

# THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M3/2026

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

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

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

1. APOLOGIES:  
**RESOLVED:**
  - To accept apologies from Cllr. R. Gurprashad
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.
  2. Cricket Bat Willows Ownership/Proceeds: The Parish Council is continuing its research.
  3. Allotment Tap: Leak had been reported; Parish Council to investigate.
  4. Community Breakfast Merton Village Hall: To be held 28 March 2026; noted that some of the posters had been removed after posting; there will be a Garage sale running alongside the event.
4. MINUTES:
  1. To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9 February 2026 at 7.30pm previously circulated and taken as read:  
**RESOLVED:**
    - That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9 February 2026 at 7.30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chair Cllr. Duncan Marshall.
5. REPORTS:
  - a. Chair'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; County Cllr. L. Gordon highlighted the following matters:
  1. Local Government Reorganisation: Consultation finishes 26 March 2026.
  2. Flood Wardens: Oxfordshire County Council has extended its Flood Warden scheme after successful pilots; she would support anyone interested.
  3. 20mph Review: The 20mph programme is being reviewed, with a small budget available for possible changes where needed - this can include relocation of the signage and buffer zones; following last month's decision to support the costs of a buffer zone, the Parish Council will hold off whilst County Cllr. L. Gordon finds out how much funding might be available.
  4. County Councillor Priority Fund: Advised that there is still money available, closes November.

The Chair thanked County Cllr L. Gordon for attending, she left the meeting.

8. PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:
  1. 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; dates for PAT testing and fire checks to be maintained and a village hall floor plan to be included.  
**RESOLVED:**
    - That the Risk Assessment was approved and adopted as a working document.
    - That the Chair Cllr. D. Marshall, Cllr. L. Wainwright and the Village Hall Bookings Clerk would meet on 16 March to run a risk assessment on the village hall.
  2. Risk Assessments: Annual Review of Allotments; Parish Council; Village Hall; Play Area; Woodland Volunteers; Village Hall Cleaner assessments following Practitioners Guide:  
**RESOLVED:**
    - That following a review of all the risk assessments that they would be re-adopted with no amendments

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with a view to carrying out a rolling review over the course of the year.

- a. Tree Survey: To consider/approve annual Tree Survey as stated in Risk Assessment: Cherwell District Council have confirmed that they do not offer the service; BBOWT to be contacted and if unsuccessful to approach the parish volunteer.
3. Grant Funding Policy: To consider and adopt a policy as recommended by the Internal Auditor: The draft had been circulated and taken as read.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the draft Grant Funding Policy be adopted.

4. Pension Regulator: The three year review update start on 6 April 2026 and the deadline is 7 September 2026: In hand.
  5. Parish Council Elections 2026: Information regarding the bookings of appointments has been circulated. Information has been published on the Merton Parish Council and Village Facebook pages.
9. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
    - a. Recreational Area:
      - i. Bookings Update: Launton FC have booked again and Uggy's Pizza are next due on 25 March and 5 April; the campers and caravanners have booked for the weekend after next.
      - ii. Goal Posts: C/fwd until the football season has finished and the weather improved.
    - b. Village Hall:
      - i. Appointment of Village Hall Cleaner and Bookings Clerk:
        - o Contract: To be signed.
        - o Mop: Cleaner advised that the mop is broken;

### **RESOLVED:**

- o If a repair is not possible a new one to be sourced.
- ii. Village Hall Bookings: There is a wedding on Saturday.
- iii. Village Hall Hire Agreement: To be updated inline with Fire Safety requirement: Clause has been added; also a clause for hirers to advise if they are going to be using any of their own electrical equipment.
- iv. Communication.
  - o Generic Email for Bookings Clerk: Set up completed and all the Village hall details updated on the website with the addition of some photographs.
- c. Merton Woodland:
  - i. Hedge Cutting: Vale Countryside Volunteers update: Have attended the site twice to cut back encroachment on paths and rides.
  - ii. Cricket Bat Willows:
    - o Update on replanting: Merton Woodland Working Group record in its minutes that J S Wright & Sons Ltd returned to replant twenty six new Cricket Bat Willows on 26 January 2026; Clerk to request clarification.
  - iii. Woodland: Minutes of meeting; grass cutting; meadow: To accept minutes and approve the proposed map:

