the tree planting and renewing the fence with the forest school which is part of the project.

Claire Michellis had confirmed by letter (see appendix B) that she has no connection with Jupiter.

All members of the council had confirmed the following by email:

1. That they had read the letter that Claire Michellis sent to the PC stating she has no connection with Jupiter.
2. That they agreed that the PC did not pay Jupiter any money for its design - initially Jupiter told us there would be a charge but it was never forthcoming.
3. That neither they nor their family has any connection with Jupiter or the project in general that would result in financial advantage.

Cllr Brown had circulated a document before the meeting in which he and Claire Michellis proposed appointing Jupiter to build the project. Approved.

● **Outdoor Gym Equipment**

Cllr Thompson reported that the village fitness group are evenly divided about using the suggested equipment. Long Wittenham Athletic Club had written to the council stating that they did not want the proposed equipment installed at Bodkins. In light of this, it was proposed that the project be discontinued. Agreed.

2025/030 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN PERMISSIVE PATH

Cllrs Thompson reported that the four gates along the path have been installed.

Cllr Brown had suggested by email that a ramp up to the first gate should be installed and that the verge out of the village, up to the first gate, be improved. Costs are estimated at:



	Materials	Labour	Total
Ramp	£300	£250	£550
Verge	£450	£250	£700
Total			£1250

The community service volunteer suggested by Cllr Bolton may be able to supply the labour for free and reduce the cost. Cllr Brown's suggestions were approved.

Cllr Corney reported that the ceremonial opening of the path will take place on Easter Saturday 19th April. The landowners will be present. Villagers from Long Wittenham and Clifton Hampden are invited and details will be available from early March.

2025/031 HIGH STREET CHICANES CONSULTATION

Cllr Corney reported that the Community Speedwatch Group had decided that they would like to see Speed Indicator Displays (SIDs) installed in the village whether or not the High Street chicanes are removed. As OCC wants to link these for the purposes of the public consultation, it was suggested that Cllr Corney finds out the type and cost of the units that would be appropriate so that the council can make a decision on the SIDs and then revisit the chicanes village consultation.

Actions: Cllr Corney to provide SID information and costs for next meeting.

2025/032 DIDCOT ROAD BUS STOP

OCC has confirmed that the new south-bound bus stop on the corner of the entrance to Wessex Way has been given the go-ahead. It also proposes that the existing south-bound bus stop opposite Saxons Heath is removed. Agreed.

2025/033 OXFORDSHIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS ALLIANCE (ONPA)

It was suggested that if any councillors are considering taking on the revision of the NDP when it becomes due in 2027, making contact with ONPA might prove useful. Cllrs Corney and Thompson agreed to discuss this with Cllr Rose.

Actions: Cllrs Corney and Thompson to discuss the NDP and ONPA with Cllr Rose.

2025/035 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

None.

2025/036 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- Playground Equipment Maintenance and Cleaning
Cllr Rose had asked by email that the council consider this. In the light of the discussion referred to in section 2025/24 above, the council agreed to defer this to the next meeting.
- Boathouse Coach Parking
Cllr Rose had asked by email if the bursar of Headington School should be informed that the school coach is sometimes parking in the village rather than at the boathouse as it cannot negotiate the existing gates. The council understands that the gates are due to be completed as soon as the weather permits and this should solve the problem.
- VE Day
Cllr Yuille advised that the WI is being active about the commemorations on Thursday 8th May.
Cllr Brown had suggested by email that a flag pole be installed at the war memorial. The cost is estimated to be approximately £250. A VE Day flag will cost approximately £50. Agreed.



Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 20th February 2025

2025/037 FINANCIAL REPORT

- CIL Funds
The clerk had been contacted by SODC asking the council to confirm that SODC should continue to hold the Wessex Way CIL funds on its behalf. Confirmed.
- Expenditure during January

07/01/2025	Logs Unlimited Inv 240583	£1,076.08
07/01/2025	Logs Unlimited Credit Note 240681	-£77.84
10/01/2025	Bosley Expenses (Payroll)	£232.60
10/01/2025	Bosley Expenses (Stationery & Litter Pick Refreshments)	£92.84
10/01/2025	Elliff Expenses (Website Hosting)	£28.80
14/01/2025	Clerk's Salary January 2025	£358.25
16/01/2025	Ornamental Trees Ltd Inv WEB234996 (Replace Trees)	£537.00
30/01/2025	SCA Charity Inv FAC028 (Defib Training Course)	£240.00
	January Expenditure Total	£2,487.73

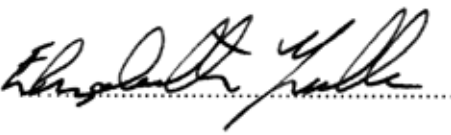
Actions: Clerk to advise SODC that it should continue to hold the council's CIL funds on its behalf.

2025/038 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

None.

Meeting Closed at 8:31pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 20th March 2025

Signed: 

Date: 20 March 2025

APPENDIX A

District Councillor Report February 2025

Proposed Local Government Reform

While still at the White Paper stage, and so not yet even a draft law, local government reform is taking up a lot of time and energy across Oxfordshire and the wider area. The two proposals are for a new 'higher tier', a strategic authority with perhaps an elected Mayor heading this, covering an area with around 1.5 m inhabitants. Mayors could have some powers that currently sit with the Secretary of State. Also proposed is the abolishment of District councils and the bringing of all council services into 'unitary' councils with newly designated boundaries, not yet specified or agreed but with a minimum population (currently 500,000 but this already seems to be questioned). Where the boundaries should go is already being hotly debated. As a Green party Councillor, I have always been of the view that considering we have the most centralised governing structure in

all of Europe, further growth in the size of councils is not at all desirable and risks local people having even less say in what happens in their area than we have already. There is little to no evidence that people prefer unitary councils or that they offer any financial or other advantages. In my opinion, any changes should follow principles of 'subsidiarity' – i.e. every decision should be taken at the lowest possible level.

After the Libdem leader of Oxfordshire County Council (Cllr Liz Leffman) enthusiastically threw their hat in the ring for government to make our area one of the first to be considered for re-organisation, last week the leader of the South Oxfordshire, Cllr David Rouane, explained his view that Oxfordshire should "work together in a Strategic Authority with those councils in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire who wish to join with us.

"This is because these areas all have vibrant economies that will contribute to the sustainable growth the government is looking for; we have a record of working together in the police and health authorities; we have a shared identity as part of the South-East Region; and we have historical connections in that much of South Oxfordshire was in Berkshire prior to the previous local government reorganisation."

The Leader of Swindon Borough Council, Cllr Jim Robbins, has expressed a preference for the Wiltshire town to "look east" towards Oxfordshire for a possible Strategic Authority. Cllr Rouane has explained that, having listened to the arguments, he does not support this idea.

Cllr Rouane said that Swindon doesn't meet the relevant conditions for joining with parts of Oxfordshire as "they are in different health and police geographies, their long-term identity is one of being the 'Gateway to the West Country' not part of the South East, we have no historical ties, and they are at a very different stage in the economic cycle."

The debate over the boundaries of any unitary councils that sit under this strategic authority continues. The local Green party has for many years advocated for unitaries about the size of South and Vale combined, rather than a whole Oxfordshire which has a population of about 740,000 and is predicted to grow to around 800,000 in the coming years – so extremely large for a unitary council.

