

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 20th March 2025

Present: Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr Ian Burton, Cllr Peter Rose, Cllr Mark Thompson, Cllr Liz Yuille, RFO Clifford Bosley, County Cllr Pete Sudbury.

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk).

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

2025/039 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chairman Steve Brown, Cllr David Corney, District Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye.

2025/040 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

2025/041 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

2025/042 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2025.

2025/043 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None.

2025/044 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

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

2025/045 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr Sudbury reported:

1. A new head of legal has been appointed at the county council who is committed to progressing S106 applications.
2. The county council has discussed unitarisation and it believes that one unitary authority should be the goal. It suggests making up for the lack of district councils by giving more authority to town and parish councils.

2025/046 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P25/S0468/LB	Frenchs High Street Long Wittenham	NSV
P25/S0339/LDP	1 Swiss Cottages High Street Long Wittenham	NSV
P25/S0625/LB	Old Farm House High Street Long Wittenham	NSV

2025/047 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Rose reported that the S106 has been received. He and Cllr Brown have met with the PC's solicitor and reviewed the document. There are no major issues, but several minor issues such as the lack of maps. The solicitor has summarised his comments and issues and this will be fed back in the next week.

Thomas Homes have withdrawn from the project and Robert Weavers' land agent is in negotiation with the suggested replacement developer Hayfield Homes. The outcome is awaited.



2025/048 CIL PROJECTS

● Acklings Playground

Cllr Rose reported that the FCC and SODC grants have been agreed and Jupiter has been instructed to proceed with the installation. They will do another site visit with Claire Michellis to confirm final details. A start date for the installation is awaited but it is hoped that it will be completed before the Summer holidays.

2025/049 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN PERMISSIVE PATH

Cllrs Corney had reported by email that Pete Sudbury has agreed to formally open the path on 19th April. Adverts have been sent to The Bridge, to Clifton Hampden surgery, post office, and Parish Council, and have been posted on the village website, and social media. An invitation to the opening has been made to all those who live in Long Wittenham and Clifton Hampden, and both land owners (Robin Buxton and Christopher Purves) will be present.

The land agents for the Gibbs Estate have advised that they wish to put sheep on the field through which the path runs. This will involve the use of electric fencing and may push the path against the roadside hedge and into deep hollows (currently full of water). Cllr Corney has asked to meet the graziers to discuss this and awaits a reply.

The ramp up to the first gate has been completed thanks to the efforts Cllr Bolton and the work experience labourer. Cllr Bolton expressed concern that the ramp has not been stabilised and may deteriorate in heavy rain. Work is also needed on the section of the verge from Lower Farm to the ramp to make it safe to use. Cllr Thompson will consult with Cllrs Corney and Brown to agree how best to get this done.

2025/050 HIGH STREET CHICANES / SIDs

Cllr Corney had provided by email information about potential SIDs along with comments from Jon Beale about the process to get them installed. It was agreed that a specific proposal, identifying which SID would be appropriate along with costs, and the locations for the mounting poles, is required before a decision can be made.

Actions: Cllr Corney to provide a specific SID proposal for next meeting.

2025/051 PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT/MAINTENANCE BUDGET

It was agreed that any major playground replacements in the future will likely be funded by grants. Cllr Thompson proposed that £1,500 be included in the annual budget to cover equipment maintenance costs. Agreed. The RFO will analyse the spending on maintenance over the last three years to check that the sum agreed will be adequate.

Actions: RFO to check that the suggested maintenance budget figure is adequate.

2025/052 BONFIRE NIGHT 2025

A new team headed by resident Anna Warren has come forward to run the event this year. The council has paid Illusion Fireworks £2,375 which will be reimbursed from the event profits. Approved.

2025/053 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Bolton reported that Long Wittenham Athletic Club has applied for a grant from FCC to install solar panels and batteries to reduce its electricity costs.

2025/054 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- **Footpath Warden Report**
Cllr Burton reported that he took over the role from Cllr Corney in August last year. He had resubmitted some legacy problems (finger posts, broken fences etc), along with new ones reported by residents. A new finger post has been installed on the cyclepath at the junction with Appleford Road. With the advent of Spring he is now concentrating on routine maintenance: cutting away shrubs and overhanging trees. Cllr Burton said that there appears to be more dog fouling taking place on the village footpaths and suggested installing some signs at appropriate locations to remind people that this is not acceptable. Approved. It was also suggested that a post on the village website about the issue would be appropriate.
The clerk was asked to contact the NE Didcot developers to find out if the required number of occupations has been achieved to allow the cycle track from the Appleford Road to Ladygrove to be upgraded as required by the planning application.
- **Bulbs**
Cllr Bolton is disappointed with the bulbs that were planted last Autumn. The daffodils are good but the snowdrops and aconites are poor. He wants to plant more bulbs next Autumn and will find a new supplier.
- **Flooding Grants**
Cllr Brown has been in contact with the OCC Flood Management team asking if a grant would be available to help reduce the risk of flooding on the susceptible section of the LW to CH permissive path. Although the grants are intended for more important projects, the team suggested submitting a grant application.

Actions: Clerk to check with the NE Didcot developers regarding the upgrade of the cyclepath to Didcot.

2025/055 FINANCIAL REPORT

- The RFO will be circulating end of year accounts and a draft 2025-26 budget for next month's meeting.
- £32,210 of the SODC grant for the Acklings playground upgrade has been received. It was suggested that it might be worth putting this on deposit to earn interest.
- **Expenditure during February**

11/02/2025	Jim Brown Inv 1017 (Bodkins Slide Repair)	£75.00
11/02/2025	Elliff Expenses (Bodkins Slide Repair)	£77.39
11/02/2025	Clerk's Salary February 2025	£358.25
14/02/2025	Running Imp Inv 435345 (Fun Run Trophies & Medals)	£156.92
19/02/2025	RJ Groundcare Ltd Inv 2861 (Permissive Path Gates)	£3,540.00
19/02/2025	Parish Online Inv 38UD046-0007 (Annual Subscription)	£45.00
21/02/2025	M Rainbow Inv 01.2025 (Tree Planting)	£175.00
25/02/2025	Savills Inv 89350 (Acklings Rent)	£600.00
	February Expenditure Total	£5,027.56

Actions: Clerk to identify appropriate deposit accounts and liaise with the RFO.

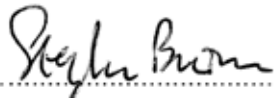
2025/056 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

Cllr Yuille reminded members of the council that the council's core documents will need to be approved at the annual PC meeting in May, and a new chairman elected.

Meeting Closed at 8:40pm.



Date of next meeting: Thursday 17th April 2025

Signed: 

Date: 17-4-25

APPENDIX A

District Councillor Report March 2025

Garden Waste Permit: apply for your permit now!

This new scheme is now live and if you have or would like a brown garden waste bin, you will need to purchase an annual permit before April.

Please visit the council's website where you can follow instructions on how to do this. It's more efficient for the council (and so ultimately for you!) if you do it via the website if at all possible, and means people who don't have easy access to the website can more easily get in touch by telephone.

Garden waste scheme changes - South Oxfordshire District Council

Assistance to bring empty homes back into use

We're encouraging empty home owners to get in touch with the Council so we can discuss the benefits and options available. See the Council website to see what help there is available to you if you own a home that is currently empty: Are you an empty home owner? - South Oxfordshire District Council

And tying in with National Empty Homes Week beginning on 3 March, we'll also be encouraging residents to report empty homes to us via our website here: Report an empty property - South Oxfordshire District Council

Want to apply for a grant from the Council?

We are holding a grant funding advice session at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot on **Thursday 20 March, appointments available from 12.30pm to 4pm**. Voluntary and community organisations will have the opportunity to discuss projects, ask questions about the application process including eligibility for any of the upcoming grant schemes.

Places are limited, so please book a time slot by emailing grants@southandvale.gov.uk or phone 01235 422405. Alternatively, the team are happy to book a phone call or Teams meeting at a more convenient time. Please help us to spread the word!

Local Government Reorganisation

Green Party councillor, Andrea Powell, brought a motion to a special full council meeting last month on local government reorganisation. The motion asked the Council leader to write to the Electoral Commission and the Minister regarding concerns over the electoral governance for Mayors – citing that the first past the post voting system the Conservative government brought in for Mayors and the high financial threshold for campaigns and deposits risked undemocratic and skewed outcomes that do not represent the areas fairly. You can read the motion on the South



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Oxfordshire website on the Council meetings page: Agenda for Council on Thursday, 20 February 2025, 6.00 pm

The motion was voted down, with all the Libdems voting against as well as other councillors, despite the fact that similar motions were passed by Libdems in other councils in Oxfordshire. This was an odd outcome, as so many said they supported the sentiment but thought it wasn't the right time to have a motion on this! I struggle to think of a better time to discuss accountability and democracy than when the government is proposing the biggest reorganisation of local government since 1972.

The government are asking for outline proposals for new unitary councils to be sent to them by 21st March. Despite our grave reservations on the advantages of unitary councils and our concerns about the disadvantages – the waste of time and money at this critical time in the wider country and the danger of a loss of democratic accountability with larger councils- we are putting forward an outline proposal for 2 unitary councils for the wider area. One provisionally called 'Ridgeway council', would comprise South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse and West Berkshire. The other would comprise Oxford city, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell councils (Oxfordshire council). The cabinets in both South and Vale believe this to be about the right size for the new unitaries, not so big to lose local accountability but big enough to be viable. You can read more in the Cabinet paper for the meeting on 19th March, where the other two proposals from other councils in Oxfordshire are also attached in the appendices. The link is here: *South Cabinet 19.03.25 Supplementary Papers - LGR.pdf

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