

# THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M2/2026

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL  
AT 7.30PM ON 9 FEBRUARY 2026

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Clerk: Tracey Charlesworth  
C. Newton (Village Hall Bookings Clerk/Cleaner)  
Two Parishioners

1. APOLOGIES:  
**RESOLVED:**
  - To accept apologies from 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. Traffic Calming: Update provided.
4. MINUTES:
  1. To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12 January 2026 at 7.30pm previously circulated and taken as read:  
**RESOLVED:**
    - That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12 January 2026 at 7.30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. Duncan Marshall.
5. REPORTS:
  - a. Chairman's Report: Matters on the agenda.
  - b. Clerk's Report: Matters on the agenda.
6. VACANCIES/CO-OPTION:
  1. Consider any applications: None.
7. COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR(S): County Councillor's written report was taken as read and noted.
8. PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:
  1. Website:
    - a. Accessibility: WCAG 2.2 AA compliance: The updated Accessibility Statement has been 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. To be completed by next meeting.
  3. Annual Review of Audit and Governance Documents:
    - a. Standing Orders:  
**RESOLVED:**
      - To approve and adopt the adapted version of the NALC Model Standing Orders - 2025 UPDATE (ENGLAND).
    - b. Internal Financial Controls Policy:  
**RESOLVED:**
      - To approve and adopt with no amendments recorded.
  4. Risk Assessments: Annual Review of Allotments; Parish Council; Village Hall; Play Area; Woodland Volunteers; Village Hall Cleaner assessments following Practitioners Guide: Review to be completed for adoption at next meeting.
    - a. Tree Survey: To consider/approve annual Tree Survey as stated in Risk Assessment: Arrangements to be made with a volunteer from a Company in the village offering its services.
  5. Community Emergency Plan: Annual Review: The draft plan has been amended to remove any personal details; permission to be sought for any personal details held on a volunteers list.  
**RESOLVED:**
    - To approve and adopt the draft with amendments to be published on the website.
      - a. O.C.C. - Annual community Emergency Plan Survey and GDPR consent – If you have a

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community emergency plan, please make sure JORT have a copy: To approve submission of approved emergency plan:

### RESOLVED:

- Clerk to submit a copy of approved Emergency Plan to JORT.

6. Asset Register: Review to include the addition of traffic calming equipment and picnic benches:

### RESOLVED:

- To approve the asset register with the addition of:-
    - 2 x Radar Speed Sign Evolis Vision - purchase value £4,678.98.
    - 2 x Galvanised steel tubes to mount speed signs – purchase value £97.80
    - 1 x RoadPod VT 5900 Plus incl. RC/Field kit and cable – purchase value £1,325.00
    - Seven six seater picnic benches/Delivery £50.00 – purchase value £1,000.00
7. Grant Funding Policy: To consider and adopt a policy as recommended by the Internal Auditor: Draft to be circulated for review and adoption at the next meeting.
8. Cash Handling Policy: To consider and adopt a policy as recommended by the Internal Auditor: the adapted draft had been circulated and taken as read:

### RESOLVED:

- To approve and adopt the Cash Handling Policy with the removal of para. 7 Petty Cash; refer to items below 8.9 Financial Regulation and 8.9a: 10.1-a of the Financial Regulations – Petty cash float to be reviewed and 12.5-a-i: To consider/approve the need for a petty cash float.
9. Financial Regulations: Review:

### RESOLVED:

- To approve the adoption of the updated Financial Regulations with the removal of para. 10.1-a below based on the decision below 12.4-h-i: To consider/approve the need for a petty cash float and the document renumbered accordingly.

- a. 10.1-a: Petty cash float to be reviewed:

10. Code of Conduct: Review:

### RESOLVED:

- That there were no amendments or updates noted to the current Code of Conduct.

11. Pension Regulator: The three year review update start on 6 April 2026 and the deadline is 7 September 2026: Clerk/RFO to provide personal information.

12. Parish Council Elections 2026: Parish Briefing update: Noted that Cllr. L. Wainwright and the Clerk had attended the online briefing: The Clerk has circulated the parish briefing; candidate security and the Microsoft Bookings step-by-step guidance; completed nomination papers have to be submitted to C.D.C., Castle Quay offices by 4pm on 9 April and no later; there is a strict timetable for everything; Cllr. L. Wainwright offered to make an appointment to submit all the forms (allowing enough time for any amendments that may or may not be needed). Cllr. D. Richardson informed the Parish Council that he would not be re-standing for election.

