ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in applying for the position of Clerk to Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney Parish Council.

We hope that you find this Recruitment Information Pack of assistance in deciding to apply.

The information is arranged as follows:-

This Recruitment Information Pack will not form part of any subsequent contract of employment.

If you have any questions on the Recruitment Information Pack or the recruitment and selection process, require any further information on the Council or the post or you would like an informal discussion on the role, please email the current Clerk, Mrs Elaine Anstee on clerk@astonoxon-pc.gov.uk.

If you would like us to make any special arrangements concerning the completion of your application or attending for interview, please let us know.

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The Parish

The parish of Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney consists of 2 villages, two hamlets all linked by farmland, and flood plain along the southern boundary created by the River Thames.

Until the 19th century Aston was a township in the ancient parish of Bampton. In 1866 the civil parish of Aston and Cote was separated from Bampton. In 1931 Aston and Cote was united with Chimney to form the civil parish of Aston Bampton, which was merged with Shifford in 1954 to form the parish of Aston Bampton and Shifford. The parish was later renamed Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney.

Aston is a village about 4 miles (6.4 km) south of Witney in West Oxfordshire, England. The 2021 Census recorded the parish's population as 1,479. Facilities include a Community Shop, the Red Lion public house, Aston Pottery, village hall and recreation grounds run by The Community Trust, allotments run by trustees and churches plus numerous clubs and activities.

Cote is a hamlet about 4 miles (6.4 km) south of Witney and 1 mile (1.6 km) north of the River Thames in West Oxfordshire, England. The hamlet of Cote stretches along Cote Lane, which seems to have originated as a road to a former crossing of the River Thames at Shifford.[1]

Cropmarks have been found east of Cote Lane that suggest prehistoric occupation. There have been isolated finds of Neolithic and Bronze Age items near the north end of Cote Lane and Iron Age pottery and a brooch have been found south of Cote House. In the 19th century two Roman coins were found at Cote: one each from the reigns of Trajan (reigned AD 98–117) and Hadrian (reigned 117–138). Other cropmarks on river gravel terraces east of Cote suggest Saxon sunken huts.

Chimney (on Thames) is a hamlet and it is on the River Thames near Shifford Lock, 6 miles (9.7 km) south of Witney. Chimney Meadows 620 acres (250 ha) is the largest nature reserve managed by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

Chimney's name is derived from Old English, meaning "Island of a man named Ceomma". A series of ring ditches to the west of the hamlet have been scheduled as an ancient monument,[2] as has an oval causewayed enclosure which is approximately 150 metres (490 ft) across. A large Anglo-Saxon cemetery, in use from the mid-10th century to the mid-11th century, has been found west of Chimney Farm. Chimney has been a small settlement since then. There were about 18 households in the 13th century, and the population reached a peak of 46 in 1821. Its current electorate is 11 persons (2025).

Shifford is a hamlet which is on the north bank of the River Thames about 6 miles (10 km) south of Witney. The settlement arose by a ford across the Thames, from which it derived its name ("sheep ford"). It was mentioned in a charter of 1005, when the estate was granted to Eynsham Abbey. It also has an electorate of 11 persons (2025).

ROLE OF THE CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

Why become a Clerk?

Becoming a Clerk to a Parish or Town Council is one of the most rewarding jobs in a local community - a competent Clerk underpins a good Council.

The role of Clerk is to ensure that the Council, as a whole, conducts its business properly and to provide independent, objective and professional advice and support and being a Clerk puts you in the centre of things.

Parish and Town Councils are part of Local Government in Oxfordshire. Within Oxfordshire there are two other tiers of Local Government – the District Councils which are responsible for statutory duties including housing, planning development and control, refuse collection and the collection of rates and council tax, and the County Council, which is responsible for statutory duties including highways, education, libraries, social services, strategic planning and refuse disposal.

Parish and Town Councils ("Local Councils") are often viewed as the part of government closest to the people.

Local Councils can "precept" – raising a council tax each year to provide and improve facilities and services for local people.

