

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M11/2025

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL
AT 7.30PM ON 10 NOVEMBER 2025

PRESENT: D. Marshall (Chairman)
Martin Smith, David Richardson, L. Wainwright and R. Gurprashad. (Councillors)

IN ATTENDANCE: Clerk: Tracey Charlesworth
W. Meads (Village Hall Booking Clerk)
C. Newton
R. Thompson (Church Warden)
2 Member of the Public.
County Cllr. L. Gordon

1. APOLOGIES: None recorded.
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST: To receive declarations of interest from councillors in relation to matters on the agenda and in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct: None received.
3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: The following matters were raised:
 1. Village Notice Board(s): To be considered as part of the Communications Survey and budget.
 2. Village Hall Bookings Clerk:
 - a. Green/Blue Bins: Next agenda PC to consider purchasing extra of each bin.
 - b. Drains: Next agenda PC to consider availability/purchase of drain rods following blockage and possible survey of drains.
 3. Footpath Stile at the end of the Village/Footpath to Fencott Stile: Both matters to be raised again with County Council.
 4. Church Warden: In attendance as an observer and to build closer relations with the Parish Council, welcomed by the Parish Council. He advised that there is a new vicar, covering eight parishes; a planned two years programme of works on the church and the church had been awarded 'Best Kept Churchyard'.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.

4. VILLAGE HALL BOOKINGS CLERK AND CLEANER: See 11.1-c-iii and 14.1-c.
5. GUEST: Proposal for village to purchase telephone box sited in the care home grounds for use as a book library: The Parish Council expressed support for the idea however, further research is required and options to be considered.
6. MINUTES:
 1. To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13 October 2025 at 7.30pm previously circulated and taken as read:

RESOLVED:

 - That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13 October 2025 at 7.30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. Duncan Marshall.
7. REPORTS:
 - a. Chairman's Report: Confirmed that the pneumatic speed strips are in place and working; data to be reviewed. Thanks were expressed to the Chairman.
 - b. Clerk's Report: Matters on the agenda.
8. VACANCIES/CO-OPTION:
 1. Consider any applications: None.
9. COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR(S): See 12.
10. PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:
 1. Civility & Respect Pledge:
 - a. Registration: Completed, certificate signed by the Chairman Cllr. D. Marshall; the logo has been added to the website.
 2. Website:
 - a. Accessibility: WCAG 2.2 AA compliance: Accessibility Statement followed up with Verve Creative Solutions.
 3. Risk Assessment: Review of Village Hall Risk Assessment and update with regards to Fire Safety in Village Halls: Consider the updated Community First Oxfordshire Information sheet 37 and any action: In hand.
 4. Asset Register: The updated register to include the felling of the eight, not 'seven' as previously minuted, Cricket Bat Willows had been circulated and taken as read.

RESOLVED:

 - To approve and accept the amended Asset Register; to be updated again once replanting has taken place.
 5. Communication Strategy: Published on website.
 - a. Questionnaire: To consider result and action: Results to be collated and shared for consideration at next meeting.
 6. Freedom of Information: To accept completed details and costs.

RESOLVED:

 - To accept completed details and costs.
 7. Community Emergency Plan: Annual Review: In progress; see 17.1.
 8. Grant Funding Policy: To consider and adopt a policy as recommended by the Internal Auditor: Model to be circulated for consideration at next meeting.

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M11/2025

9. Cash Handling Policy: To consider and adopt a policy as recommended by the Internal Auditor: Model to be circulated for consideration at next meeting.
11. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
 - a. Play Area:
 - i. Replacement of Safety Caps: Delivery received.
 - b. Recreational Area:
 - i. Bookings Update:
 - o Uggy's Pizza have no current bookings.
 - o Camping and Caravanners: Attended Friday 24-Sunday 26 October and due Friday 5-Sunday 7 December.
 - o Launton Youth FC: Due Sunday 16th November.
 - ii. Goal Posts: C/fwd.
- RESOLVED:**
- That for Health & Safety Reasons the small goal post are to be removed and stored.
- c. Village Hall:
 - i. Village Hall Bookings: Bookings coming in.
 - ii. Village Hall Hire Agreement: To be updated inline with Fire Safety requirement: See 10.3.
 - iii. Communication:
 - o Update on proposed linked calendar through the website/email addresses: Clerk to go back to the website provider with the preferred option of going through the website.
 - o Bookings Clerk Generic Email update: A generic email has been set up and will be made available once a new Bookings Clerk is in place.
 - d. Merton Woodland:
 - i. Grass and Hedge Cutting Merton Woodland: Review of contractual agreement: To be re-drafted for consideration at the next meeting.
 - ii. Hedge Cutting: Vale Countryside Volunteers update: No update; noted that the Woodland Working Group of been advised of the Parish Council's decision to fund.
 - iii. Meadow: Work completed.

