Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 24th September 2026

Present: Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr Mark Thompson, Cllr Steve Brown and Cllr Richard Jackson.
10 members of the public

In attendance: Liz Cruse (Clerk/RFO).

Cllr Bolton welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2026/136 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Bolton stood as the September meeting Chairman and was proposed by Cllr Brown and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

2026/137 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

County Cllr Johnny Hope-Smith

2026/138 COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION

The Council Resolved to co-opt Laurie Read as a Councillor.

Action: Clerk to register documents with SODC

2026/138 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr Jackson registered an interest in Planning application ref P26/S3367/FUL.

2026/139 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Smoke from FCC Landfill site fires
  Residents were asking for an update on how long before the fires would be extinguished and how dangerous the particles are in the smoke. The Clerk advised that the Fire crews had handed the site back to FCC to manage the fire as it was now lower down in the waste pile. FCC were managing the extinguish which was producing plumes of smoke but they should be extinguished fully in the next few days. The advice from the EA was to log online if possible, the smoke issues etc so the EA had a full picture of the issues for residents and could take action.

2026/140 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2026.

2026/141 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- PC 'Drop in'
  Cllr Jackson and Brown advised that 20-30 residents attended and advised suggestions for future projects in the village

Action: Cllr Brown to prepare report re Drop in for the Oct meeting

- Wards Footpath

Cllr Jackson advised that the PCC would be pruning/felling the Poplars from the 5th October.
In the meantime, the work on the footpath on the other side still needs to continue

Action: Cllr Bolton to contact Logs Unlimited for a quote on the footpath work

2026/142 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr Hope-Smith's and Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye reports for September, sent by email, are attached in appendix A and B respectively.

2026/143 WHITE HORSE RESERVOIR – GARD UPDATE

Derek Stork, Chairman of GARD presented an update on the reservoir and advised the PC on next steps for being kept informed.

2026/144 EARTH TRUST ACCESS ROUTES PROJECT UPDATE

Dave Lewis, Director of Operations gave an update that the site now has a new carpark and access route. They will also be adding a cafe as part of the project.

2026/145 THAMES VALLEY POLICE COMMUNITY FUND APPLICATION

The Council discussed applying for funds to add solar powered lighting to the playground area and table tennis table. However, Councillors were concerned that this might lead to unsociable behaviour. After further discussion on the tight deadline it was agreed to wait and apply for a Scottish and Southern Grant that Cllr Brown had been advised of.

2026/146 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P26/S2726/LDE Stable Cottage High Street Long Wittenham NSV

Appeal 6009891 P24/S2764/O Land off Sires Hill southeast of B4106 Didcot

The appeal is due to take place in mid October. The Council discussed and agreed that Cllr Brown should represent the Council at the appeal. Cllr's to meet to agree objectives.

P26/S3830/FUL Willingtons Down Farm Abingdon Road Didcot OX11 9BT

The Council discussed and agreed to put forward a residents concerns to the Planning department as a comment.

2026/147 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Brown advised that there had been no response from Pye regarding the Hub.

2026/148 NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

Cllr Thompson advised that since the submission of the latest version of the NDP he has been advised that there will be a pre-submission consultation. This could take up to three months.

2026/149 NEW PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

The Clerk advised that the website is prepared and asked the Councillors to review it before it goes live.

Action: Clerk to send Cllr's link

2026/150 BODKINS PLAYGROUND 'SPIDER WEB' EQUIPMENT – ROSPA ANNUAL INSPECTION – RISK FINDING

Cllr Brown advised that the top pole of the Spider Web needs replacing but is not an immediate danger. The Council discussed whether it would be best to replace the whole item or just the top pole.

Action: Cllr Brown to get quotes for both options

2026/151 ACKLINGS IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS

The Council discussed the litter issues within the playground area and if the bin is moved further in from the road it would not be collected by Biffa anymore. It was discussed that it may be worth looking at a private company again for bin emptying. Cllr Bolton also advised that Clifton Hampden PC have a handyman that works for a couple of hours a week doing small jobs. It was agreed to revisit at the next meeting as time was running short.

Action: Clerk to contact Clifton Hampden Clerk regarding handyman

2026/152 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

- Long Wittenham Athletic Club
  Cllr Bolton advised that the grass has really suffered in the weather and it is just becoming mud. They will need to make a decision soon on re-seeding.
- Village Hall Committee (VHC)

Cllr Brown had forwarded the notes to the Cllr's from the last meeting.