## 9. ASSET MANAGEMENT:

1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:

a. Play Area:

- i. Replacement of Safety Caps: Completed.

b. Recreational Area:

- i. Bookings Update: Launton FC have cancelled some bookings.
- ii. Goal Posts: C/fwd.

c. Village Hall:

- i. Appointment of Village Hall Cleaner and Bookings Clerk:
  - Contract: Following a few minor adjustments the contract can be signed.
- ii. Village Hall Bookings: The bookings clerk had received some compliments from bookings. There is a booking for a party; wedding and the caravanners have been in touch.

Cllr. R. Gurprashad gave his apologies and left the meeting at 8:32pm the meeting continued quorate.....

- iii. Village Hall Hire Agreement: To be updated inline with Fire Safety requirement: C/fwd to March meeting.

iv. Communication:

- Generic Email for Bookings Clerk: Set up to be completed then website details to be updated.

- d. Merton Woodland: Volunteers had a session last Sunday and are meeting to discuss concerns regarding the health of some of the trees, awaiting a report; the Parish Council supported the idea of a children's Easter Egg Hunt.

- i. Hedge Cutting: Vale Countryside Volunteers update: Have started pruning works.
- ii. Cricket Bat Willows: Update on replanting: Awaiting a response.

## 10. COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Merton PC Facebook Page:

- a. To consider matters for publication: The following approved for publication:-

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- i. Cherwell/Oxfordshire Bulletins: Matters published.
- ii. Agenda published.
- iii. Volunteers Litter Pick
- iv. Parish Council Litter pick April 2026.
- v. O.C.C. FixMyStreet Super User information.
- vi. Parish Council Election information when it becomes available.

### 11. 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 noted.
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. None noted.
3. Withdrawal Notices:
  - a. None noted.
4. Planning Matters:
  - a. C.D.C. - MAP Plan: Bicester and Surrounding Villages – re-coding of meeting - all comments are required by COP Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February: No comments recorded.
  - b. C.D.C. - Local Government Reorganisation - diary invitation from Democracy to join a briefing on the upcoming consultation on Local Government Reorganisation which we expect to be launched week commencing 2nd February 2026: Noted.
5. Traffic Calming:
  - a. VAS Equipment: Data collected and being reviewed.
  - b. 40mph buffer zone: Chair Cllr. D. Marshall, County Cllr. L. Gordon and O.C.C. Highways met to discuss the possibility of a 40mph buffer zone at either end of the village; whilst O.C.C. can budget for an unmarked hidden entrance sign it has a backlog of works and is unlikely to have the budget for the buffer zone for which it has to work in conjunction with Thames Valley Police to change speed limits; for the consultation and works estimated a cost of £6,500.00. The option would be to wait until funding is available or for the Parish Council to consider funding the cost itself. After careful consideration; whilst the Parish Council supported the cost in principle it would need a formal quote from O.C.C. to formally consider and approve.
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: Work ongoing.
7. Film Club: No update.
8. Telephone Kiosk: Update; to consider options: Clerk to forward photos as requested by BT.
9. Village Hall Welcome Pack: To be published on the website.
10. O.C.C. FixMyStreet Super User – Would the parish council be interested in having a councillor or local resident volunteer as a FixMyStreet Super User? Parish Council to consider: Information to be put on Facebook.
11. Bus Shelter Timetable: Request for the repair the acrylic safety glazing: Cllr. M. Smith will investigate whether or not it can be replaced.
12. Village Notice Board: To consider/approve siting: A Facebook voting platform had resulted in a majority vote for the a notice board to be sited in the Bus Shelter; quotes to be obtained for the April meeting.

### 12. FINANCE:

1. Quotes:
  - a. Drainage Survey: Quotes to be obtained as a guideline for next meeting.
  - b. Zurich Municipal Insurance – To consider/approve quotes for the additions of traffic calming equipment and benches.

#### RESOLVED:

- To accept that the premium that would be generated by the adjustments would be waived as a gesture of goodwill this year but will increase the premium around £22.43 at renewal.
  - To approve the addition of the 2x Radar Speed signs and the 1 x Roadpod VT5900 plus/field kit and cable.
  - The 2 x galvanised steel tubes to mount the speed signs at a value of £97.00 would not be covered as there is a minimum excess of £100.00.
- c. Pneumatic Speed Strips: To consider/approve purchase of and where funding from.

#### RESOLVED:

- To purchase a second set of 2 x Radar Speed signs and the 1 x Roadpod VT5900 plus/field kit at a

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cost of £1,591.80 as per pro-forma invoice from MetroCount; cost to be met by the Traffic Calming Fund.