Following the arrival of County Cllr. L. Gordon the following item 9 on the agenda was considered:

12. COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR(S): County Cllr. L. Gordon was welcomed and reported on the following matters:-
1. Congestion Charge: The congestion charge went live on the 29th of October. OCC will be monitoring the results closely. The funds from the congestion charge will be used to support free park and ride buses for the first three months, as well as a number of bus service improvements including a more frequent 700 bus and more frequent 2 and 2a services from Oxford Parkway Park and Ride.
 2. Cowley Branch Line: Funding for the Cowley Branch Line has been approved following investment by the county council and lobbying by the County's MPs. It will connect Littlemore, Cowley, Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys to central Oxford in under 10 minutes in a twice-hourly passenger service. A date for opening has yet be announced.
 3. East West Rail: Has removed its commitment to open at the end of the year.
 4. Part-Night Lighting Approved: following a policy change by the County Council, the Parish Councils will now have the right to request that street lights be turned off after 11:30pm. Requests should be submitted to Oxfordshire County Council.
 5. Name our Gritters: The county council has issued a call for naming suggestions for the new gritters with a particular request for any names that reference Oxfordshire's culture, history and places, suggestions submitted through 'Let's Talk Oxfordshire'.
 6. Highways Consultation: Oxfordshire is taking part in a nationwide survey on public satisfaction with transport and road services, the surveys are anonymous and are open till February 2026. <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/nht-2025>
 7. Fire and Rescue consultation: A consultation has been opened on consolidating Fire and Rescue services. The consultation is open at <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ofrs-consultation-until-february-2026>.
 8. London Road Crossing: No update.
 9. Local Government Reorganisation: O.C.C. to hold a Scrutiny meeting; C.D.C. holding a full council meeting on 11 November; in the summer there will be a parliamentary recess decision and result should be known June-August 2026.
 10. Parish Matters:
 - a. She continues to chase up about the stile and the buffer zone.
 - b. School Bus Service: The Parish Council was pleased to announce that this is running well and thanks were expressed for County Cllr. L. Gordon's support.

The Chairman thanked County Cllr. L. Gordon; she left the meeting at 8.40pm.

13. COMMUNICATIONS:
1. Merton PC Facebook Page: The Parish Council has been advised that it cannot pin to the top of the Village Facebook page as it is for the 'village'.
 - a. To consider matters for publication: The following approved for publication:-
 - i. Cherwell/Oxfordshire Bulletins: Matters published.
14. COMMUNITY:
1. Planning Applications: To consider all recent applications received from Cherwell District Council detailed below and any other planning applications submitted and published on the CDC planning portal between the agenda being published and the meeting:
 - a. **Application No: 25/02277/F**

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M11/2025

Applicant's Name: Mr and Mrs O'Neill

Proposal: Demolition of existing storage barn and erection of two dwelling houses with associated works

Location: Merton Stud, Merton, Bicester, OX25 2NF

Parish(es): Merton

Comment by 29 October

Objections submitted.

b. **Application No: 25/02734/F**

Applicant's Name: Mr Nicholas James Turner

Proposal: Erection of a single storey contemporary garden building to be used as a home office - Location: Merton

Croft, West End Lane, Merton, OX25 2NG

Parish(es): Merton

Comments by 13 November 2025 .

RESOLVED:

- That the Parish Council made no comments or objections.
2. Decision Notices: To consider all recent notices received from Cherwell District Council detailed below and any other planning notices submitted and published on the CDC planning portal between the agenda being published and the meeting: The following noted:-
- a. **Application No: 25/02188/F**
Proposal: Proposed single and double storey rear extension
Location: Winford, Main Road, Merton, Bicester, OX25 2NF
Parish(es): Merton
PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT
3. Withdrawal Notices:
a. None noted.
4. Planning Matters:
a. Stoke Lyne PC - Building a Coalition of Objection against the Puy du Fou theme park application in Bucknell: 25/02232/OUT - please confirm that you would like to join this Coalition of Objection.

RESOLVED:

- That the Parish Council did not wish to join the Coalition of Objection.
5. Traffic Calming:
a. VAS Equipment: The pneumatic strips are in place and working, data to be collected and reviewed.
b. 40mph buffer zone: County Cllr. L. Gordon following up.
c. Traffic Calming Working Group to arrange a meeting.
6. Footpaths:
a. Footpath Stile at the end of the village: See 3.3. 1.
b. Footpath to Fencott: See 3.3. 1
15. FINANCE:
1. Quotes:
a. Seating (Recreational Area): To compare cost of materials to make a bench with the cost of purchasing new: A test/sample picnic bench is in place; the cost for any further benches is £150.00 each.
b. Merton Woodland Meadow – To approve the quote retrospectively:

RESOLVED:

- That the Parish Council approved the quote for £360.00 to Cut, rake and clear the two areas of wild flower meadow (approximately 0.15 ha) on the Northern edge of the woodland site -Collected material to be distributed just inside the woodland area adjacent to the flower meadow as done in previous years.
- c. Bookings Clerk: Self Employment Insurance: To consider and approve payment if the Parish Council has the power to spend: Awaiting a response from OALC.
2. Receipts: To record and approve any receipts received listed on receipts and payments schedule: The following receipts recorded as received:-
a. Village Hall/Recreational: To confirm income from Village Hall Bookings: Income £25.00 cash to be banked.
i. Camping & Caravanners £495.00.
ii. Launton FC - £170.00 (Including refundable deposit £50.00).
iii. Hall Hire - #37 - £100.00.
b. HMRC – VAT Reclaim £1,496.30.
3. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting: The following payments were verified:-
a. Salary October 2025 - £273.80 Gross: To be verified: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2); noted that the back pay had been settled the previous month.
b. HMRC – Payment October 2025.
c. Unity Trust Bank Plc – Statement No: 051– Bank Charges 1.9.2025-30.9.2025 - £6.00 – 30.10.2025.

4. Accounts for Payment:

RESOLVED:

- To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-
- a. Salary November 2025 - £ 273.80 Gross: To be approved for payment at the end of November: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
b. Expenses:
i. Expenses October 2025 - £1.60 - plus Home Working Allowance £26.00: Power to spend under LG (Financial Provisions) Act 1963 s5
- Total Exp £27.60.
a. W. Meads – Inv. No: 28 - £113.15 (Incl. Mats £12.15) – Village Hall Cleaner.
b. Unity Trust – St. No: 053 – Charges £6.00 – 1.10.2025-31.20.2025 – Payment to be debited from account 30.11.2025.
c. M.R. & J.S. Cross – Inv. No's: 381 - £600.00 (Grass cutting Recreational area 15.10.2025/29.10.2025) – 383 -

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M11/2025

- £630.00 (Merton Woodland 26.10.2025/Woodland Meadow 30.10.2025) – Total £1,230.00
- d. Good Energy – Inv. No: KI-OCC2242£-0005 - £349.82 – Period 1.8.2025-31.10.2025.
 - e. OALC – Inv. No: 5927 - £42.00 – Breakthrough Communications – Data Protection course Part One.
 5. Funding/Grants: To consider/approve applications:
 - a. O.C.C. - County Council – Laura Gordon – Councillor Priority Fund: Update on possibility to claim for bollards: C/fwd.
 - b. C.D.C. - Applications Now Open – Community Active Travel Fund: No application to be made.
 6. Training: Consider/approve any training opportunities offered by OALC, NALC and SLCC:
 - a. Breakthrough Communications: Course name: Data Protection Part 1: Foundations & Theory - Course date and time: 03-11-25 09:30 - £35.00: Clerk to attend – Invoice to be issued by OALC.
 - b. The Parkinson's Partnership LLP – Introduction to VAT (Free) - Tue 24 Mar 2026, 10:00am - 11:30am GMT: Clerk to attend.
 7. Film Club/Age UK Performance Rights: The Licence was complete for the Film Club to go ahead.
 8. Good Energy: Electricity prices are increasing from 1st November: Review tariff: C/fwd.
 9. Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation:
 - a. Budget Comparison: 1.4.2025 – 31.3.2026 up to 10.11.2025. Presented prior to the meeting, accepted and approved, noted that there were no further anomalies.
 - b. Bank Reconciliation presented prior to the meeting, accepted and approved.
 - i. 1.10.2025 – 31.12.2025 (Unity Trust St. No: 053 31.10.2025):