Local Council powers and duties cover many things that we take for granted where we live and can include the provision and maintenance of allotments, burial grounds and public monuments, public clocks, halls, some street lighting, litter bins, car parks, public lavatories, rights of way, roadside verges, bus shelters, swimming pools and village greens.

Parish Councils are consulted on and can comment on planning applications and can be represented at public inquiries.

Most Council meetings are open to the public and are led by the Council's Chairperson and advised by the Clerk to the Council who is there to see that business is conducted within the law.

What does the Clerk to the Council do?

The enclosed job description lists the duties in detail, but the main duties of the job can be summarised as to: -

- ensure that the Council conducts its business lawfully
- administer all the Council's paperwork
- ensure that meeting papers are properly prepared and the public is aware of meeting times
- communicate and execute the Council's decisions
- organise and manage the provision of the Council services
- organise and oversee the implementation of projects
- manage and liaise with contractors
- keep property / asset register and other legal documents
- keep up to date by training/qualification and attend conferences as appropriate.

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED

Clerks usually pride themselves in having a good deal of common sense, confidence to handle the administrative work, being a good organiser, IT literate and able to get on with most people.

In order to be successful in your role as Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, you will need:

Attainments

- Minimum GCSE level B or equivalent in Maths and English Language
- Good organisational and administrative experience in a structured environment
- Excellent IT skills, including Word and Excel
- Experience of managing the finances of a small business or other organisation

Qualities and Attitudes

- Self-reliant and self-motivated
- Flexible, pro-active and “hands-on” approach to tasks
- Trustworthy with confidential information
- Ability to demonstrate tact and diplomacy
- Community focused with ability to develop and maintain good relationships with external bodies, contractors and the public

Skills and Abilities

- Ability to communicate effectively in writing
- Ability to produce understandable and concise written reports on complex topics
- Ability to organise and prioritise own work to meet strict deadlines

Special Conditions

- Ability to attend evening meetings
- Ability to work from home, including secure storage of key Parish Council records
- Willingness to undergo training to acquire relevant new skills or knowledge relevant to the role
- Existing high speed internet service at home

HISTORY AND PROFILE OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY COUNCIL

Council Area and Environment

- The parish area incorporates the medium-sized village of Aston, the smaller village of Cote, the hamlets of Shifford and Chimney and all of the isolated properties within the geographical area.
- The Council was formed, as were most local councils in England and Wales, after the passing of the Local Government Act 1894 which introduced elected councils at district and parish level.
- There are approximately 640 domestic properties and 1500 people on the electoral register.

Council History and Background Details

- The Council has a precept for 2025-26 of £30,935 and budgeted grants receivable from the District and County Councils of £1,500.
- The Council has 7 seats.
- The Council does not own any land but owns benches, noticeboards, bins, defibrillators and three bus shelters sited on land owned by Oxfordshire County Council.

Council Structure

- The Council holds monthly meetings
- Councillors are elected on a 4-yearly cycle
- An Annual Parish Meeting is held each year in April or May
- The Council meetings take place at 7.30pm on the first Thursday of each month at Aston & Cote Village Hall

Staffing

- Clerk – 13.3 hours per month (including holiday allowance)
- RFO – 15 hours per month (including holiday allowance)

Office Arrangements

- The Clerk is required to work from home and must be able to provide a suitable working environment which will comply with Health and Safety requirements.
- Many of the Parish Council records are stored at Aston & Cote Village Hall but the Clerk will need to be able to securely store the documents referred to regularly at home.
- The Parish Council owns a laptop, and the current clerk uses their own printer and a mobile phone.

Appointment of the Clerk to the Council

Part time – 13.3 hours per month
£14.60 - £15.88 per hour, dependent on qualifications and experience, plus an allowance for home working

The Parish Council is seeking to appoint a new Clerk who will ensure that all legal, statutory, financial and other governing provisions relating to the Council are observed, all Council meetings are properly administered and decisions effectively implemented.

The successful candidate will:

- Be an excellent communicator
- Be self-motivated and have a flexible attitude
- Be well-organised, able to deal with a wide range of situations and demands, and able to meet strict deadlines
- Have experience of administering meetings, including preparing agendas and minutes
- Have experience of preparing and monitoring a budget
- Have good office IT skills including MS Word and Excel
- Preferably have knowledge of the workings of Local Government or a public body

The post requires the Clerk to work from home and to attend evening meetings and occasional other meetings/events.