2026/153 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- SODC – Capital Grant 24/25 Plaque – Acklings Playground Project Plaque

The Clerk had received the Plaque and Cllr Brown agreed to put it up at the playground.

Action: Cllr Brown to put up Plaque

- Pilgrimage route sign posts along 'The Maddy'
  Cllr Brown had been approached by a resident regarding signage to make the route clearer. Clr Brown agreed to 'mock up' some ideas for signs

Action: Cllr Brown to 'mock up 'signs

2026/154 FINANCIAL REPORT

- Expenditure during July and August
  1/7/2026, Logs Unlimited £645.22
  8/7/2026, CiLCA Training £420.00
  8/7/2026, Elliff Expenses (Website Hosting), £41.04
  1/7/2026 Scribe £39.60
  20/07/26 The Community Heartbeat Trust LWAC Defib Maint £162.00
  20/07/26 Noticeboard parts£585.19
  20/07/26, Royal British Legion - Remembrance Poppy Wreath, £50
  21/07/26 Parish Online Website Service, £300
  30/07/26 Cruse Salary (July), £386.24
  30/07/26 Cruse Expenses (Stamps) £7.20
  30/07/26 Long Wittenham Village Hall - Open morning Hire £24.00
  July Total £2660.49

  3/8/2026, Logs Unlimited £1907.01
  3/8/2026, M Rainbow Bodkins Fence £800
  August Total £2707.01

- Income during July and August
None

- 1st Quarter Reconciliation sign off
  The Clerk had distributed the report to the Cllrs. The Chairman signed the report.

Meeting Closed at 21.45pm.
Date of next meeting: Thursday 15th October 2026

Signed: ……..... Date: .....

Appendix A

County Councillor Report September 2026

Free Electric Blanket Checks – Book Early for Winter Safety

Key Details

·Oxfordshire County Council is once again offering free electric blanket safety checks to help residents stay safe and warm this winter.

·Last year, more than a third of blankets tested failed safety checks, highlighting the importance of regular testing. Faulty electric blankets can present a risk of fire or injury.

·Testing sessions will be held across Oxfordshire during September and October, including nearby locations in Didcot on the 5th October

·Appointments are expected to be popular and should be booked in advance.

What Parishes Can Do

·Share the opportunity with residents, particularly older people and vulnerable households who may rely on electric blankets during the winter.

·Encourage residents to have blankets tested even if they appear to be in good condition.

·Direct residents to the OCC booking page to arrange or manage an appointment:

Site for further details: https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/blankettesting

Temporary Restrictions on Fridge & Freezer Disposal

Key Details

·A national shortage of specialist facilities for recycling fridges and freezers has led Oxfordshire County Council to introduce temporary restrictions at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).

·Residents can now only see fridge and freezer booking availability up to one week in advance rather than the usual two weeks.

·Households are limited to one fridge or freezer booking every three months, although up to two appliances can be taken per booking.

·OCC reports that national treatment capacity has fallen by around one third, creating a significant backlog across the country.

·Residents are encouraged to use retailer take back schemes, or to sell or donate working appliances where possible.

What Parishes Can Do

·Share the temporary restrictions with residents who may be planning to dispose of fridges or freezers.

·Encourage residents to book early and check availability before travelling to an HWRC.

·Promote retailer take back services and reuse options for working appliances.

·Remind residents that proof of Oxfordshire residency is required when attending an HWRC and that visitors from outside the county are charged £15.

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 24th September 2026

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – Government Review Announced

Key Details

·The government has announced it will review its Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) decisions across England following legal advice, including the previously announced proposals affecting Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

·As a result, the government's earlier “minded to” decision for Oxfordshire has been paused while the underlying evidence and advice are reviewed.

·OCC has stated that significant preparation work has already been undertaken for LGR and is now seeking further clarification from government on the implications for the programme.

·Questions remain about the future timetable, including how this may affect local elections scheduled for May and the overall implementation timeline.

What Parishes Can Do

·Keep residents informed that no final decision has yet been made on future council structures in Oxfordshire.

·Continue to engage with existing county and district councils as normal, as current governance arrangements remain unchanged.

·Monitor future updates from government and Oxfordshire County Council, as further announcements are expected on timescales, elections and implementation.

