THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M9/2026

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL
AT 7:30PM ON 12 OCTOBER 2026

PRESENT: D. Marshall (Chair)
M. Smith, R. Gurprashad and L. Wainwright. (Councillors)

IN ATTENDANCE: Clerk: Tracey Charlesworth
Village Hall Bookings Clerk/Cleaner.
1 Parishioner
The Church Warden and Treasurer St Swithun's Church.

1. APOLOGIES: None recorded.

2. CO-OPTION: To consider any applications: None received.

3. 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 noted.

4. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS: To consider passing a resolution in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for items numbered 20/21 on the agenda (19/20 below) on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of private and confidential information:
RESOLVED:
   - To pass a a resolution in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for items numbered 20/21 on the agenda (19/20 below) on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of private and confidential information.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: The following matters were raised:
   a. Bus Timetable: Request that the published Bus Timetable be lowered.
   b. Traffic Calming – The fitting of the second set of pneumatic strips has been held over whilst Oxfordshire County Council Highways have pneumatic strips fitted at both ends of the village for the proposed 40mph buffer zones.
   c. Village Hall Bookings Clerk: Play area bins require attention; wooden bottoms rotting away; removal of metal bin, plastic bin needs holes to drain away rain water.

6. GUEST: The Chairman welcomed the Church Warden and Treasurer St Swithun's Church, Merton to discuss the following:
   a. 'Jazz' in the Church: The PCC and the Rector have given the go ahead for the event to be held in the church, proposed date; St Swithun's Day 17 July 2027, the date has been secured with the Jazz group, they provide all the marketing based on an 80% with the Church taking 20% from the event.
   b. Church Clock: It was confirmed that the clock had not been serviced in recent years the Treasurer made contact with the Parish Council when it became apparent that it was the Parish councils responsibility; some history of the clock and church was shared. They are currently trying to raise three quarters of a million to repair the crumbling clock tower and stone work around the windows and the clock tower has been included as part of a grant application.

   The Chairman thanked them for attending; they left at 8:01pm.

7. ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION:
   a. Wrong Plan Wrong Site: Approximately two thousand objections were submitted during the Government window (11 to 17 September) along with objections from Cherwell District Council, Bicester Town Council, Oxfordshire County Council and various Parish Councils. Prior to the window closing the Bicester Countryside & Communities CIC put in place a pre-action protocol questioning why an environmental impact assessment was not needed, a lack of response could lead to a Judicial Review with a further Judicial Review if planning is approved. The Acting Deputy Chair for 'Wrong Plan Wrong Site' has been holding awareness roadshows. They have stressed that they are a non-partisan group and are working with everyone.

8. MINUTES:
   1. To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14 September 2026 at 7:30pm previously circulated and taken as read:

RESOLVED:

- That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14 September 2026 at 7:30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chair Cllr. Duncan Marshall.

9. REPORTS:
   a. Chair's Report: Matters on the agenda.
   b. Clerk's Report: Matters on the agenda.

10. COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR(S): None noted.

11. PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:
   1. Risk Assessment: Rolling review:
      a. Village Hall Risk Assessment: To consider report from Risk Assessor and any action required: C/fwd.
   2. Pension Regulator: To note that the Clerk would be opting-out of the pension scheme.
   3. GDPR Documents: To consider/approve review of recommended documents by Internal Auditor for adoption.
      a. Data Roadmap: Ongoing.
   4. Banking and Electronic Banking Procedures: Annual Review:

RESOLVED:

- To re-adopt the Banking and Electronic Banking Procedures document with no amendments.

   5. IT Policy: Annual Review:

RESOLVED:

- To re-adopt the IT Policy with no amendments.

   6. Complaints Policy: Consider/approve adoption of a policy as recommended by OALC: Clerk to source a model document for consideration.

Cllr. R. Gurprashad gave his apologies and left the meeting at 8:05pm.

12. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
   1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
      a. Recreational Area:
         i. Bookings Update:
            - Caravanners and campers booked for 27 to 29 November, noted that the caravanners booked for January have had to cancel.
            - Charlton on Otmoor FC: Possible hire of pitch November to December (they have offered to erect the goal posts if they use the pitch).
         ii. Goal Posts: C/fwd.
         iii. RoSPA/Playsafety Inspection – To note inspection completed, report to be re-circulated.
         iv. Active Places Data - Sport England Active Places - 6001250 - MERTON VILLAGE PLAYING FIELDS: To provide information: Noted that this was not applicable.
         v. Insurance Claim: This has been raised with the Parish Council's insurance company.
      b. Village Hall:
         i. Village Hall Bookings: Birthday party 1 November; Jamming session booked 21 November and Wreath making booked 25 November. It was noted that Uggy's Bookings charge is to be reduced by £5.00 whilst unable to use the toilet.
         i. Sharesy: Village Hall booking service; based on small commission: To consider/approve:

RESOLVED:

- To use Sharesy on an advertising basis not a bookings basis.

         ii. Rear Door Lock: Report of not locking properly: In hand.
         iii. Repair to the Path Leading to the Merton Village Hall: To consider/approve action: Parish Council to establish ownership; if Highways land it will be raised with them, if Parish Council land then arrangements will be made to weed kill.
         iv. PAT Test: Expertise Repairs completed the tests on 23 September 2026 at 10am; certificates to be displayed.
         v. Slabs: The Parish Council acknowledged a donation of 100 slabs.

c. Allotments:
   i. Stop Cap: To establish if there is an internal stop cap for the allotment supply.
   ii. The National Allotment Society: Please complete the National Allotment Society survey reminder: Cllr. M. Smith to review.

13. COMMUNICATIONS:
    1. Merton PC Facebook Page: Monitoring of the Merton Village Facebook page: Administration to be contacted.
       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: 26/02371/F**
          Applicant's Name: Matt & Nikki Widdows
          Proposal: Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of single-storey rear extension; installation of mono-pitch roof canopy over garage projection and main entrance door; installation of external boiler to side elevation; repositioning of oil tank; installation of external flues for boiler and solid fuel appliance; and associated changes to fenestration
          Location: Greytop, Street Through Merton, Merton, OX25 2NH
          Parish(es): Merton
          Comments by 8 October 2026 (Extension granted).

       RESOLVED:
       - That the Parish Council made no observations or comments.

       b. **Application Consultation - Application No.: 26/02423/NMA**
          Applicant's Name: Graven Hill Village Development Company
          Proposal: Revisions to the Gateway Park West hard and soft landscaping plans to show the as-built footpath, memorial, benches, bins, tree planting and woodland mix, together with fencing, timber boundary posts and bollards. (proposed as non-material amendments to 24/00648/REM)
          Location: Graven Hill, Murcott Road, Upper Arncott, Bicester
       c. Parish(es): Chesterton – Bicester – Merton – Comments by 21 October 2026

       RESOLVED:
       - That the Parish Council made no observations or comments.

    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: 26/00967/F**
          Proposal: Variation of condition 4 (terms of owner use) and condition 5 (hours of operation) of 24/02927/F to allow third-party operator of approved café/dining space and to amend use to weekday only
          Location: Boxengasse, Langford Lane, Merton, Bicester, OX25 2NS
          Parish(es): Merton
          Date of Decision: 29 September 2026
       b. PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS
    3. Withdrawal Notices:
       a. None noted.
    4. Appeals: To note:
       a. **Appeal Reference: 6016098**
          Application No: 6/01462/PIP
          Appellant's Name: Mr and Mrs O'Neill
          Proposal: Conversion of barn to form two dwellings
          Location: Merton Stud, Street through Merton, Merton, Oxfordshire, OX25 2NF
          Parish(es): Merton
          Appeal Start Date: 15 September 2026.
    5. Planning Matters:
       a. O.C.C. - Message from Oxon4Buses: OxBus2040 - Oxfordshire County Council will be

issuing a 4-week consultation on bus services in the county, called OxBus2040, on 13 October: Noted.

6. Local Government Reorganisation: C.D.C. - Local government reorganisation (LGR): No update.
7. Traffic Calming:
   a. VAS Equipment: Fitting of the second set of pneumatic strips to be completed once Highways have completed its survey.
   b. 40mph buffer zone: Under review.
   c. Traffic Safety Concerns and Speed Enforcement Request – Main Road, Merton – Traffic Surveys: To consider if the Parish Council would support or help coordinate a volunteer Community Speedwatch scheme in partnership with Thames Valley Police: Update: The Parish Council would support a Community Speedwatch Scheme and the call for volunteers.
8. Footpaths:
   a. Footpath to Fencott: To be followed up with County Cllr. L. Gordon.
9. Film Club: Dates have been published.
10. Neighbourhood Safety: Information regarding Neighbourhood Watch to be explored; exterior village hall lighting to be added to the next agenda for discussion.

