

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 5th February 2026

MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON Thursday 5th February 2026 at the Village Hall, Aston, at 7.30pm

Members R La Forte (Chair)
Present: J Ordish
P Sparrowhawk
Ben Lings

In Attendance: E Anstee – Interim Clerk
D Shenton (RFO)
7 members of the public
Cllrs S and S Cosier (WODC)

1. **Apologies from Members:** There were apologies from R Anstee, D Outen and G Ball.
2. **Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items** – R La Forte and P Sparrowhawk declare nonpecuniary interests in items 10b, 10c and 11 as trustees of the Community Trust.
3. **Minutes of the previous meetings** of the Parish Council on 8th January 2026 were agreed, and it was RESOLVED as proposed by P Sparrowhawk, seconded by B Lings, with all in agreement, that the meeting Chair signs them.
4. **Meeting Open for Public Participation – None.**
5. **WODC/OCC Matters**
WODC Cllrs S and S Cosier – see emailed report at appendix A.
6. **Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**
 - a) *Quick updates:*
 - *Electronic Speed Signs* – The one on Bampton Road entrance to Aston was installed on 9th January and the ones on the Cote Road and North Street (Aston) week ending the 30th January 2026.
 - *Traffic Calming* – deferred until VAS (see first point) installed and effects analysed.
 - *Thames Water/St Joseph’s Court* – The ditch works that Thames Water agreed to do have been completed. The further works to link to the Aston Ditch which fall under the EA/OCC responsibility to work with the land-owner to complete. P Sparrowhawk to contact the OCC representative on the Bampton Flood Group to ascertain how this can be effectively progressed.
 - *OCC Highways have since confirmed that the culvert does not lie within their boundary and is thus a landowner responsibility.*
 - *Footpaths/Treescapes* – volunteers have been identified and hope to start in April 2026.
 - *Great Brook Bridge* – No update since last meeting. First raised as an issue in 2015. Further concerns have been raised frequently ever since. The OCC Chief Exec has been shown the issue.

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Barriers have been hit again. Clerk has contacted Humza, Highway Engagement Officer at OCC and copy in Cllr Ted Fenton and our MP. Humza has confirmed that the bridge is currently at the design stage, with construction due to commence Summer 2026. Due another general inspection December 2025.

Following contact from a resident of Chimney, our MP Charlie Maynard has been in contact with Sean Rooney, Head of Service – Highway Maintenance and Road Safety who has advised that the work on the bridge can only go ahead in the 2026/27 financial year if the design is completed by March 2026. This work has been given priority, but no guarantee of when it will be completed has been given. In the meantime, **and subject to budget**, OCC will review the visibility of the existing “Unsuitable for HGV’s” signage.

- *North Street* - District Cllr Cosier liaised with OCC resulting in the northbound side of the road being repaired using a “Bobcat”! The repair has resulted in a water pooling on the road (which is what caused the problem in the first place). Cllr Cosier has brought this to the attention of OCC for rectification. The potholes beyond the area of repair have worsened and though the Parish Council is grateful for the action taken so far it is not understandable why the contractor could not have done everything they could see needed doing when on site.
- *Beddles Turn* - Raised with OCC Highways in 2018 and was most recently raised in February 2025.
- *Cote Mile Bridge* – No outstanding reports on Fix-My-Street.
- *Defibrillators* – Living Space (Brier Furlong /Aston Pottery) have still not supplied the funding so R La Forte will follow up. The Head at Aston & Cote Primary School has asked that the Parish Council purchase the cabinet and they will arrange installation. The RFO will source the cabinet.
- *Crossing on Cote Road between the end of Marsh Furlong and Poundfield Road*. Currently awaiting scheduling at OCC. OCC have confirmed that the parish will be consulted.
- *War Memorial and Bus Shelter Cleaning – Tenders for 2026* – Further information has been supplied by the contractor. This will be discussed under Finance.
- *Appointment of 2 Allotment Trustees for the Aston and Cote Allotments*. RFO to contact Allotment Secretary, one more time, for nominations. The matter to be discussed in full at the March meeting to include a decision on appointments and revising of the current trust documents.
- *OCC Grant Funding for Flood Management* - A re-submission of our request for £5k Grant Funding for a flood management plan for the Parish (or part thereof) was submitted, as requested by James Feest OCC Flood Mitigation Officer. The Council is awaiting quotes and James Feest OCC has been advised of current situation.

b) *Data Loggers and Project Groundwater*

Reports from loggers supplied by D Outen by email.

c) *History Board Update*

No update.