Botley Road Reopening – Expected This Month

Key Details

·Network Rail and its contractors are currently working towards reopening Botley Road to traffic on 20 September 2026, following more than three years of closure associated with the Oxford Station expansion project. The road has been closed since April 2023 and has experienced several delayed reopening dates during that period.

·The most recent delay was announced in July after gas leaks were discovered during excavation works. Gas network operator SGN has since confirmed its work was completed on 3 August.

What Parishes Can Do

·Continue to advise residents that the current target date for reopening is 20 September 2026, whilst recognising that previous reopening dates have been postponed.

·Share updates with residents who regularly travel to Oxford, particularly commuters and those accessing the city centre and rail station.

·Monitor Network Rail announcements for confirmation that the reopening date remains on track as September progresses.

·Be aware that traffic patterns around Oxford may continue to evolve even after the road reopens as wider station improvement works continue.

·Site for updates: https://www.networkrail.co.uk/our-work/our-routes/western/oxfordshire/

REMINDER: Councillor Priority Fund – Supporting Local Projects – DEADLINE NOVEMBER 2026

The Councillor Priority Fund is still open, 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 and to then apply, visit the Councillor Priority Fund page.

https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/councillorpriorityfund

Appendix B

District Councillor Report: August/September 2026

Local Government Reorganisation – new councils for Oxfordshire

The Minister of State's decision is that from May 2028 the new Oxfordshire and West Berkshire unitary councils will consist of three separate councils. These will be North Oxfordshire, incorporating parts of the current Cherwell, and parts of West Oxfordshire; Greater Oxford which incorporates Oxford city and most of the greenbelt area around Oxford; and Ridgeway council which incorporates some of South Oxfordshire and most of Vale of the White Horse and all of West Berkshire. All the current councils, including the County Council, will be abolished and three new councils will be 'vested' (i.e created) on 1st May 2028.

Most of this current ward will be within the Greater Oxford council area, except for Long and Little Wittenham, which will be in Ridgeway. New wards will be created for the new councils, where needed, and the shape and size of these is being proposed to the Minister at the moment.

This enormous change will take some time to adapt to, as well as a massive amount of administration. It is the biggest change since 1974. And it is not the choice I

supported with the risk of being ‘swallowed up’ by Oxford city something I will be working hard to prevent, as well as working to maintain the rural character of this area.

I will be working as hard as I can, along with the council officials, to ensure services remain effective. But there is no doubt there will be bumps along the way.

Changes to Planning Rules – Town & Parish Briefing

An invitation has been sent out to town and parish councils inviting them to an online briefing session on Thursday 10 September 5.30pm – 7.30pm. This will cover the major changes under the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions which comes into force from 31 October 2026.

These changes are quite widespread and it’s important that parish councillors understand them. For those attend, the session will be recorded and shared afterwards. Please register their interest by emailing - planning.admin@southandvale.gov.uk

Cash for community groups with councillor grant scheme

A total of £270,000 is available to support community projects with this year's round of the Councillor Community Grant Scheme. Each councillor is allocated £7,500 for their ward. The grant scheme launched on Monday 17 August and is open to non-profit organisations including community and voluntary groups and town and parish councils.

Previous projects that have been supported with this grant have ranged from mental health support groups for children, play and sporting equipment, memorial benches and solar panels for community buildings.

If any groups or parish councils wish to apply, get in touch with me or go to the Grants page for more details: Councillor Community Grant Scheme 2026/27 - now open - South Oxfordshire District Council

With the councils changing across Oxfordshire, we don’t know if these grants will continue, so if your group has been thinking of applying, get on with it!

Cool spaces

With the recent heatwaves and their impact still vivid in our memories, the Council website has been updated with advice and guidance for community groups and managers of community buildings who want to set up Cool Spaces, as was recently discussed in full Council meetings. The advice includes what is needed and how to sign up to national map of cool (and warm) spaces. More information is on the website: Community groups can help in a heatwave - South Oxfordshire District Council

More grants! – the Performing Arts Grant is now open

Applications are now open for the latest round of the Performing Arts Grant scheme. The scheme offers grants of £500 to £5,000 to town/parish councils, voluntary and community organisations to support performing arts projects that bring people together and benefit local communities.

If you know a group that could benefit, please encourage them to apply. Full details are available on our website. For any questions, the Community Arts team can be contacted at performingartsgrants@southandvale.gov.uk.

Please help share this opportunity with local organisations and community groups.

To contact me email: sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk