

# THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M1/2026

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL  
AT 7.30PM ON 12 JANUARY 2026

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Clerk: Tracey Charlesworth  
W. Meads  
C. Newton

1. APOLOGIES:

**RESOLVED:**

- To accept apologies from Cllr. R. Gurprashad and County Cllr. L. Gordon.

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 Hall Bookings Clerk/Cleaner:

- W. Meads confirmed that she had handed over everything to do with the village hall except for last years bookings forms, which would be destroyed in a years time. A copy of the Village Hall folder notes to be forwarded. The Parish Council expressed its thanks.

4. VILLAGE HALL BOOKINGS CLERK AND CLEANER: C. Newton had been provided with a copy of the proposed contract. See 10.1-c-i.

5. MINUTES:

- To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8 December 2025 at 7.30pm previously circulated and taken as read:

**RESOLVED:**

- That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8 December 2025 at 7.30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. Duncan Marshall.

6. REPORTS:

- Chairman's Report: Matters on the agenda.
- Clerk's Report: Matters on the agenda.

7. VACANCIES/CO-OPTION:

- Consider any applications: None.

8. COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR(S): County Councillor's written report was read.

9. PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:

1. Website:

- Accessibility: WCAG 2.2 AA compliance: The updated Accessibility Statement had been circulated; to be published on the website.

2. 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: The fire risk section of the Village Hall Risk Assessment had been reviewed based on the guidance; it was noted that the safety guidance for hirers needs to be added to the conditions of hire along with a note regarding the electrical equipment that the PC is responsible for i.e., annual PAT Testing and that any equipment used in the hall by the hirer would be their own responsibility. A printed copy of the guidance along with a copy of the fire check certificate needs to be added to the folder.

3. Annual Review of Audit and Governance Documents:

- Financial Regulations: Current regulations to be reviewed against the March 2025 updates for adoption at the next meeting.
- Standing Orders: To be reviewed for adoption at the next meeting.

4. Risk Assessments: Annual Review of Allotments; Parish Council; Village Hall; Play Area; Woodland Volunteers; Village Hall Cleaner assessments following Practitioners Guide: Village Hall Risk Assessment to include capacity based on Fire exit plan and parking; the provision of a ramp to be considered as part of the 'wish list' for the village hall. Review for adoption at next meeting.

5. Communication Strategy:

- Questionnaire: To consider result and action: Having taken some useful points from the results of the questionnaire to action, the Clerk was tasked with removing from the agenda.

6. Community Emergency Plan: Annual Review: The plan has been reviewed and information updated; in-line

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with GDPR any personal details are to be removed and a list of volunteers is to be kept separately for use in an emergency, once consent to retain personal details is sought. Draft to be shared for comments.

7. 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.
  8. 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.
  9. Pension Regulator: The three year review date start on 6 April 2026 and the deadline is 7 September 2026.
10. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
    - a. Play Area:
      - i. Replacement of Safety Caps: Date agreed to carry out remaining replacements 24 January 2026.
    - b. Recreational Area:
      - i. Bookings Update: Launton FC still booking.
      - ii. Goal Posts: C/fwd.
    - c. Village Hall:
      - i. Appointment of Village Hall Cleaner and Bookings Clerk:
        - o Contract: A couple of amendments were agreed.

### RESOLVED:

- That the contract was approved with the agreed amendments.
  - Approval of Appointment:

### RESOLVED:

- That the appointment of Catherine Newton as the Village Hall Cleaner was approved and accepted; once amended the new contract to be signed.
- That the appointment of Catherine Newton as the volunteer Bookings Clerk was approved.
  - ii. Village Hall Bookings: A couple of enquiries have come in since Christmas.
  - iii. Village Hall Hire Agreement: To be updated inline with Fire Safety requirement: The safety guidance for hirers needs to be added to the conditions of hire along with a note regarding the electrical equipment that the PC is responsible for i.e., annual PAT Testing and that any equipment used in the hall by the hirer would be their own responsibility.
  - iv. Village Hall Fire Checks: Chilman Fire & Security have completed the annual check, 1x2kg Co2 Extinguisher was replaced and re-sited at the correct height, leaving a small repair job.
  - v. Communication:
    - o Update on proposed linked calendar through the website /email address:As a result of not cancelling the 'Free Trial' for Dropbox for Parish Council use, the Chairman has had to pay for a years subscription; Clerk to add to next agenda for consideration and approval of reimbursement.
- d. Merton Woodland:
  - i. Hedge Cutting: Vale Countryside Volunteers update: Scheduled dates were noted.
  - ii. Cricket Bat Willows: Update on replanting: Awaiting a response.