### **RESOLVED:**

- To accept the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2026 at 7.30pm.
- To approve the proposed map and instruct the contractor to mow wider paths and to mow the wildflower meadow area earlier in the season between end July and end of August.

## 10. 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.
    - iii. Volunteers List to be published.
    - iv. Parish Council Election information published.

## 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.

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4. Planning Matters: The following noted:-
    - a. C.D.C. - Reference: Confirmation of Tree Preservation Order No. 19/2025 – Group of various species of trees located on land at Arrochar House, Street through Merton, Merton, Bicester, Oxon OX25 2NF – IO/JH11036.
  5. Traffic Calming:
    - a. VAS Equipment: Order for pneumatic strips placed.
    - b. 40mph buffer zone: The Parish Council agreed to wait for further information before committing funds.
  6. Footpaths:
    - a. Footpath to Fencott: Due to re-open October 2026.
  7. Film Club: No update.
  8. Telephone Kiosk: Update; to consider options: BT have been unable to ascertain that the kiosk belongs to them and for the Parish Council to negotiate with the landowners; before committing the Parish Council have to carefully consider the next steps.
  9. 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.
  10. Bus Shelter Timetable: Request for the repair the acrylic safety glazing: Cllr. M. Smith will investigate whether or not it can be replaced.
  11. Village Notice Board: To consider/approve siting: Quotes to be obtained for the April meeting.
  12. Spring Clean: C.D.C. Spring Clean 2026: Litter pick to be organised for 25 April 2026; equipment ordered. Risk Assessment to be completed.
12. FINANCE:
1. Quotes:
    - a. Drainage Survey: Further quotes to be obtained.
    - b. O.C.C. 40mph Buffer Zone: The Parish Council agreed to wait for further information before committing funds.
  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: No cash received; the following paid by bank transfer/credit:-
      - i. Hall Hire - #60- £30.00
      - ii. Hall Hire - #61 - £50.00
      - iii. Hall Hire - #62- £59.00
  3. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting: The following payments were verified:-
    - a. Salary February 2026 - £273.80 Gross: To be verified: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
    - b. HMRC – Payment February 2026.
    - c. Unity Trust Bank Plc – St. No: 056 – Charges £6.00 – 1.1.2026-31.1.2026 – Payment to be debited from account 28.2.2025.
- RESOLVED:**
- To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-
    - a. Salary - March 2026 - £ 273.80 Gross: To be approved for payment at the end of March: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2).
    - b. Expenses:
      - i. Expenses February 2026 - £1.60 - plus Home Working Allowance £26.00: Power to spend under LG (Financial Provisions) Act 1963 s5  
Total Exp £31.59.
    - c. C. Newton – Village Hall Cleaner – Inv. No: 02 - £32.00 (Incl. £2.00 mats) – 1.2.2026-28.2.2026.
    - d. Unity Trust – St. No: 057 – Charges £6.00 – 1.2.2026-28.2.2026 – Payment to be debited from account 31.3.2026.
    - e. OALC – Inv. No: 6017 - £42.00 - Registration for Breakthrough Communications course(s) 25/26 (2025-04-01 - 2026-03-31) -Data Protection Part 3.
    - f. Vale Countryside Volunteers – Inv. No: 012 - £300.00 – Merton Woodland – cutting back encroachment on to paths and rides.
    - g. ICO - Your data protection fee - it's time to renew ICO:00013186867 - £52.00 is due on 24/03/2026.
    - h. Reimbursement – F. Foxon - North Oxfordshire Topsoil Ltd – Inv. No: 16885 - £45.00.
    - i. OALC Membership Subscription 2026-27 - Inv. No: 6236 - £228.00.
    - j. Blackthorn Parish Council – Contribution to Home Working Insurance – Coversure - (£135.65 paid in full by BPC) - £67.83.
    - k. Castle Water – Inv. No: 10009457136 - £32.71 – Period 1.2.2026-28.2.2026.
  4. Funding/Grants: To consider/approve applications:
    - a. O.C.C. - County Council – Laura Gordon – Councillor Priority Fund: The Parish Council to ask for funding for a patio area to the rear of the village hall.
  5. Training: Consider/approve any training opportunities offered by OALC, NALC and SLCC:
    - a. Breakthrough Communications – Data Protection Part 3: Booked for 27 April 2026.
    - b. HMRC - Employers – what's new for 2026 to 2027? Booked.

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- c. Parkinson's Partnership – Free VAT Session 24 March 2026: Booked.
  6. Good Energy: Electricity prices are increasing from 1<sup>st</sup> November: Review tariff: C/fwd.
  7. Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation:
    - a. Budget Comparison: 1.4.2025 – 31.3.2026 up to 9.3.2026: 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. 1.1.2026 – 31.3.2026 (Unity Trust St. No: 057 28.2.2026):

Balance B/fwd:	£42,220.44
Add Receipts:	£ 410.00
Less Payments:	£ 2,325.23
Total C/fwd:	£40,305.21
  8. Financial Controls Checks: None presented.
  9. Banking:
    - a. Unity Trust: To consider/approve setting up account details for withdrawals:
- RESOLVED:**
- Not required as Petty Cash float closed.
- b. Hinckley & Rugby Building Society – Savings Solutions Tailored for Town and Parish Councils: Clerk to explore opening an account.
  - c. Petty Cash: The bookings Clerk confirmed that she had kept the cash and transferred the balance of £13.00 to the Unity Trust Bank account.
10. Payroll: HMRC:
  - a. PAYE: Submissions update: Up to date.
  - b. HMRC – DM PAYE – Outstanding costs £181.83: Query update: No response to date.
11. Funds/Reserves: Review c/fwd to next meeting.
12. Account Year Ending 31 March 2026:
  - a. Internal Audit: To send paperwork as requested: Submitted.
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 - Practical pay rolling pointers for employees and directors: 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: Report from Cllr. L. Wainwright: Notes circulated.
  2. C.D.C. - Elections 2026 Post nominations briefing - Parish Briefing 2 – 15 April 2026 – 5pm-6.30pm.
  3. EWR - East West Rail Bicester Design Update Session - early access hour [In-person] - 13:00 for the Friday 27.2.2026 session and at 11:00 for the Saturday session.
  4. O.C.C. - One Oxfordshire and LGR - Invitation to Town and Parish Councils Briefing Session - The Government's consultation closes at 11:59pm on 26 March 2026: Cllr. L. Wainwright to request information.
15. GENERAL
  1. Correspondence: Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda:
    - a. MPC357(13): O.C.C. - Please display Notice and Plan: Merton Bridleway No. 4 (part) Modification Order 2026: Facebook.
    - b. MPC357(18): C.D.C. - Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Extension of Consultation period.
    - c. MPC357(26): O.C.C. - Oxfordshire Support & Care Guide for Adults 2026 .
    - d. MPC357(34): O.C.C. - Extension (T16646) Temporary Footpath Closure - Merton, Footpath 295/5/10.
    - e. MPC357(47): O.C.C. - National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey 2025-26 - Public Representatives – Ends 28.2.2026.
    - f. MPC357(53) M.R. & J.S. Cross - Public Liability Proof: To note receipt.
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 13 April 2026 in Merton Village Hall.

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There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:50pm.

**Draft Minutes subject to confirmation:**

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Approved and Signed by the Presiding Chairman .....

Date .....