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d) *Anti-Social Behaviour*

- *Codfather and lighting of the parked vehicle* – the RFO has been in communication with the owner and he has assured that the matter is in hand.
- *Abandoned vehicle in Southlands* – the vehicle is SORN and also taxed until May 2026 so the authorities will not remove it or challenge that it is parked on the public highway. Once the tax expires, they are more likely to take action

7. PLANNING

New planning applications - None

Update on Ongoing Planning Applications – For Information

- a) 22/00986/FUL Brier Furlong –
- It was reported that the first 18 houses are now occupied
 - Request made for Thames Water to review the issues and for Grampian Conditions to be rephased so this can be enforced.
 - Discussion with members of the public regarding the adoption of the road and the pumping station, and who is responsible for managing the drainage - as the issue is the connection to the foul water drains which in turn link to the unadopted pumping station.
 - It was noted that enforcement of the planning conditions is inadequate.
 - Awaiting TW response on how many drains are affected.
 - Update from District Councillor - Drainage repairs to be carried out by Mears, then Thames Water can assess so that the County Council can then adopt the road.
- b) 15/01550/OUT Marsh Furlong –
- The former clerk spoke to the Brier Furlong site manager who confirmed that all connections to the pumping station for foul water at the back of Marsh Furlong had been finalised. Concerns were subsequently raised by residents following tests of the system at the end of July.
 - WODC Planning have been advised, and the clerk has contacted Thames Water urgently again for clarification.
 - As above, update from District Councillor - Drainage repairs to be carried out by Mears, then Thames Water can assess so that the County Council can then adopt the road.
 - A resident alerted Parish and District Councillors to work being carried by OCC to remove a traffic calming build-out on the Marsh Furlong estate. Rumble strips have been installed instead of the build outs.
 - The Parish Council need to keep these issues alive to try and get an effective resolution for residents. Mears are not interacting with anyone.
- c) 25/00853/OUT North Farm
- EA objected to connecting to foul water system but subsequently withdrew this objection. It was noted that the default would be to connect to mains water system.
 - On the planning portal, dated 26th January 2026, the applicant has submitted a Road Safety Audit.

8. New Business

- a) *Grant request from Aston & Cote Community Events* – RFO to contact applicant and request form is completed in full.
- b) *Request from Community Trust for matched funding of £1,453 for 50 chairs for the Village Hall* – deferred to March meeting as not quorate for resolution.
- c) *Request from Community Trust that the Parish Council request the contingency monies for the MUGA, be made available for the construction of a path around the MUGA.* Additionally, as the path is expected to cost £16k-£18k, that the shortfall is made up from the reserve from the Precept. Deferred to the March meeting for more information and not quorate for resolution.

9. Parish Infrastructure

- a) *Village maintenance.*
 - *War Memorial grass is being churned up on the corner by the bench.* Decision to source another boulder similar to the one on the other side of the bench to deter cars from going up onto the grass.
 - *Street signs* – Many in the parish need replacing – agenda item for March meeting.
 - *Back Lane* – The bramble/hedge and small trees have been cleared from the ditch and a new hedge is to be planted on the field edge.

10. Governance – Policies for Review and Resolution - None

11. FINANCE

- a) Account balances - Current account balance will reduce in February due to payments totalling £9.5k. Therefore, an immediate transfer of £10,000 from the investment account to the current account was recommended and resolved under payments.
- b) Signatories – The Chairman and one other Councillor have now been approved as signatories. Elaine Anstee has been removed as main contact by Unity Trust and replaced by the RFO, along with the relevant addresses
- c) It was, RESOLVED, to approve the following payments for the period February 2026 as proposed by J Ordish, seconded by B Lings, with all in agreement.

	NET	VAT	Total
D Shenton – January pay & WFH	418.21		418.21
HMRC – PAYE on above	108.98		108.98
Signway – VAS opposite Aston Pottery	7,376.56	1,475.31	8851.87
SLCC Annual Membership - RFO	116.00		116.00
Total to be decided and approved	£8,019.75	£1,475.31	£9,495.06
Total of already approved/paid	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Monthly Standing Orders/DDs			
Lloyds Bank Card – Bank Charge £3, Key Cutting £10	11.33	1.67	13.00
Total SDOs	£11.33	£1.67	£13.00

Total	£8,031.08	£1,476.98	£9,508.06
Transfer from Investment Account to Current A/C	£10,000.00		£10,000.00

e) It was agreed for the continuation of services with the current contractor, for the upkeep of the War Memorial and other village maintenance with revised pricing.

f) It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, second by J Ordish, and all in agreement, to appoint Nicholas Hoskins as the internal Auditor for the year ending 31st March 2026.

g) It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, second by P Sparrowhawk, and all in agreement to agree the bank reconciliation to the 31st December 2025, prepared by the RFO & checked by J Ordish.

12. Parish Councillors' and clerk's reports from meetings attended since last meeting.

R La Forte reported on the two forums he had attended with WODC on the local government reforms.

13. Matters for inclusion on next agenda.

Recruitment and Street Signage

14. Date of next meeting:

Thursday 5th March 2026 at 7.30pm

Being the monthly meeting of Parish Council.

Meeting closed at 21.10 hrs.

Signed.....Dated.....

Appendix A

Councillor Steve Cosier (SASH District Councillor)
Councillor Sandra Cosier (SASH District Councillor)

January Report 2026

Mobile phone reception in rural areas:

At a recent Full Council meeting, I received overwhelming support for a motion calling for urgent action to address the mobile connectivity issues affecting our rural communities. I know that mobile coverage across West Oxfordshire remains deeply inconsistent. While our larger towns: Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Bampton, Charlbury, Eynsham, and Woodstock benefit from good levels of service, the situation in surrounding villages and hamlets is far more concerning. Twenty-five of our tier-five settlements are officially classified as “total not-spots,” meaning residents have no mobile signal whatsoever. The lack of reliable mobile coverage has serious implications for those living and working in rural areas; Farmers operating in remote fields, parents walking children to school, or residents caring for vulnerable family members, may find themselves unable to use a mobile phone when it is most needed.

This issue becomes even more pressing as we approach the national switch-off of copper landlines on 31 January 2027. The replacement digital (VoIP) lines rely on electricity, and industry-standard battery backups last between one and seven hours.

In West Oxfordshire, where storms can leave communities without power for days, the mobile phone becomes the only remaining lifeline. According to the NFU, 80% of rural businesses identify connectivity as their primary barrier to growth. For our farmers, tourism operators, and independent traders to thrive, they must be able to operate modern, efficient businesses without being constrained by unreliable mobile coverage. For several years, we were told that the mobile industry’s Shared Rural Network would resolve these issues.

However, delivery has fallen far short of expectations, and the major networks have not provided the transparency required to assess progress. I believe that no resident in my ward should be left without the ability to use the mobile network. As a council we will continue pressing the government and mobile operators to deliver the infrastructure our communities deserve.

Local Elections 2026:

I would like to update residents on the position regarding the upcoming 2026 local elections in West Oxfordshire. At the end of last year, on 18 December 2025, the government wrote to all councils with elections scheduled for May 2026. The letter offered councils the option to request a postponement of their elections if they believed delaying the vote would free up essential capacity to support local government reorganisation. Any council wishing to request a postponement was asked to respond by 15 January 2026.

West Oxfordshire District Council has carefully considered this invitation and has confirmed that we will not be requesting a postponement. This means that local elections in West Oxfordshire will proceed as normal on Thursday 7 May 2026. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, has explained that the council has undertaken the necessary due diligence to assess whether there was any practical reason to delay the election. The conclusion was clear: West Oxfordshire is a well-run authority, already at an advanced stage of preparation for the May elections.

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While local government reorganisation will require significant work, this is being managed effectively in partnership with neighbouring authorities. I believe that Local elections are a vital part of our democratic system, and it is important that residents continue to have the opportunity to make their voices heard. I encourage all residents to take part in the elections in May.

Cllr Sandra Cosier

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service Consultation:

The public consultation on Oxfordshire County Council's proposed restructuring of the Fire and Rescue Service has now concluded, attracting approximately 1,500 responses. The consultation, which opened in October, sought views on a series of changes intended to improve safety, efficiency, and response coverage across the county.

These proposals include the introduction of five day-shift fire engines in Wallingford, Faringdon, Witney, Bicester and Chipping Norton, as well as the removal of the on-call fire engine at Rewley Road in Oxford due to persistent staffing challenges. Although no final decisions have been made, the service has also indicated that on-call stations in Woodstock, Eynsham and Henley are being considered for closure because of consistently low fire engine availability.

The proposals have generated significant public and stakeholder interest. By the original closing date of 20 January, the consultation had received around 900 responses. Following an extension of ten days, a further 600 responses were submitted.

A full report on the consultation findings and any resulting recommendations will be brought forward once the analysis is complete. Councillors will be updated ahead of any decisions being presented for approval.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised, or you require help with a council matter please contact us.

Best wishes Sandra and Steve
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