### 11. COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Merton PC Facebook Page:
  - a. To consider matters for publication: The following approved for publication:-
    - i. Cherwell/Oxfordshire Bulletins: Matters published.
    - ii. Agenda published.

### 12. 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. None.
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: **25/02277/F**  
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  
REFUSAL OF PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT  
Date of Decision: 9 December 2025
  - b. Application No: **25/02734/F**  
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

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## PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

Date of Decision: 17 December 2025

3. Withdrawal Notices:
  - a. None noted.
4. Planning Matters:
  - a. C.D.C. - Bloxham Modified Neighbourhood Plan - consultation period commences on Monday 8th December 2025 and the deadline for receiving comments is Sunday 1 February 2026 11.59pm .
  - b. C.D.C. - Update on Thames Valley devolution plans.
  - c. Bletchingdon Parish Council - Notification of consultation on the Bletchingdon and Hampton Gay and Poyle Neighbourhood Development Plan: Regulation 14.
  - d. C.D.C. - Mid-Cherwell Modified Neighbourhood Plan. Publication of Plan Proposal under Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (As Amended) – Regulation 16
5. Traffic Calming: The Traffic Calming Working Group have held a meeting to discuss further options; whilst the group are in favour of the purchase of additional SID's the Parish Council support the purchase of further pneumatic speed strips; quotes to be sought for consideration at next meeting.
  - a. VAS Equipment: Data collected and being reviewed.
  - b. 40mph buffer zone: County Cllr. L. Gordon following up.
6. Footpaths:
  - a. Footpath Stile at the end of the village: As O.C.C. have closed this action, Clerk was tasked with removing from agenda.
  - 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:  
**RESOLVED:**
  - To approve that the DVD and TV equipment can be left in the village hall.
8. Telephone Kiosk: Update; to consider options: Once ownership is confirmed the Parish Council will consider its options.
9. Community Event:
  - a. To consider/approve event and spending limit: Having confirmed the power to spend, Clerk to remove from agenda.
10. Village Hall Welcome Pack: To consider/approve reviewed document:  
**RESOLVED:**
  - To approve for publication on the website following a couple of amendments.

### 13. FINANCE:

1. Quotes:
  - a. Church Clock: To consider/approve quote for servicing: The quote had been amended to reflect investigation as to why the hands are not working. This has been considered as part of the budget for 2026-27.
  - b. Drainage Survey: Quotes to be obtained as a guideline
  - c. Grass Cutting: To consider/approve quotes for 2026/27 for the Woodland and Recreational Area:  
**RESOLVED:**
    - To approve the following quote:
      - Woodland:
        - The bridleway that largely runs around the perimeter of the woodland £57.00 plus VAT per cut.
        - The figure-8 footpath that runs through the central area £57.00 plus VAT per cut.
        - The path through the cricket-bat willows by the edge furthest from the road £57.00 plus VAT per cut.
        - The meadow area adjacent to the road. One cut and rake per annum August/Sept. Collected material to be distributed just inside the woodland area adjacent to the flower meadow £370.00 plus VAT per cut.
      - Recreational Area:
        - Twelve cuts (although less may be required if the summer is very dry) £260.00 plus VAT per cut.
    - To confirm the requirement of twelve cuts to the Woodland.
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 £50.00 cash to be banked; the following paid by bank transfer/credit:-
    - i. Hall Hire #47- £60.00
    - ii. Hall Hire #48 - £60.00
    - iii. Hall Hire #49 - £120.00
    - iv. Hall Hire #50 - £195.00
    - v. Hall Hire #51 - £30.00