2025-26 Budget

No matter what happens in the re-organisation of local government, we have to create a budget for our work next year. The budget has been approved by Cabinet and will be going to the full council meeting on 13th February. Some key highlights in the budget are:

- there is a revenue surplus for the first time in many years, helped by the windfall from interest earned on the reserves (not by any improvement in government grant to cover services; in fact, the increase in NI payments for employees has not been covered by government, despite what the Chancellor indicated and we need to cover around £100,000 of the increase, just under 50% of the total);
- the Community Hub continues to be funded, with its offer of guidance and support to residents;
- Everyone Active grants continue;
- Councillor community grants are increased by 50% and the new Performing Arts grants are funded;
- the Climate team continue to be funded
- there are no service or staff cuts
- further monies are put aside for council house build/purchase

Insourcing IT services from Capita

This programme is a key one for the Council and we continue to work towards the exit of the Capita contract. We've made significant changes this month with the launch of a new inhouse IT Service Desk for staff and councillors. The new service desk will initially only deal with certain things and will run alongside the usual Capita IT Helpdesk, with more and more services added as the weeks progress. The deadline for all IT to be insourced is September of this year, and we are on track for this date with the many smaller projects underlying the whole programme



Changes to our Garden waste Collection service

We are introducing a new permit scheme for garden waste collections this year.

This permit scheme is like the one successfully operated in West Oxon. It ensures that everyone who benefits from the service is paying the right amount at the right time. To receive garden waste collections from 1 April 2025, residents need to purchase an annual permit. This will replace direct debits system that currently runs.

So residents who wish to carry on receiving the garden waste service from April 2025 need to:

(From late February) visit www.southandvale.gov.uk/GardenWastePermit to make a one-off, annual payment for garden waste collections. When customers get the permit in the post, **they need to stick it to the lid of their brown bin.**

Garden waste customers can also sign up for an online account on our website to make things easier when they purchase the next permit in 2026. Anyone who cannot easily sign up for a permit online can call us on 01235 422422 for support.

Visit the New Garden Waste FAQ page for more information (South FAQ)

Oxfordshire Nature Recovery

More than 2,100 Oxfordshire residents, landowners and organisations took part in last year's public consultation on the county's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Using an interactive map, people sent in comments on the nature areas already mapped and lots of suggestions for additional areas to be included.

The LNRS team (a partnership of organisations including South and Vale) now has the task of compiling the responses into a public report and the final version of the strategy is due to be published in autumn this year. For more information about the LNRS and the nature groups involved see the LNRS webpage

Opportunities in Sports

Our partners at Better Leisure who run South and Vale leisure centres are launching this year's Sports Foundation scheme and applications for this fund are now open.

The GLL Sports Foundation provides support to athletes across all ages, disciplines and backgrounds, providing access to free gym memberships, monetary funding and other athletes services including mental health support and physiotherapy.

More information including how to apply and eligibility can be found on the GLL Sports Foundation application page and applications must be submitted by 20 February 2025

Sam Casey Rerhaye sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk / 01235 635566



APPENDIX B

C Michellis
3, The Crescent
Long Wittenham
OX14 4QA
09th February 2025

Martin Elliff (Parish Clerk)
Long Wittenham Parish Council

Dear Martin,

Re: incorrect details within Parish Council Minutes

I write with regards the Parish Council Minutes dated 19th October 2023 and 16th November 2023. Matters **2023/159 – CIL Projects – Playgrounds** (October) and **2023/178 – CIL Projects – Acklings Playground** (November) state that I, Claire Michellis, work for Jupiter Play. This is in fact incorrect.

I do not and never have worked for Jupiter Play in any capacity, and have no interest in doing so nor do I have any other vested interest in their company. No member of my immediate family work for, or ever have worked for, Jupiter Play.

I crossed paths with them whilst I was employed at LDA Design, over 6 years ago, when they provided us with advice and design support for a couple of playground designs we were developing as part of housing developments. In more recent years I have attended a couple of 'webinar' CPD sessions that Jupiter Play have provided for members of the Landscape Institute and as such their name remained in my memory as a company who have a landscape-led approach to playground design which I thought would chime with what the Parish Council are trying to achieve at Acklings.

Yours sincerely



Claire Michellis