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 £211.00 cash to be banked; the following paid by bank transfer/credit:-
    - i. Hall Hire - #59 - £60.00
  - b. C.D.C. - Remittance Advice – Ref. No: 30052177 – Adopt a Site Agreement – April-Sept 2025 - £130.30.
3. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting: The following payments were verified:-
  - a. Salary January 2026 - £274.60 Gross: plus £0.80 from previous month: To be verified: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
  - b. HMRC – Payment January 2026.
  - c. Unity Trust Bank Plc – St. No: 055 – Charges £6.00 – 1.12.2025-31.12.2025 – Payment to be debited from account 31.1.2025.
4. Accounts for Payment:

### RESOLVED:

- To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-
- a. Salary - February 2026 - £ 273.80 Gross: To be approved for payment at the end of February: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
- b. Expenses:
  - i. Expenses January 2026 - £1.60 - plus Home Working Allowance £26.00: Power to spend under LG (Financial Provisions) Act 1963 s5  
Total Exp £27.60.
- c. C. Newton – Village Hall Cleaner – (No invoice presented at time of printing): Inv. No: 01 presented - £15.00; Bank details to be provided to set up new payee with Unity Trust Bank.
- d. Unity Trust – St. No: 056 – Charges £6.00 – 1.1.2026-31.1.2026 – Payment to be debited from account 28.2.2026
- e. D. Marshall – Reimbursement – Inv. No: 9R4DJ3PI - £95.88 – Dropbox Plus (10.1.2026-10.1.2027).
- f. Good Energy – Inv. No: KI-0CC2242E-0006 - £937.77 – Period 1.11.2025-31.1.2026.
- g. Castle Water – Inv. No: 10009122272 - £18.12 - For the period 31 December 2025 - 31 January 2026.
- h. Petty Cash: To review previous approval to withdraw cash to retain petty cash float based on the necessity to set up withdrawal details/permission with Unity Trust Bank.
  - i. To consider/approve the need for a petty cash float:

### RESOLVED:

- That there was no longer the requirement for a petty cash float to be held by the bookings Clerk; as such no withdrawal details/permission would be required by Unity Trust; all income is to be banked in line with the Financial Regulations and cash handling policy; both documents amended to meet the requirement as agreed above.
  - That the remaining £13.00 held in the current float to be banked.
5. Funding/Grants: To consider/approve applications:
    - a. O.C.C. - County Council – Laura Gordon – Councillor Priority Fund: The Chair had discussed this with County Cllr. L. Gordon; updated quotes to be obtained for a patio area to the rear of the village hall.
  6. Training: Consider/approve any training opportunities offered by OALC, NALC and SLCC:
    - a. Breakthrough Communications – Data Protection Part 2: To note Clerks attended on 19 January 2026 and has signed up for the final part.
  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 12.2.2026. 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:	£42,220.44
Add Receipts:	£ 60.00
Less Payments:	£ 951.06
Total C/fwd:	£41,329.38
  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.
    - b. Unity Trust Bank: Clerk to order a new paying in book.
  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. Funds/Reserves: Review c/fwd to next meeting.

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13. Precept 2026/27: To note submission of precept requirement.
14. Account Year Ending 31 March 2026:
  - a. Internal Audit: To complete the questionnaire and send paperwork as requested: Completed and submitted; further information to provided as necessary.
13. 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.
  2. HMRC - Get record keeping right: essential guidance from HMRC National Minimum Wage and ACAS: Noted.
14. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/TRAINING: To confirm or approve attendance at meetings or training provided by NALC, SLCC, C.D.C. and OALC:
  1. CDC - Cherwell District Council Virtual Briefing for Town/Parish Councils - LGR Update – 11 February 2026 – 6pm – 7pm: Cllr. L. Wainwright to attend.
  2. C.D.C. - Elections 2026 Post nominations briefing - Parish Briefing 2 – 15 April 2026 – 5pm-6.30pm: Noted that there is only a need to attend if the Parish Council contested.
  3. Scribe - Mastering Year End: Less Stress, More Success! - Free session: Clerk to attend 11 February 2026.
15. GENERAL
  1. Correspondence: Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda: None noted.
16. Matters for Further Information or Discussion:
  1. Matters for Further Information: None.
  2. Matters for Further Discussion: None.
17. NEXT MEETING: To confirm:
  1. Merton Parish Council Meeting to be held on 9 March 2026 in Merton Village Hall.
  2. Annual Parish Council Meeting: To approve meeting to be held on 11 May 2026 in accordance with the Annual meeting being held within 14 days of an election (between 11-24 May).
  3. Annual Parish Meeting of Merton Parish: To approve meeting to be held on 11 May 2026.

**RESOLVED:**

  - o To approve the 11 May 2026 as the date for the Annual Parish Council meeting to be held at 8:00pm in Merton Village Hall.
  - o To approve the 11 May 2026 as the date for the Annual Parish Meeting of Merton Parish to be held at 7:30pm in Merton Village Hall.

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There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:30pm.

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

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

**Date: 9 March 2026.**

**Minute Ref: M3/2026-4.1**