

# THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M12/2025

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL  
AT 7.30PM ON 8 DECEMBER 2025

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Clerk: Tracey Charlesworth  
W. Meads (Village Hall Booking Clerk)  
C. Newton  
P. Murphy (Footpath Warden and Film Club representative).  
1 Member of the Public.

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. Traffic Calming Data: Some of the data has been reviewed, showing the highest speed of 68-75mph.
  2. Village Hall Bookings Clerk/Cleaner:
    - a. Small goal posts: Need relocating.
    - b. Unscheduled football match: See 10.1-b-i (Asset Management – Recreational Area – Bookings update).
    - c. Parking: PC to considered under the budget.
    - d. Parish Council Website: Request advertising for the village hall to be reviewed as the current information is incorrect; see 10.1-c-ii (Asset Management -Village Hall – Village Hall Bookings).
    - e. W. Meads confirmed that this was her last month as the bookings Clerk and cleaner after eight years service; the Parish Council expressed its thanks.

*The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.*

4. VILLAGE HALL BOOKINGS CLERK AND CLEANER: The Parish Council would review the outcome of the Insurance enquiry as a confidential matter later in the meeting.
5. MINUTES:
  1. To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 10 November 2025 at 7.30pm previously circulated and taken as read:  
**RESOLVED:**
    - That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 10 November 2025 at 7.30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. Duncan Marshall.
6. REPORTS:
  - a. Chairman's Report: Matters on the agenda.
  - b. Clerk's Report: Matters on the agenda.
7. VACANCIES/CO-OPTION:
  1. Consider any applications: None.
8. COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR(S): County Councillor written report to be circulated.
9. PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:
  1. Civility & Respect Pledge:
    - a. Registration: Completed. Clerk to remove from the agenda.
  2. Website:
    - a. Accessibility: WCAG 2.2 AA compliance: Accessibility Statement followed up with Verve Creative Solutions:  
**RESOLVED:**
      - That the Accessibility Statement be update to include recommendations by the Website provider and the addition of 'if you would like accessibility to a document please contact the Parish Council'.
      - That the Parish Council will aim to address the issues by April 2026.
      - In order to ensure that all new PDF published will meet the standards the Parish Council will look at using Google Docs which will also aid the review of documents.
  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: To reflect capacity based on Fire exit plan.
  4. Annual Review of Audit and Governance Documents:
    - b. Financial Regulations: Current regulations to be reviewed against the March 2025 updates for adoption at the next meeting.
    - c. Standing Orders: To be reviewed for adoption at the next meeting.
  5. Risk Assessments: Annual Review of : Allotments; Parish Council; Village Hall; Play Area; Woodland Volunteers; Village Hall Cleaner: Review following Practitioners Guide: Village Hall Risk Assessment to include capacity based on Fire exit plan and parking. Review for adoption at next meeting.
  6. Communication Strategy:
    - a. Questionnaire: To consider result and action: The results have been circulated and taken as read; the Parish Council have taken some useful suggestions from the questionnaire, in response a piece will be written for the

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Parish Council Facebook page and shared with the Village Facebook page.

**Councillor R. Gurprashad gave his apologies and left the meeting, the meeting continued quorate.**

7. Community Emergency Plan: Annual Review: In progress.
  8. Grant Funding Policy: To consider and adopt a policy as recommended by the Internal Auditor: Model circulated, to be adapted to meet the Parish Council needs.
  9. Cash Handling Policy: To consider and adopt a policy as recommended by the Internal Auditor: Model circulated, to be adapted to meet the Parish Council needs.
  10. Pension Regulator: Three year review noted as an action and carried forward to next meeting.
10. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
    - a. Play Area:
      - i. Replacement of Safety Caps: Date to be scheduled to carry out remaining replacements.
    - b. Recreational Area:
      - i. Bookings Update: Income should exceed £3,500.00 this year with the playing field bringing in the majority of the revenue.
        - o Uggys Pizza have confirmed their attendance twice a month.
        - o An unscheduled Football match meant players had access to the toilets whilst there was a hall booking, £15.00 is to be deducted from the football club deposit to reimburse the hall hirer, as agreed, for the inconvenience. Payment to be made from the petty cash and Clerk to add withdrawal of cash to maintain the float at £28.00 to the next agenda.
      - ii. Goal Posts: C/fwd.
      - iii. Grass Cutting: Approval of eleventh cut: Due to the wet weather and growth an eleventh cut was required.

**RESOLVED:**

        - The eleventh cut was approved.
    - c. Village Hall:
      - i. Appointment of Village Hall Cleaner and Bookings Clerk: See 13.1-b – Finance – Bookings Clerk.
      - ii. Village Hall Bookings: Bookings coming in. Advertising for the hall on the village website to be amended.
      - iii. Village Hall Hire Agreement: To be updated inline with Fire Safety requirement:
      - iv. Village Hall Fire Checks– To approve booking annual check with Chilman Fire & Security.