For further information about how to apply please download the Recruitment Pack from the Parish Council website (https://www.astonoxon-pc.gov.uk) or email clerk@astonoxon-pc.gov.uk.

Closing Date for applications: 25th July 2025 at 5pm

Interview Date: WC 4th August (date and time by negotiation)

Required Start Date: 1st September 2025

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title:	**Clerk to the Council**
Responsible to:	Full Council
Responsible for:	All Council staff, property and financial resources
Employment status:	Part-Time (13.3 hours per month) Permanent
Salary scale:	LC2 (13-17) £14.60 to £15.88 per hour. (Depending on qualifications)

Job Purpose

1. To ensure that the Council's civic and administrative functions and services are performed professionally and in accordance with all relevant statutory obligations.

2. To carry out all the functions required by law of a local authority's Proper Officer in a timely manner and to issue all statutory notifications.

3. To ensure that the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are correctly observed and implemented.

4. To manage the Council's employees effectively and to be the Council's principal adviser on policy matters, to be responsible for all aspects of Health and Safety, manage the provision of Council services, buildings, land and resources and to promote the Council.

5. To be responsible for ensuring that the instructions of the Council in connection with its function as a Local Council are carried out and to produce all the information required for making effective decisions and to implement constructively all decisions.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To ensure that statutory and other provisions and notices governing or affecting the running of the Council are observed and to advise the Councillors on all meeting procedures and regulations.

2. To be the Council's principal adviser on all policy issues, to keep services and activities under continuous review and to identify, plan and implement improvements in quality, efficiency and effectiveness.

3. To keep up to date with changes in legislation and forthcoming changes and advise the Council accordingly ensuring that all Council policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

4. To prepare and publish, in consultation with appropriate Members of the Council, agendas for meetings of the Council and Committees in accordance with all statutory requirements and prepare minutes for approval, other than where such duties have been delegated to another Officer.

5. To ensure that all meetings of the Council and all meetings of its Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties are clerked, attending personally other than where such duties have been delegated to another Officer, and to maintain Councillor's attendance records.

6. To action all necessary and appropriate correspondence and documents on behalf of the Council as a result of the instructions, or the known policy of, the Council or, when appropriate, bring relevant items to the attention of the Council.

7. To sign, seal and deliver any agreements, contracts, conveyances, licences, consents, approvals etc on behalf of the Council. To ensure the Council's planning obligations are met.

8. To provide general advice to the Council on the budget preparation process and ensure that all Management Reports are presented to the Council and the statutory External Audit requirements are completed each year.

9. To work with the RFO to ensure that Council's budget is prepared and balanced and accounts raised and invoices paid and prepare records for audit purposes and VAT.

10. To prepare and publish the Council's Annual Report.

11. To study reports and other data on activities of the Council and on matters bearing on those activities and where appropriate, to discuss such matters with consultants and specialists in particular fields and to produce reports for circulation and discussion by the Council.

12. To head the Council's paid service and manage all other members of staff in keeping with the policies of the Council and employment law and to ensure they perform to expected standards.

13. To arrange and/or undertake staff annual performance appraisals or reviews and deal with any redundancy, disciplinary, capability or grievance issues in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

14. To undertake all necessary activities in connection with the management of salaries, conditions of employment and work of other staff.

15. To apply the principles of equality and equal opportunities as embodied in the Council's policies and practices in order to promote equality of opportunity and treatment and the appropriate attitude and behaviour for all employees.

16. To monitor the implemented policies of the Council to ensure they are achieving the desired result and where appropriate suggest modifications.

17. To be responsible for the management, maintenance and use of all the Council's properties and facilities, whether through direct management or through contracts, agreements or partnerships with other parties or providers.

18. To act as the official representative of the Council at meetings of other relevant organisations as required.

19. To issue notices and prepare agendas and minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting, attend the Annual Parish Meeting and to implement the decisions made by the Council.

20. To maintain effective and positive press and public relations and prepare, in consultation with key Councillors, press releases about the activities of, or decisions of, the Council.

21. To take appropriate public relations action to enhance the profile and image of the Council and promote and protect the views/interest of the Council with all relevant external organisations or individuals.

22. To develop effective liaison and an effective working partnership with other relevant City/District/Borough/County Councils/Unitary Authorities, other public authorities, statutory and voluntary bodies and other agencies as the Council's representative, to ensure that the Council plays a full and effective role in issues affecting the area.

23. To work to improve, develop and up-date the Council's website.

24. To lead the development and publication of the Parish Plan and produce a rolling business plan, as required.

25. To have an understanding of planning and development issues as they affect the Council area, in particular Neighbourhood Plans, the Local Development Plan, the Local Strategic Partnership, economic strategies and the Emergency and Resilience Plan and advise Councillors accordingly.

26. To ensure the casual vacancy process is followed when a Councillor vacancy arises. To explain the requirements of Ordinary Elections to all Councillors and undertake publicity for recruitment.

27. To ensure that the Council's obligations for financial risk assessment and insurance are properly met and that health and safety obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act and other related legislation are met.

28. To be the principal adviser to the Council on matters of ceremony, civic protocol, and develop relevant cultural, community and commercial links.

29. To make appropriate arrangements for civic functions and occasions and attend the Council on any ceremonial occasions.

30. To attend training courses or seminars on the work and role of the Clerk and the Council's activities as required by the Council.

31. To obtain the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA) (if not already gained) as a minimum requirement for effectiveness in the role.

32. To manage the arrangements to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General data Protection Regulations 2018.

33. The clerk manages the Council's Responsible Financial Officer who is responsible for all financial procedures and records, and the careful administration of its finances, in compliance with all statutory obligations or other laws, provisions and notices governing or affecting the running of the Council including:

    (a) being responsible as and carry out all the functions required by law of the Council's Responsible Financial Officer under S151 of the Local Government Act 1972 for all financial matters and records of the Council;
    (b) acting as the Council's principal adviser on financial matters, and to be responsible for the careful administration of the Council's finances, and the proper application and maintenance of the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;
    (c) ensuring that the Council's finances are effectively managed and monitored, and to advise the Council on its financial forward plan, strategy and policies;

(d) advising the Council and its Committees on and preparing the annual budget estimates of income and expenditure for revenue services, the capital budget program and annual Precept requirements;
(e) monitoring and managing the Council's budget expenditure and income, and providing the Council and Committees with a regular statement of income and expenditure under each heading in the approved annual revenue and capital budgets;
(f) ensuring that all Management Reports are reported to the Council, and the statutory internal and external audit requirements are undertaken and completed each year, and any consequential action taken;
(g) issuing and reporting on invoices for goods and services to be paid for by the Council, and to ensure such accounts are met and that: -
- all necessary activities in connection with the management and payment of salaries and expenses are administered accurately and legally
- all payments made to the Council are recorded, any necessary receipts issued, all cash and cheques received banked, all associated records kept and any queries are investigated
- invoices are prepared and issued on behalf of the Council for goods and services to ensure payment is received
- all necessary records in connection with the above are maintained
- all necessary administration and banking procedures are arranged to ensure that all full- and part-time staff wages and salaries are paid
- petty cash accounts are operated properly, and all associated records of purchases are maintained
- all relevant rents or charges are collected for relevant Council services and facilities
- all necessary Revenue and Customs, VAT, SSP and pension financial returns and/or payments are completed and dispatched on time
- records, returns and public notices for the annual audit are prepared and the necessary public notices displayed
- appropriate financial IT systems are in place and operated securely;

(h) monitoring and ensuring that the Council's accounts are controlled, and the Council is informed of the ongoing financial situation;
(i) ensuring all necessary records are prepared for audit and VAT purposes;
(j) ensuring that the Council's obligations for financial risk management, including risk assessments, are properly met and where necessary risks are properly insured;
(k) ensuring that adequate financial security, and internal financial and accounting controls, are in place and periodically reviewed, and the accounting records of the Council are maintained and kept up to date in accordance with proper practices;
(l) ensuring that an annual equipment inventory and asset register are in place;
(m) advising the Council on and assist in the raising of funds by way of grants and sponsorship etc. by following the necessary consultations and processes.
(n) ensuring that all surplus Council funds are invested securely and income maximized;
(o) to ensure that the Bribery Action requirements are complied with.

