

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 15th May 2025

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

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk).

Chairman Yuille welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2025/085 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Steve Brown, Cllr Ian Burton, District Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye.

2025/086 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Residents David and Janet Haylett had emailed Cllr Rose asking if the council had any ideas for where the village History Group archive, which is currently held at their house, could be stored now that there is doubt over the new village hall. It was suggested that it could be moved to the current village hall, or better, deposited at the Oxford History Centre. Cllr Rose will advise Mr & Mrs Haylett accordingly.

2025/087 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

2025/088 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 17th April 2025.

2025/089 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- Cllr Thompson is awaiting a quote from a contractor for the replacement of the rotted gate post at Bodkins.

2025/090 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye's annual report and report for May, sent by email, are attached in appendix A.

2025/091 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Johnny Hope-Smith was elected for the Cholsey and The Hagbournes division on 1st May. The clerk has contacted him and invited him to attend future meetings of the council when he can.

2025/092 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P25/S1142/DIS	Land to the north east of Didcot	NRR
P25/S1413/FUL	Carpenters Cottage High Street LW	NSV
P25/S1414/LB	Carpenters Cottage High Street LW	NSV

2025/093 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Rose reported:

A few months ago Thomas Homes wound up their company and so withdrew from completing the project. They recommended three other developers but they all withdrew. The reason that no developer was interested was that the project was not financially viable. There was a significant (millions) shortfall due to two main reasons. Firstly that building costs have risen significantly in the last 3 years but house prices have not risen to address this. Secondly the demands of OCC on the design of the school building including the requirements for a larger playing field with high spec football pitch and the large roundabout at the site entrance.

Since the last meeting Cllr Brown and I have had several meetings to try to determine a way forward. We have met Chris Brotherton (Thomas Homes), Mark Sanders (Robert Weavers' land agent), together with a property developer recommended by him, Stephen Stratton our solicitor and the CEO of the school academy trust. We have a meeting arranged next week with school and pre-school reps. I have approached Johnny Hope-Smith, our new county councillor, for a meeting. We have a meeting arranged with the planner at SODC who is responsible for our application.

One developer is still interested but this would possibly mean a modified project

Within the next few weeks we should have a proposal for the PC as to how to proceed. We may need to make a decision quickly as there has been no progress on the S106 due to the uncertainties; SODC will not wait forever to make a decision on the application. Therefore, we may need a special meeting before the next PC meeting to agree next steps.

2025/094 ACKLINGS PLAYGROUND

Cllr Rose reported that the installation of the new equipment is in progress and is expected to take four to six weeks to complete.

Soil may need to be purchased for the mounds as part of the installation. This will come out of the £5,000 contingency fund.

Cllr Thompson is awaiting a quotation from a contractor for the replacement of the Woodland Adventure site fence.

2025/095 LONG WITTENHAM TO CLIFTON HAMPDEN PERMISSIVE PATH

The path was formally opened on 19th April by Cllr Pete Sudbury with the landowners and about seventy people present.

Cllr Thompson reported that the decision on the grant application from the OCC Flood Authority Priority Action Flood Project to fund improvements to the verge from Home Farm to the ramp is expected at the end of May. Drayton Construction Ltd have been asked to quote for the work.

2025/096 SIDs / HIGH STREET CHICANES

Cllr Corney advised that he will meet with the Community Speedwatch team in June to agree a specific proposal, identifying which type of SID would be appropriate along with costs, and the locations for the mounting poles.

2025/097 RENEWAL OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

It was agreed that this should wait until there is more certainty about the outcome of the Community Hub project.

2025/098 SSEN COMMUNITIES FUND

This fund is currently open for grant applications, but it was agreed to wait until the next funding round when the uncertainty over the Community Hub planning application will hopefully have been resolved.

2025/099 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Bolton reported that a car is still parking on the verge at Bodkins periodically. He suggested that it may be necessary to install bollards to stop it happening.

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2025/100 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- Village Gazebos
Cllr Bolton said that Long Wittenham Athletic Club stores the gazebos but they are not responsible for the management of them. He asked if Wittenham Warriors still exists to do this. Cllr Yuille will contact Sally Duff to determine the current status of the group.
- South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO)
Cllr Corney had attended a meeting of a group of parish councils that are concerned about the project. The group includes Suttons Courteney and Steventon. The group's relationship to GARD (Group Against Reservoir Development) is not clear. There are concerns that the building of the reservoir may raise the water table by a metre. Cllr Corney will broach this again when he has more information.

Actions: Cllr Yuille to find out the status of Wittenham Warriors.

2025/101 FINANCIAL REPORT

- 2024-25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
This was approved by the council and signed by the chairman and clerk.
- Income during April

03/04/2025	SODC Precept 1st Payment	£12,947.00
23/04/2024	HMRC (VAT Repayment)	£3,998.58
25/04/2024	FCC Communities Fund (Acklings Grant Part 1)	£8,333.34
April Income Total		£25,278.92
- Expenditure during April

04/04/2025	Logs Unlimited Inv 240910	£1,482.00
08/04/2025	Bosley Expenses (Payroll)	£327.40
08/04/2025	Elliff Expenses (Website Hosting)	£28.80
11/04/2025	Clerk's Salary April 2025	£350.45
11/04/2025	Burton Expenses (Dog Fouling Signs)	£9.98
15/04/2025	VHC Inv 130425 (Hall Hire)	£149.75
22/04/2025	Bank Service Charge	£4.25
April Expenditure Total		£2,352.63

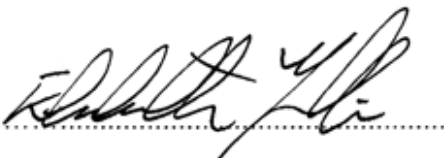
2025/102 ANY MATTERS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

None.

Meeting Closed at 8:50pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 19th June 2025

Signed:



Date:

19/6/25

APPENDIX A

2024-2025 Annual District Councillor report

It's been an eventful but productive year in the District Council. Here are some of the highlights.

Cleaner, greener technologies at Leisure centres

Over the last year we have continued our successful bidding for funds to invest in cleaner, greener technologies at our leisure centres in Didcot, Thames and Wheatley. This means there are more solar panels, and energy saving systems like fans to keep heat where it is needed.

Homes that people need

We have worked on changing our empty homes policy to bring more empty homes into use (there are just under 600 in the District), increasing council tax liability but also offering support and guidance to carry out work that would make these homes habitable if that's what is needed.

We have delivered 48 affordable homes, and progressed work to buy and build more social homes for rent. We have done this using developer contributions and grants from central government, further example of our creative approach to finding funding for our priorities.

Joint Local development Plan submitted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate

We submitted this somewhat earlier than we initially planned to, in December. We included some of the most progressive policies that we could in relation to carbon, nature and community inclusion in this plan. We did not add any more homes to the total expected to be built over the period to 2041 as the evidence showed more are not necessary. We expect the examination to happen in June. This was the culmination of 4 years of extensive work to make it the best plan for our District, while being legally compliant and sound.

Grants for communities

I have had fantastic demand for the councillor community grant, and we have increased this by 50% for next year because these grants are so popular. I have been able to award money to help fund the recreation ground in Nuneham Courtenay, a new bus stop shelter in Clifton Hampden and some money towards the work of Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue across the whole District. We've introduced a new performing arts grant, adding to the list of grants for communities e.g. capital and revenue

Launched our new 4-year Council Plan

Building on our last strategic plan, we are focusing on climate action, supporting community action, providing homes people need, and being innovative but careful with council finances. We will be delivering our first annual action plan this coming year, because even though there are local government reorganisation proposals, these will take at least two years to be finalised.

Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Charter

We have committed to supporting the county, along with other councils, by pledging our commitment to OIEP. It means when the council agrees contracts it will assess the support the supplier can offer the local community as well as the value for money of the contract. It means we will consider in each action we take how we can support the local community and economy.

New Garden Waste Permit scheme launched

This should work better for householders and the Council after the initial change. It means we will spend less money and time chasing payments and fewer bins that are being collected without payment being made as people move home etc – keeping to our commitment to better council finances and reducing waste (both garden and financial!)

Flooding prevention work with parishes and the County

We collaborated with other councils to implement more prevention measures after some really horrendous flooding in people's homes last winter. As weather patterns becomes less predictable and more severe, we are doing what we can to help people and communities adapt.

Local Government Re-organisation

Despite the very short notice given by the government, we were able to work up a viable option of a unitary council comprising South, Vale and West Berkshire. We already had a commitment that any unitary should be small enough to be close to communities it serves but large enough to be financially viable and effective. We do not think that at this time of deteriorating services and infrastructure in the country that local government reorganisation should be a priority but we need to respond to the government's requirements.

Strategic sites for houses and businesses design and delivery

Work continues in the background with developers and their agents on the big sites like land in Sandford and Culham. However, there have been a number of delays outside the council's control: Thames Water failing to upgrade the sewage works and landowners taking longer to agree terms than anticipated. We are doing whatever we can to ensure the sites will deliver developments that align with our policies and the future needs of the District.

Updates for May 2025

Website unavailability

Certain functions on the SODC website will be unavailable for a week starting on 24th May. This is because we are updating some important IT systems, as part of bringing our IT function back in-house from Capita. This will cover nearly all online services. Planning applications that overlap that period will have a 14 day extension to their consultation periods.

Residents will still be able to contact the council using the online general inquiry form or by phone.

Free outdoor community park fitness sessions

These sessions are designed for those who are new to exercise or have been inactive for some time and are a perfect way to start your fitness journey.

People can find the full dates and locations on the Active Communities Facebook page and the South Open Space Activities pages

Everyone Active grant

The Everyone Active grant is now open for applications, to improve the health and well-being of residents. There is a budget of £50,000 - with a maximum of £1,000 for each application - for projects that benefit more than one individual becoming active or sustaining activity, to groups of residents, in South Oxfordshire.

The grant scheme is open to a wide range of not-for-profit groups and sports clubs, town and parish councils/parish meetings, not for profit pre-schools, PTAs and local authority run schools or academies for non-statutory elements of the education programme.

For more information visit the Everyone Active grant scheme webpage or email grants@southandvale.gov.uk

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