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- vi. Hall Hire #52 - £30.00
  - vii. Hall Hire #53 - £85.00
  - viii. Hall Hire #54 - £180.00
3. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting: The following payments were verified:-
- a. Salary December 2025 - £273.80 Gross: To be verified: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
  - b. HMRC – Payment December 2026.
  - c. Unity Trust Bank Plc – St. No: 054 – Charges £6.00 – 1.11.2025-31.11.2025 – Payment to be debited from account 30.12.2025.
  - d. Castle Water – Inv. No: 10008582300 - £34.55 - £13.35 paid – o/s £21.20 – Payment set up 13.12.2025
4. Accounts for Payment:
- RESOLVED:**
- To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-
- a. Salary Salary - January 2026 - £ 273.80 Gross: To be approved for payment at the end of January: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
  - b. Expenses:
    - i. Expenses December 2025 - £1.60 - plus Home Working Allowance £26.00: Power to spend under LG (Financial Provisions) Act 1963 s5  
Total Exp £27.60.
  - c. W. Meads – Village Hall Cleaner – Inv. No: 030 - £90.00 - Period 1.12.2025-31.12.2025
  - d. Unity Trust – St. No: 055 – Charges £6.00 – 1.12.2025-31.12.2025 – Payment to be debited from account 31.1.2026
  - e. M.R. & J.S. Cross – Inv. 392 - £300.00 – (Grass cutting recreational ground 10.12.2025)
  - f. Castle Water Ltd – Inv. No: 10008843986 - £50.82 (£20.21 already set up for payment) – outstanding £29.62 period 01 December 2025 - 30 December 2025.
  - g. OALC – Inv. No: 5967 - £42.00 – Breakthrough Communications – Data Protection Part 2.
  - h. Cash withdrawal Petty Cash - £15.00 (To top petty cash float back up).
  - i. Chilman Fire & Security – Inv. No: 66217 - £182.04 – Annual Fire Check: Invoice not listed on schedule but approved for payment as the fire safety check had been approved previously.
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. Breakthrough Communications – Data Protection Part 2: To note Clerks attendance 19 January 2026.
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 12.1.2026. 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: 055 31.12.2025):

Balance B/fwd:	£47,042.46
Add Receipts:	£ 3,519.85
Less Payments:	£ 8,341.87
Total C/fwd:	£42,220.44
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 opening an account.
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 consider/approve draft budget based on the following:
- 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.
    - i. External paving/refurbishment of rear store room: Provision.
    - ii. Village Hall Car Park: Consider proposal for bollards if funding unavailable: Provision.
    - iii. Proposal for new village notice board/position/cost: Provision.
    - iv. Proposal to purchase a green and blue wheelie bin for the village hall: Provision.
    - v. Survey of drains: Quotes required for future consideration.
- RESOLVED:**
- To approve the draft budget following an amendment to provisions for funds to zero resulting in a budget of £23,192.36.
- c. Funds/Reserves: To be reviewed.
13. Precept 2026/27: C.D.C. - Parish Tax Base Figures and Precepts - Timetable - precept request should be submitted to the Council's finance team, by 11 January 2026. All precepts will be considered by CDC's full

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Council on 23 February 2026:

- a. To approve a precept requirement based on the budget:

**RESOLVED:**

- To approve a precept requirement based on the budget of £23,000.00.
- b. To note the Draft Tax Basis 2026/27: Noted that the Draft Tax Base for 2026/27 is 147.6 presenting a movement of 0.2% on 2025/26 147.3 the amount that will show on the council tax bill for a band D property will be £155.83 a 6.76% (£6.76) increase on 2025/26.

14. Account Year Ending 31 March 2026:

- a. Internal Audit: To complete the questionnaire and send paperwork as requested.
- b. Oxon SA Moore – To note details of 2025/26 External Audit timeline & requirements for submissions – Oxfordshire.
- c. Oxon SA – Moore UK - Have Your Say! SAPPP and CIPFA Launch Joint Consultation on Proper Practices for Smaller Authorities.

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 - Online Elections 2026 Parish Briefing - 5pm start – 29 January 2026: Clerk and Cllr. L. Wainwright to attend.
2. Oxfordshire Mind - Free Mental Health Training for Councillors.

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. MPC355(44) O.C.C. - Merton Bridleway No. 4 - Proposed Definitive Map Modification Order: Noted.
  - b. MPC355(57) O.C.C. - New booking system at the Household Waste Recycling Centres: Published on Facebook.
  - c. MPC355(59) O.C.C. - FOR INFORMATION: Oxfordshire Street Design Code.
  - d. MPC355(60) National Highways - Important roadworks information: M40 southbound between junctions 2 and 1A - technology work: Published on Facebook.

17. Matters for Further Information or Discussion:

1. Matters for Further Information: None.
2. Matters for Further Discussion: None.

18. NEXT MEETING: To confirm:

1. Merton Parish Council Meeting to be held on 9 February 2026 at 7.30pm in Merton Village Hall.

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There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:40pm.

***Draft Minutes subject to confirmation:***

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

**Date: 9 February 2026**

**Minute Ref: M2/2026-4.1.**