15. FINANCE:
    1. Quotes:
       a. Drainage Works: To consider/approve quote(s): Quotes required. Ownership of land to be confirmed.
          i. Insurance: To consider/approve if an insurance claim applies: Clerk to clarify if drainage is covered on the insurance policy.
       b. Church Clock Service: To consider/approve:

RESOLVED:

- To approve the quote from Smith of Derby: To attend on site to check over the complete installation, to make best endeavours to repair and set to time and to submit report and recommendations of any issues found or further work required. The cost will be £650 Net plus VAT; the Church Clock Reserve budget of £1,000.00 to be used to meet the costs.
- To provide a Purchase Order number for an invoice purchase.

    c. Village Hall Window Cleaner: To review at the next meeting.
    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 Clerk:
          i. Hall Hire #87 - £37.00
          ii. Hall Hire #88 - £109.00
          iii. Hall Hire #92 - £100.00
          iv. Hall Hire/Recreational #91 – 61.00
          v. Hall Hire #95 - £195.00
       b. To receive cash to be banked income from Village Hall/Recreational Hire: No cashed received.
    3. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting: The following payments were verified:-
       a. Salary - September 2026 - £ 350.60 Gross (Incl. Back pay £45.00 to April 2026): Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2): Verified.
       b. Unity Trust Bank Plc – St. No: 064 – Charges £7.00 – 1.8.2026-31.8.2026 – Payment debited 30.9.2026.
       c. Castle Water Ltd – Inv. No: 10011364357 - £431.49 – 1.08.2026 – 31.08.2026.
    4. Accounts for Payment:

RESOLVED:

- To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-

       a. Salary October 2026 - £ 282.80 Gross: To be approved for payment at the end of October: Power to spend under LGA1972 s112 (1)(2): To be verified at next meeting.

RESOLVED:

- To approve payment of the following:-

       b. Expenses:
          i. Expenses September 2026 - £1.60 plus Home Working Allowance £26.00: Power to spend under LG (Financial Provisions) Act 1963 s5 – Reimbursed £2.00 against Curry Inv. For McAfee in July/overcharged. - Power to spend under LG (Financial Provisions) Act 1963 s5

Total Exp £25.60.

c. C. Newton – Village Hall Cleaner - Inv. No: 08 – (No invoices presented) – Presented at meeting £196.07 (Incl. Mats £136.07) – Period 1.9.2026-30.9.2026.
d. M. Smith – Reimbursement – Receipt from Screwfix – Hoover Bags Village Hall - £11.99.
e. Expertise Repairs – Inv. No: 20851 - £30.00 – PAT Test Village Hall appliances.
f. M.R. & J.S. Cross – Inv. No's: 441 - £312.00 (Grass cutting recreational area 16.9.2026) - 442 - £205.20 (Grass cutting Woodland 25.9.2026) – Total £517.20.
g. C.D.C. - Inv. No: 20038653 - £226.51 – Half Yearly Charge for Emptying Dog Bins – Cost includes 10% Admin Fee. 3 Dog Bins.

5. Funding/Grants: To consider/approve applications:
   a. Thames Valley Community Fund: Application submitted.
6. Request for Funding:
   a. St. Swithun's Church, Merton - Re: Application for contribution graveyard – application form: To consider/approve:

RESOLVED:

- To make an initial provision in the budget for 2027/28 of £500.00 to be reviewed as part of the budgeting process towards the maintenance of the Church Graveyard. Noting that in 2025 the cost of maintaining the graveyard was 470.68.

7. Film Club Licence: Renewal: Age UK Oxfordshire - Merton Village Hall Film Shows Re Licence - The licence for Merton Cinema Club renewed (£500) in March with Motion Picture Licensing Company - MPLC (to run from 20/05/2026 to 19/05/2027): Awaiting response from Age UK Oxfordshire regarding payment.
8. Training: Consider/approve any training opportunities offered by OALC, NALC and SLCC:
   a. OALC - Finance Day 22nd October 2026 - 9:30 – 4:30pm - £125.00 – Benson Village Hall: No attendance.
   b. The Royal Agricultural University - Join our Lantra-accredited Basic Tree Survey and Inspection course - 13 October 2026 - £215.00 plus VAT: No attendance.
   c. C.D.C. - Free MECC Training opportunity - Thursday 15th October: No attendance.
9. Good Energy: Electricity prices are increasing from 1st November: Review tariff:
   a. Clear Solutions – Transfer from Good Energy to Yu Energy – Contract and Completion of Direct Debit Letter of Authority forms: To review and confirm transfer to Yu Energy based on the change in prices.

RESOLVED:

- To accept the change and continue with transfer from Good Energy to Yu Energy.

10. Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation:
    a. Budget Comparison: 1.5.2026 – 31.3.2027 up to 12.10.2026: Presented prior to the meeting, accepted and approved, noted that there were no anomalies.
    b. Bank Reconciliation presented prior to the meeting, accepted and approved.
    1.7.2026 – 30.9.2026 (Unity Trust St. No: 064 30.9.2026):

Balance B/fwd:	£44,645.86
Add Receipts:	£12,378.50
Less Payments:	£ 6,416.21
Total C/fwd:	£50,608.15

    1.10.2026-31.12.2026 (Unity Trust St. No: 064 30.9.2026):

Balance B/fwd:	£50,608.15
Add Receipts:	£ 0.00
Less Payments:	£ 1,971.18
Total C/fwd:	£48,636.97

11. Financial Controls Checks: Financial Controls Check presented and signed by Financial Controller; RFO signed, Minute reference to be completed.
12. Payroll: HMRC:
    a. PAYE:
       i. Submissions update: Complete.
13. B**udget 2027/2028:** To start process and considerations for the budget.
    a. Bicester Tree Services - Tree Management Plan: To consider any expenditure as part of the budget.
    b. St Swithun's Church: Consider contribution to upkeep of graveyard: As agreed at 15.6-a.
    c. Village Hall Patio Area: To consider provision in budget and if the O.C.C. - County Cllr. Laura Gordon - Councillor Priority Fund : Still applies for the project if it needs reapplying for a

different project: Drainage takes priority; to follow up funding with County Cllr. L. Gordon.

14. Funds/Reserves: To be reviewed as part of the budgeting process.

16. 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. - Healthy Bicester Annual Stakeholder Event 2027 Invite - Wednesday, 10 March 2027- ? Time: Arrival 9:45 AM, prompt start 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM optional M.E.C.C training 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM - ? Venue: Bicester Methodist Church, Sheep Street, Bicester, OX26 6JQ : No attendance.

17. GENERAL
    1. Correspondence: Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda:
        a. MPC361(28): BBOWT Community Network newsletter sign-up: If signing up is just for receiving the newsletter then the Parish council will sign up.
        b. MPC361(53): O.C.C. - General review of speed limits on Oxfordshire's rural A and B class road network - Stakeholder consultation - Cherwell district: No more to add as under review.
        c. MPC362(16): Land & Property registration - Complimentary Property Deed Audit for Your Parish Council: offering a free initial review of your Council's property deeds to identify any areas that may require attention. The only request is that our travel expenses be reimbursed: Does not meet the Parish Councils needs.

18. MATTERS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR DISCUSSION:
    1. Matters for Further Information:
        a. None noted.
    2. Matters for Further Discussion:
        a. None noted.

19. EMPLOYMENT: No discussions; all matters carried forward to the next meeting.
    1. Clerk's Contract and Job Description: Review update: To forward to Chairman.
        a. Health & Safety: Consider lawful requirement: To re-circulate.
        b. Annual Appraisal: Recommended by Internal Auditor: To be considered.

20. **PROPOSED USE OF MOD SITE A, BICESTER FOR ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION**: Contribution towards legal costs and powers to spend:
    1. Challenge Decision: The Parish Council has taken advice and is waiting to receive information from the NALC legal team.

21. NEXT MEETING: To confirm:
    1. Parish Council meeting to be held on 12 October 2026 at 7:30pm in Merton Village Hall.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10:25pm.

Draft Minutes subject to confirmation:

Approved and Signed by the Presiding Chairman ……

Date ……