

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
Thursday 6th February 2025 at the Village Hall, Aston, at 7.30pm**

Members R La Forte (Chair)
Present: J Ordish
D Outen
R Anstee
P Sparrowhawk
B Lings

In Attendance: Elaine Anstee – Clerk
6 members of the public
Cllr S Cosier (WODC)

1. **Apologies from Members:** There were apologies from G Ball.
2. **Parish Councillors - Disclosure of interests on agenda items** – R La Forte and P Sparrowhawk declared a nonpecuniary interest in agenda item 12 as they are trustees of the Community Trust.
3. **Minutes of the previous meetings** of the Parish Council on 6th January 2025 were agreed, and it was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement, that the meeting Chair signs them.
4. **Meeting Open for Public Participation - None**
5. **WODC/OCC Matters**

Cllr C Maynard ((MP) and WODC) sent his apologies and provided the report attached at Appendix A.

Cllr D Levy (OCC) sent his apologies and provided the report attached at Appendix B.

Cllr S Cosier (WODC) reported on the Local Plan 2041 – meeting at WODC on 6th February and will feed back properly at the March meeting. The consultation will be out in March, but the new NPF has thrown a lot of housing at the district. His report is attached at Appendix C.
6. **Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**
 - a) *Quick updates:*
 - *Electronic Speed Signs* – the order has been submitted to Westcott and the location on the Bampton Road needs to be finalised before installation. Clerk to clarify if it is the line of sight/distance along the road for reaction time on the proposed VAS that means it must be sighted 100 meters from the speed sign., or if it is just best practice.
 - *Cote Chapel* – no news.
 - *Gate at St James Church* – J Ordish showed the council a picture of the gate at St Mary’s Bampton. Parish Council agreed that this would be a suitable design. He will source a quote.
 - *Footpaths/Treescaping* – Potential to improve the footpaths to make circular routes such as the one from the end of Bull Street to Ham Lane (habitual use

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so there is scope for a permissive path). APM agenda Item looking for volunteers to explore land ownership, existing footpaths and their maintenance, parish wardens for footpaths and adding new footpaths/permissive rights of way.

- *Thames Water* – there had been no update as of the meeting. Clerk asked to contact Thames Water and demand a response.
- *Traffic Calming* – deferred until VAS (see first point) installed and effects analysed.
- *Great Brook Bridge* – First raised as an issue in 2015. Further concerns have been raised, and clerk has submitted a request for signage re-flooding, road closure drop sign to OCC. The clerk to contact OCC Emergency Planning to find out what plans they have in place if the bridge fails and what will they expect of the Parish Council.
- *Beddles Turn* - Raised with OCC Highways in 2018.
- *Bridge in the one at the end of Cote Mile*
- *North Street* – First raised comprehensively in 2018 and repeatedly raised ever since.
- *Land south of Bampton Road* – Croudace – no planning application at time of meeting. There has been some activity and appears to be small bore holes/sampling it. – Move to planning for next agenda. RLF/RA – clerk to
- *Defibrillators* – Brier Furlong (Aston Pottery), no news, and cabinet (Aston & Cote Primary School) the clerk has contacted Community Heartbeat Trust.
- *B4449 past St Joseph's and Aston Pottery* was resurfaced in October 2024, but the white lines have not been reinstated. Report via the OCC portal.

b) Neighbourhood Plan

Report by Clerk from meeting with consultant on 3rd February. Place based analysis from the new government so Neighbourhood Plan now ideal. It can be updated and reviewed as the Parish needs.

It was RESOLVED as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by R Anstee, was all in agreement that, in principle, the Parish Council aspires to scope a Neighbourhood Plan and its feasibility, potential design statement to be incorporated.

Action – RFO to find out the process of accessing the grant from WODC.

Action – Clerk to create a 'TEAMS' folder for documents to be put in.

c) Data Loggers and Project Groundwater

Report circulated by email and 4th data logger has arrived. Location for siting has been identified.

d) History Board Update

No update.

e) Anti-Social Behaviour – None reported.

7. PLANNING

New planning applications

Documents emailed to councillors for perusal prior to the meeting.