General Duties

1. To continue to acquire the necessary professional knowledge required for the efficient management of the affairs of the Council and to attend training courses or seminars on the work and role of the Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer and the Council's activities as required by the Council.
2. To attend the Conference of the National Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Council Clerks, and other relevant bodies, as a representative of the Council as required.
3. To undertake such other duties commensurate with the level of the post and job purpose as required by the Council from time to time.

KEY TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Salary	Salary is negotiable within range of £14.60 to £15.88 per hour, dependent on qualifications and experience
Hours of Work	You will be contracted for 13.3 hours per month and paid overtime for additional hours. Your will be required to maintain a timesheet recording hours worked. You will be expected to check emails, post and telephone messages every day (Mon to Fri), organising the working month around the demands of the meeting schedule. You will be expected to attend evening meetings.
Annual Leave	21 working days plus public holidays. (all pro-rata)
Pension	The salary is below the level required for auto-enrolment. The Clerk will be legally entitled to request to opt into a pension scheme, but the Council will not be legally required to contribute.
Probation	13 weeks probationary period.
Pay Method	Salary is paid by BACS monthly in arrears following the monthly Parish Council meeting.
Work Location	You will be required to work from home. Council meetings are held in Aston & Cote Village Hall.
Expenses	HMRC Tax-free mileage rate paid for essential work journeys. Travel is not paid from home to the Village Hall. £26.00 per month is paid as a working from home allowance. This is not subject to PAYE income tax or National Insurance contributions.
Notice Period	After completion of the probationary period, four weeks' notice. .

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Recruitment Schedule

The recruitment timetable is as follows:-

- Application closing date **25th July 2025**
- Interviews **WC 4th August**
- Start Date 1st September 2025

You will be advised of any material change to this timetable as appropriate.

Application Procedure

CV and covering letter.

When preparing your covering letter, you should address the requirements of the Job Description and Skills and Attributes required for the post as outlined in this Recruitment Pack.

Please note you may be required to show documentary proof of any qualifications you claim to hold.

When completed, your application should be emailed or sent to:-

Mrs Elaine Anstee
Parish Clerk
16 Foxwood
Aston
BAMPTON
OX18 2DZ

clerk@astonoxon-pc.gov.uk

By 5pm on 25th July 2025.

References

Your covering letter must include the contact details of two referees. The referees should ideally be people for whom you have worked as an employee, and where you have had employment within the last 5 years, the referees chosen should be your two most recent employers. Your referees cannot include members of your family.

If you are shortlisted references will normally be applied for in advance of the interview unless you indicate in your covering letter that you do not give the Council permission so to do.

Your employment will not be confirmed until satisfactory references have been obtained.

Proof of Eligibility to Work in UK

In accordance with its legal obligations the Council will require you to provide proof that you are legally able to work in the UK before commencing employment.

Canvassing

Canvassing, either directly or indirectly, will disqualify you from appointment. Sending copies of, or extracts from, your completed Application Form, CV or testimonials to any Member of the Council will be regarded as canvassing.

Equal Opportunities

The Council wholeheartedly supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment, opposing all forms of unlawful and/or unfair discrimination whether on grounds of any protected characteristic in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. We aim to appoint therefore purely on merit and suitability for the post on offer.

Further Information

We hope that the information contained in this Recruitment Information Pack is helpful and sufficiently thorough to enable you to submit your application which we look forward to receiving.

However, if you have any questions on the information in the Recruitment Information Pack or any aspect of the appointment or the recruitment process, please do not hesitate to contact the Council as set out in the Introduction earlier in the Pack.

Data Protection

If your application is not successful, we will keep your information on file for six months after which it will be destroyed, and your details removed from our databases.