**RESOLVED:**

        - Clerk to book annual Village Hall fire check with Chilman Fire & Security.
        - v. Availability/purchase of drain rods following blockage and possible survey of drains: To consider proposal to purchase if the PC does not have access to a set of drain rods and/or drainage survey. Cllr. P. Stubbs to leave a set of his drain rods in the village hall. Quotes for a drain survey to be obtained.
        - vi. Communication:
          - o Update on proposed linked calendar through the website /email address: No update reported.
    - d. Merton Woodland:
      - i. Grass and Hedge Cutting Merton Woodland: Review of contractual agreement: Draft agreement circulated and taken as read:

**RESOLVED:**

        - To approve the draft agreement.
        - ii. Hedge Cutting: Vale Countryside Volunteers update: Booked for January, February and March 2026.
        - iii. Cricket Bat Willows: Clerk to chase Wright's regarding the replanting.

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6. Footpaths:
  - a. Footpath Stile at the end of the village: No update.
  - b. Footpath to Fencott: No update.
7. Film Club: To discuss/approve Age UKs offer to leave their DVD and TV equipment with the Parish Council so that film nights can be held for villagers: To clarify insurance cover before accepting.
8. Telephone Kiosk: Update; to consider options: Once ownership is confirmed the Parish Council will consider its options.
9. Community Event:
  - a. To note power to spend: The Parish Council has the power to run events under LGA 1972 s145;
  - b. To consider/approve event and spending limit: The type of event and a budget would need to be considered.

### C. Newton left the meeting at 9:05pm.

13. FINANCE:
  1. Quotes:
    - a. Seating (Recreational Area): To consider/approve quote to purchase six benches.

**RESOLVED:**

    - To accept and approve the quote of £150.00 each for seven benches in total plus £50.00 delivery.; payment to be covered by the income from the Cricket Bat Willows.
    - b. Church Clock: To consider/approve quote for servicing: Awaiting confirmation that the original quote still stands and if the clock hands would be working as a result of any servicing.
    - c. Bookings Clerk: (Village Hall Cleaner) Self Employment Insurance: To consider and approve payment if the Parish Council has the power to spend: OALC confirmed that the Parish Council does not have the power to spend.

**RESOLVED:**

    - That the Parish Council did not approve payment of the Self Employment Insurance as it does not have the power to spend; there would be no need to pay for additional insurance.
    - Contract to be put in place with the Parish Council January 2026, for which the Parish Council's insurance will provide cover.
  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 £110.00 cash to be banked for the following:-
      - i. Hall Hire #45 - £60.00
      - ii. Hall Hire #46 - £50.00
  3. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting: The following payments were verified:-
    - a. Salary November 2025 - £273.80 Gross: To be verified: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
    - b. HMRC – Payment November 2025.
    - c. Unity Trust Bank Plc – Statement No: 053 – Charges £6.00 – 1.10.2025-31.10.2025 – Payment to be debited from account 30.11.2025.
  4. Accounts for Payment:

**RESOLVED:**

    - To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-
    - a. Salary December 2025 - £ 273.80 Gross: To be approved for payment at the end of December: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
    - b. Expenses:
      - i. Expenses November 2025 - £1.60 - plus Home Working Allowance £26.00: Power to spend under LG (Financial Provisions) Act 1963 s5Total Exp £27.60.
    - a. W. Meads – Inv. No: 029 - £51.50 (Incl. £3.00 mats) – 1.11.2025-30.11.2025 – Village Hall Cleaner.
    - b. Unity Trust – St. No: 054 – Charges £6.00 – 1.11.2025-31.11.2025 – Payment to be debited from account 30.12.2025.
    - c. Castle Water Ltd – Inv. No: 10008345220 - £13.35 – Period 1.10.2025 – 31.10.2025.
    - d. Gavin Moss – Invoice for picnic benches £1,100.00 (incl. £50.00 delivery) – Payment due upon delivery of benches; delivery expected Saturday.
  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; to ascertain deadline date.
  6. Training: Consider/approve any training opportunities offered by OALC, NALC and SLCC:
    - a. HMRC- Mileage, motoring and meal allowances – On-line webinar for Employers: Noted.
    - b. Assertion 10: Clerk attended; reported that Assertion 10 would form part of the AGAR; as part of the GDPR requirement Generic Emails are required.
  7. Good Energy: Electricity prices are increasing from 1<sup>st</sup> November: Review tariff: C/fwd.
  8. Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation:
    - a. Budget Comparison: 1.4.2025 – 31.3.2026 up to 8.12.2025. 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: 054 30.11.2025):