Reference **25/00043/HHD**
Alternative Reference Not Available
Application Validated Thu 09 Jan 2025
Address 3 Chimney Farm Cottages, Chimney, Bampton, OX18 2EH
Proposal Erection of detached summer house.
Status Under consideration
Information re listing building consent requested on 26th January.
No objections

Reference **25/00128/PN42**
Alternative Reference PP-13706468
Application Validated Mon 20 Jan 2025
Address 4 Southlands Aston, Bampton, Oxfordshire, OX18 2DA
Proposal Erection of replacement conservatory to rear elevation (4.5m x 2.2m height to eaves/3.3m max. height).
Status Under consideration
No objections

Reference **24/03177/FUL**
Alternative Reference PP-13626978
Application Validated Mon 27 Jan 2025
Address Land South of The Paddocks, Aston, Bampton, Oxfordshire
Proposal Erection of a single detached dwelling and associated works
Status Under consideration
Object

Update on Ongoing Planning Applications – For Information

- a) Brier Furlong – S Cosier has spoken to Living Space and there are still issues with connection to the wastewater system with Thames Water. Until the connection happens there can be no occupation. See 7b.
- b) Marsh Furlong – agenda item 7 under Thames Water – no news on adoption of the pumping station.
- c) St Joseph’s Court –agenda item 7 under Thames Water.
- d) North Farm – Following meeting with Bluestone on 10th January a report was circulated by email by Chairman. The design statement has also been received and shared with councillors.
- e) Potential new development – Lone Star Land (land agents) application was to be on the agenda for WODC Lowlands Planning committee on 10th February 2025, but it has not been included. A holding objection has been posted on the planning portal from the Biodiversity officer.
- f) *Land south of Bampton Road* – Croudace – no planning application at time of meeting. There has been some activity and appears to be small bore holes and sampling it.

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Reference **24/02891/HHD**
 Alternative Reference PP-13553447
 Application Validated Mon 25 Nov 2024
 Address 20 Marsh Furlong Aston Bampton Oxfordshire OX18 2FN
 Proposal Installation of an air source heat pump to rear of property
 Status Decided
 Decision Approve
 Decision Issued Date Mon 20 Jan 2025

Reference **24/02626/HHD**
 Alternative Reference PP-13471800
 Application Validated Wed 06 Nov 2024
 Address Gaston Cottage Church Lane Aston Oxfordshire OX18 2DY
 Proposal Demolition of single storey side extension. Erection of a two-storey side extension, construction of a garden room with store and formation of a new access and parking area (Part retrospective)
 Status Decided
 Decision Approve
 Decision Issued Date Tue 14 Jan 2025

Reference **24/01374/FUL**
 Alternative Reference Not Available
 Application Validated Fri 05 Jul 2024
 Address Playing Field Cote Road Aston Bampton Oxfordshire OX18 2DU
 Proposal Proposed floodlit Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) on land adjacent to an existing basketball practice area at the Aston and Cote Recreation Ground (amended plan).
 Status Decided
 Decision Approve
 Decision Issued Date Mon 13 Jan 2025

Note: R La Forte and P Sparrowhawk are on the Community Trust subcommittee for the MUGA.

8. New Business

a) VE Day 80

8th May 2025 will be the 80th Anniversary of VE Day. There will be an event on Sunday 11th May at the village recreation ground.

It was RESOLVED, as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, to purchase a flag from the RBL. It will be flown on the flagpole at St James Church. Clerk to investigate silhouettes for the churchyard and/or war memorial.

b) Annual Community Emergency Plan Survey and GDPR consent

OCC has sent out the annual survey and the parish's community emergency plan is due for review. There is a revised format. The clerk has partially completed the new format and emailed both existing and new to councillors to compare. The concerns about the Great Brook bridge and its potential failure, which will leave residents cut off if the Great Brook is in flood need to be included. See 6a – Great Brook Bridge.

9. Governance – Policies for Review – None

10. Community Trust

The revised governing document has been approved by the Charity Commission and will be posted on the website.

Aston Football club will be having their annual presentation day on the 7th June and will be combining it with a ‘fete’ for the community.

11. Parish Infrastructure

a) *Village maintenance.*

- The street signs around Aston need auditing and several need replacing. R Anstee/Clerk will do a walk round and photographs. WODC are the responsible authority but will need a comprehensive list.
- North Street – the footpaths are covered in gravel from the blown potholes. Clerk to arrange for them to be cleared.

12. FINANCE

a) *Account Balances to 31 December 2024 – noted.*

b) *Review of the year to 31st January 2025 – noted.*

c) It was, RESOLVED, to approve the following payments for the period February 2025 as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by J Ordish, with all in agreement.

	NET	VAT	Gross Amount
Aston & Cote Community Trust – Room Hire	197.25		197.25
Oxfordshire Mind – Donation agreed Jan 9, 2025.	100.00		100.00
CPRE – Annual Membership	36.00		36.00
Community Heartbeat – Annual support for defib.	165.00	33.00	198.00
British Heart Foundation – Replacement defib for garage	990.00	198.00	1188.00
OTT Hydromet - Inv 147216	2327.80	465.56	2793.36
Total to be decided and approved	£3,816.05	£696.56	£4,512.61
Total of already approved/paid	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Monthly Standing Orders/DDs			
Clerk’s CC – Microsoft £65.88, Bank Charge £3	57.90	10.98	68.88
Clerk’s Salary including WFH Allowance	225.38		225.38
RFO Salary including WFH Allowance	201.20		201.20
HMRC PAYE	93.40		93.40
Total SDOs	£577.88	£10.98	£588.86
Total	£4,393.93	£707.54	£5,101.47

13. Bank Reconciliation to 31st December 2024.

It was, RESOLVED, as proposed by R La Forte, seconded by P Sparrowhawk, with all in agreement, to accept the bank reconciliation, as presented, to the 31st December 2024.

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

P Sparrowhawk reported he has attended the Bampton Flood Group. There are more parishes wanting to attend the group which is positive. However there continues to be issues with getting EA, OCC and other organisations to turn up. R Anstee to do a count of the trees currently in the Great Brook for reporting back to the group.

R La Forte reported that he met C Maynard (MP) on his walk round on 1st February. He showed him the 'Aston swamp' also known at the land next to ST Joseph's Court and subject of a potential planning application.

15. Matters for inclusion on next agenda – none.

16. Date of next meeting: Thursday 6th March 2025, 7.30pm
Being the monthly meeting of Parish Council.

Meeting closed at 21.28 hrs.

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

Appendix A

MP and district councillor update - Charlie Maynard

February 2025

I gave evidence to the High Court this week, on behalf of Thames Water's 16 million customers. As you will know, the company is putting up its bills from April by £19 a month. What is particularly bad about this is that more than a quarter of our bills is being spent on just paying the interest costs of their enormous debt mountain. Thames Water is proposing adding a further £3bn of very expensive debt to the £18bn of debt already in the company. I am intervening in the court process to urge the judge not to permit this and instead to put the company into bankruptcy, also known as Special Administration. This is so that much of its existing debt can be written off and the company's finances stabilised. The company must have a sufficiently strong financial position to be able to fund the large amounts required to fix our sewage treatment works and networks. I am also happy to report that the Judge provided me with a "Protective Costs Order", which means that I cannot be sued for all my worldly goods, which was a possibility and is consequently quite a relief. We believe a judgement will be announced on February 14th. Do google!

On Saturday, January 18th I went on a walk across our ward. I set off at 7am from the roundabout just south of Eynsham and walked across Pinkhill and through Sutton to join Matt and Rob, Men's Breakfast leads (first Saturday of the month at 8am!) in the Harcourt Arms. My fellow ward councillor and SH resident, Steve Cosier, joined me there and for all of the rest of the walk. We chatted our way to Bablock Hythe where we talked through all the flooding troubles there (I'm asking parliamentary questions on this issue) and then on to Northmoor where the Saturday market was in full swing. So much so and thee so many people to chat to and issues to talk through that we were late for our pints in the Black Horse in Standlake. We went the back way via St. Marys', Shifford through Cote and on to Aston. Thank you, Russell, Gill, Kathy and others, for coming out and to others for chatting along the way. We watched the men's football team not do so well against Uffington (no, I won't give the score) and then on to Aston Pottery for tea, cake and discussions on flooding and housing. No surprises there, just yet more housing sites and the same old flooding. What I am happy to see is that the water level loggers pioneered in Standlake are now in use in Aston (well done Paula, Kathy), allowing residents to record hyper accurate data on water levels, rather than being dependent on data collected by hydrologists which are themselves funded by developers. Linking this up with drone surveys and photos and compelling cases are being put together which help protect our villages. By the end of the walk, I was very tired, hoarse and very happy. I loved meeting as many people as we did and loved the walk too. We are lucky to live such a beautiful place.

As I said soon after July's general election, I will be standing down as your district councillor. I will be doing this in sync with the upcoming council elections on May 1st. This avoids the time, and cost of having to run an extra by-election. Sandra Cosier will be standing to replace me. As many readers beyond the parish council will already know, Sandra is a Stanton Harcourt Parish Councillor, previously worked for the RAF and the NHS and has a very sensible head on her shoulders. She is also a bell ringer at St. Michael's and is married to the abovementioned Steve. We are very lucky to have such an excellent candidate.

Appendix B

This is the second report of 2025

The January report mentioned a number of key topics relating to the County Council and to local government generally.

Local Government changes. Government mandate The Government White Paper on Devolution and Local Government in England was published in December, and the government demanded input from top tier local authorities, i.e., county councils and unitary councils, by 10 January. Among other things, the government strongly hinted that it expected any authority wanting to get the set-up it wants to ask for a postponement of elections in May. Carrying on with elections would be seen as being half-hearted about the new governance arrangements. It has been made explicitly clear that “do nothing” is not an option, whether we like what we are being required to do or not.

The reorganisation will end up with all authorities being unitaries, of a minimum size of 500,000 residents, i.e. there will be no more district councils and no small unitary councils. A unitary council does all the things that are currently done separately by county councils (like social care and road maintenance) and by district councils (like planning and refuse collection).

WODC will cease to exist at some time during this parliament, probably in 2027. And each authority will be part of a Strategic Combined Authority, most of which will have mayors, with the mayor being directly elected and with additional funding in areas like inward investment and infrastructure. As additional powers and money will go to these mayors, the government is calling this devolution, although in reality power is being taken further away from local communities rather than closer. The mayor is typically leader of a committee comprising the leaders of all its constituent unitaries, and a key determinant of how successful an authority will be how much influence those members have on mayoral activities. It is also requiring these two separate and complex things – unitarization and the creation of combined authorities – to happen at the same time, which is ambitious.

Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire’s letter to the Secretary of State was sent on 10 January. It said that Oxfordshire wishes to be part of the fast track for this process. We are working with neighbouring authorities to create a Thames Valley Mayoral Combined Authority (which will have almost the same footprint as the Thames Valley Police minus Milton Keynes and a very similar footprint to the local NHS commissioning board), and that we want to unitarize at pace. Some parts of Oxfordshire are calling for Swindon to be part of the MCA.

We believe a unitary covering the whole of Oxfordshire best meets the minimum size criterion and will cause least disruption to key services like social services, which otherwise would have to be partitioned between different unitary authorities. Oxfordshire contains about 750000 residents - <https://data.oxfordshire.gov.uk/population/current-population/>. Each of the district councils has had input to the letter. All of the districts bar the City Council endorsed it. All the party leaders at the County Council have given backing to the County Council approach.

Oxford City Council has suggested we should not be looking to get the first – and hence most empowered – Mayoral Combined Authority, and that instead of a whole Oxfordshire unitary, there should be a new Oxford Unitary using an “enhanced geography”, i.e. the city will encompass areas like Cassington, Kidlington, Kennington, Botley and Eynsham, and probably Witney and Abingdon. This is unlikely to meet the half million resident qualification and would create a financially challenged authority from the start as well as

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being unwelcome in many swallowed – up places. The remaining, non-Oxford area would also have insufficient people and be an odd set up.

Democracy and elections

We had called for County Council elections to go ahead in May, unless the government gave a guarantee that a shadow authority can be in place by May 26 and that elections to that shadow can happen then. This has been misreported as calling for elections to be cancelled. The opposite is true. We had been led to expect further guidance from the government by the end of January but instead got a “holding message”. There was a statement in the House of Commons on Wednesday, confirming that Oxfordshire is not a place that will have elections postponed, so there will be an election on May 1. A reminder that elections are under new boundaries, so Aston is part of the new division of Carterton South and Bampton. You are also likely to have a by-election for the WODC Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt ward seat currently held by your MP – who has been busy challenging Thames Water in the High Court on the behalf of its customers, among other activities. There is much more detail on the County Council website.

<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=7978&x=1>

Parish and Town Councils

My belief, and certainly that of my party and our Green colleagues, is that we must ensure that decisions can still be taken locally where that is the best place for them to happen, and where that can ensure that residents can best have a say. So, things like planning still need to happen at a much more local scale than the unitary authority, and parish and town councils need to have stronger local powers, possibly in combination with other parishes where appropriate. There clearly is an issue that some town councils and parish councils, like Witney, are large and well-resourced, and others are not. Not all of the places in Oxfordshire have a parish council.

Budget, roads, flooding

The County Council budget will be agreed on February 11th. The finances for 25-26 look to be reasonably secure, given the prudent management of the county council and substantial progress on making efficiencies, combined with a sensible council tax increase of 4.99% and a moderately generous grant from government. This is true despite only being reimbursed about 80% of our direct additional costs of employee national insurance (ENIC) and none of the costs of ENIC borne by our contractors and suppliers. Future years may be more difficult, as the government has said it will rebalance funding to support more disadvantaged places, and there are likely to be (unhelpful) changes to business rates and various grant schemes.

Oxfordshire is relatively prosperous, despite having pockets of very severe deprivation. Among other measures, we are restoring annual gully clearing. The budget of 2021 had reduced this to once every four years. There will be more money for flood measures and nearly £50m for road maintenance. We are maintaining the investment in children’s services and adult social care, which together take up the bulk of the budget. We are also suggesting putting a substantial amount aside as a reserve to cover some of the upfront costs of the reorganisation that is coming. A40 Thank you to everyone who took part in the consultation about the improvements to the A40 from Wolvercote to Eynsham. The data is being collated so it can be part of refinements to the plans. Work will start on Shores Green in February to make the junction four way. There will be some temporary closures at times, which will be advertised as usual. Construction will take some time, and I appreciate that it will be disruptive. The new junction will create a new way for people to the east of Witney to get onto the A40 westbound - it is possible that this will see a reduction in traffic using the A415.

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As ever, please contact me at dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Appendix C

Councillor Cosier's February Report – West Oxon District Council

Executive Summary of on-going electoral review - Full Council

Councillor Alaric Smith, Chair of the Constitution Working Group, presented a report regarding the Council Size Proposal for the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The proposal is part of the ongoing electoral review of West Oxfordshire, including potential changes to the electoral cycle for the District Council and Town and Parish Councils.

Key Points

- **Long Overdue Review:** The district's last review was in 2001. The current review will take effect from the local elections in 2027.
- **Addressing Electoral Inequalities:** The review aims to correct disparities due to new developments and population shifts, ensuring balanced representation.
- **Optimal Number of Councillors:** The Draft Council Size Proposal recommends keeping the current size of 49 Councillors. This recommendation is widely supported by Members.
- **Informed Decision Making:** Submitting a Council Size Proposal will guide the Local Government Boundary Commission's decision.
- **Electoral Cycle Consideration:** The Council will decide whether to retain a mix of 1, 2, and 3 Member wards, potentially leading to whole-Council elections every 4 years from 2027.

Conclusion The proactive steps taken by the Constitution Working Group aim to ensure fair representation and effective governance for West Oxfordshire. The Council Size Proposal and future electoral cycle considerations demonstrate the Council's commitment to addressing electoral inequalities and fostering a well-represented community.

Executive Summary

Full Council Motion A: Sewage Pollution and Thames Water -Proposed by: Councillor Lidia Arciszewska. Seconded by Councillor Pearson Key Points of the motion:

- **Significant Concern:** 27.4 thousand hours of raw sewage discharge in 2024 (25% increase from previous year).
- **Impact on Rivers:** Commitment to restoring the vibrant life of West Oxfordshire rivers.
- **Community Impact:** Addressing sewage backups in resident areas.

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- Council's Commitment: Continue to try and engaged with Thames Water and achieved successes in reducing pollution.
- Economic Context: Thames Water's financial challenges hinder necessary investments.
- Proposed Solution: Government intervention to place Thames Water into a Special Administration Regime and transition to a non-profit or community benefit company.
- Thames Water is seeking a £3 billion loan at 9.75% interest, with hefty service charges.
- OFWAT has agreed to allow Thames Water to increase customers' bills by 35% by 2030.
- Most of the bill increases will happen in the next couple of years.
- If the loan is approved, 46% of each customer bill will go towards Thames Water's debt interest payments. • This situation is deemed unacceptable by the council. Conclusion
- The Council resolved to request the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs take action.
- Aim: Ensure Thames Water can invest in infrastructure, reduce pollution, and support housing ambitions.
- Motion demonstrates the Council's dedication to improving residents' quality of life and protecting the environment.

Thank you, Steve Cosier, District Councillor for Sutton, Stanton Harcourt, Northmoor, Standlake and Aston. Steve.cosier@westoxon.gov.uk