Balance B/fwd:	£47,042.46
Add Receipts:	£ 2,494.55
Less Payments:	£ 4,791.85
Total C/fwd:	£44,745.16
 10. Financial Controls Checks: None presented.
 11. Banking:
 - a. Hinckley & Rugby Building Society – Savings Solutions Tailored for Town and Parish Councils: Information to be reviewed i.e., accessibility: Clerk to re-send information and any comparisons.
 - b. Unity Trust Bank Ltd: Update on additional signatories: Completed.
 12. Payroll: HMRC:
 - a. PAYE: Submissions update: Up to date.
 - b. HMRC – DM PAYE – Outstanding costs £181.83: Query update: No response to date.
 13. Budget 2026/27: To commence process: Draft based on current costs to be drawn up.
 - a. Village Notice Board: To be considered as part of the budget.
 - b. To consider the proposal to create a category for future spending:
 - i. External paving/refurbishment of rear store room.
 - ii. Village Hall Car Park: Consider proposal to purchase matting to extend parking area.
 - iii. Village Hall Car Park: Consider proposal for bollards if funding unavailable.
 - iv. Proposed purchase of six benches at a cost of £150.00 each.
 - v. Proposed purchase of bollards; example cost for fixed bollards £50.99/removable £292.00 each incl. Fitting.
 - vi. Servicing of Church Clock: Provision.
 - c. Election Reserves. To consider as part of the budget.
 - d. Income from the sale of Cricket Bat Willows to be protected.
 16. EMPLOYMENT:
 1. Clerk's Contract and Job Description: Review comments to be forwarded to Chairman.
 - a. Health & Safety: Consider lawful requirement: C/fwd.
 - b. Annual Appraisal: Recommended by Internal Auditor: To be considered.
 17. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/TRAINING: To confirm or approve attendance at meetings or training provided by NALC, SLCC, C.D.C. and OALC:
 1. **C.D.C.** - C.D.C. - Parish Liaison Flooding Workshop - Council Chamber Castle Quay - 6.30pm on Thursday 16 October in the Council Chamber at Castle Quay: Report Cllr. M. Smith: The workshop was informative and full of advice on how you can protect yourself, to form part of the Emergency Plan review.
 2. **O.C.C.** - Your Invitation for November Community Climate - Adaptation Workshops - The following workshops are currently scheduled: Evening of November 18th: An online webinar held via Microsoft Teams - Morning of November 22nd: An in-person workshop to be held at the Westgate Collaboration Space, Oxford
 3. **CFO** - Community First Oxfordshire AGM 2025 - Date: Thursday 6 November Venue: Online via Zoom – Tme:10:00-11:30.
 4. **O.C.C.** - Support for Emergency Exercise - Thursday 13th November we are running a Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) exercise at Kings Centre, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES from 10:00-14:30. There is free parking, or it is a short walk from train station or city centre. We will be providing drinks and refreshments.
 5. **CDC Parish Liaison Meeting Invitation** - 12 November 6pm - evening of Wednesday 12 November (6-8pm). This will be held remotely via MS Teams. - Agenda attached: Cllr. L. Wainwright to attend and give feedback at the next meeting.
 18. GENERAL
 1. Correspondence: Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda:
 - a. MPC353(61) **O.C.C.** - Bicester and Mid-Cherwell Movement and Place (MAP) Plan Engagement briefing - Recorded session.
 - b. MPC353(65) **CFO** - Licencing Act 2023 - TENS. Government Call for evidence -Deadline 6th November.
 - c. MPC353(67) **C.D.C.** - Local Government Reorganisation – publication of the two-unitary proposal.
 19. Matters for Further Information or Discussion:

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M11/2025

1. Matters for Further Information:
 - a. None.
 2. Matters for Further Discussion:
 - a. Pension Regulator: Three year review.
 - b. Quote for the servicing of the Church Clock.
 - c. Proposal for bin outside the bus shelter.
 - d. Proposal for new village notice board/position/cost.
 - e. Proposal to purchase a green and blue wheelie bin for the village hall.
 - f. Proposal to adopt Telephone Kiosk:
20. NEXT MEETING: To confirm:
1. Merton Parish Council Meeting to be held on 8 December 2025 at 7.30pm in Merton Village Hall.
-

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8:52pm.

Draft Minutes subject to confirmation:

Minutes approved

Minute Ref: M12/2025-5.1

Approved and Signed by the Presiding Chairman: *D. Marshall*

Date: 8 December 2025.