Balance B/fwd:	£47,042.46
Add Receipts:	£ 2,759.55
Less Payments:	£ 6,834.22
Total C/fwd:	£42,967.79
  9. Financial Controls Checks: Financial Controls Check presented and signed by Financial Controller; RFO signed, Minute reference to be completed.
  10. Banking:
    - a. Hinckley & Rugby Building Society – Savings Solutions Tailored for Town and Parish Councils: Clerk to explore

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- opening an account.
- b. Unity Trust Bank Ltd: To note changes to fees and charges-Effective from 1 February 2026.
11. Payroll: HMRC:
    - a. PAYE: Submissions update: Up to date.
    - b. HMRC – DM PAYE – Outstanding costs £181.83: Query update: No response to date.
  12. 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: A budget of £300.00 to be provided.
    - b. To consider the proposal to create a category for future spending:
- RESOLVED:**
- To approve a category for future spending for:-
    - i. External paving/refurbishment of rear store room: Yes.
    - ii. Village Hall Car Park: Consider proposal to purchase matting to extend parking area: No budget.
    - iii. Village Hall Car Park: Consider proposal for bollards if funding unavailable: Yes – See 13.5-a.
    - iv. Proposal for bin outside the bus shelter: To consider proposal: No budget.
    - v. Proposal for new village notice board/position/cost: To consider proposal:
    - vi. Proposal to purchase a green and blue wheelie bin for the village hall: To consider proposal: Yes.
    - vii. Availability/purchase of drain rods following blockage and possible survey of drains: To consider proposal to purchase if the PC does not have access to a set of drain rods: No budget for drain rods; yes budget for survey.
  - c. Election Reserves. To consider as part of the budget: Provided under reserves.
  - d. Income from the sale of Cricket Bat Willows: To confirm power to spend: Noted that as the income of £7,200 is below the £10,000 capital receipt threshold the Parish Council may use the money as it sees fit within its current powers.
14. 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.
  15. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/TRAINING: To confirm or approve attendance at meetings or training provided by NALC, SLCC, C.D.C. and OALC:
    1. CDC Parish Liaison Meeting Invitation - 12 November 6pm - evening of Wednesday 12 November (6-8pm). This will be held remotely via MS Teams: Report from Cllr. L. Wainwright: The meeting had been informative and focussed on how parish councils should respond to planning application; awaiting provision of slides.
    2. O.C.C. - Briefing from Chief Fire Officer - Fire and Rescue consultation | Oxford & Kidlington - Mon 10/11/2025 :00 PM - 7:00 PM: No attendance recorded.
    3. CFO - Hall committee networking meeting online next Thursday 13th November 10am to 11am - They will be on the 2nd Thursday of every month: No attendance recorded.
  16. GENERAL
    1. Correspondence: Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda: The following noted:-
      - a. MPC354(10): O.C.C. - For awareness and information - Bicester & Mid-Cherwell Movement and Place Plan Consultation Live until 1st December - **public consultation event** where we will be listening and engaging with members of the public, so we can learn more about local views. This will be held at:- Bicester – Friday Market, Sheep Street - 14<sup>th</sup> November between 09:00 – 16:00.
      - b. MPC354(26): O.C.C. - Q&A session: Bicester and Mid-Cherwell Movement and Place (MAP) Plan.
      - c. MPC354(30): O.C.C. - National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey 2025-26 - Public Representatives.
      - d. MPC354(35): C.D.C. - Monitoring Officer's Annual Report 2024/25 – Complaints, Conduct & Ethics.
      - e. MPC354(49): C.D.C. - Recorded Q&A session of the Bicester and Mid-Cherwell Movement and Place (MAP) Plan Engagement.
      - f. MPC354(51): Solar Source Electrical.co.uk - Merton Village Hall - Solar Source Electrical - Introduction – Is the PC interested.
  17. Matters for Further Information or Discussion:
    1. Matters for Further Information:
      - a. Pot Holes from Islip to Merton to be filled.
    2. Matters for Further Discussion:
      - a. Welcome Pack: Revue.
  18. NEXT MEETING: To confirm:
    1. Merton Parish Council Meeting to be held on 12 January 2026 at 7.30pm in Merton Village Hall.
    2. To approve list of meeting dates for 2026-2027: To take into account Elections 7 May 2026:
- RESOLVED:**
- To approve meetings will continue to be held on the second Monday of the month with the exception of August; the Parish Council has an election year and the date in May may need to be reviewed.

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There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:54pm.

**Draft Minutes subject to confirmation:**

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

**Date:** 12 January 2026.