

Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 19th February 2026

Present: Chairman Liz Yuille, Cllr Steve Brown, Cllr Steve Bolton, Cllr Ian Burton, Cllr Mark Thompson, RFO Clifford Bosley, County Cllr Johnny Hope-Smith.

In attendance: Martin Elliff (clerk) and 2 members of the public.

Chairman Yuille welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2026/018 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2026/019 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllrs Bolton and Burton declared their interest in Long Wittenham Athletic Club.

2026/020 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- Resident Jim Brown was present to ask the council to support his initiative to get OCC to integrate its river water levels data with Google Maps and Waze so that these applications will warn drivers of potential road flooding automatically. Agreed.
- Resident Cath Nicholson had asked via social media if there was merit in setting up a village Neighbourhood Watch. The council agreed to support this. The Chairman will advise Ms Nicholson accordingly.

2026/021 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Parish Council resolved to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2026.

2026/022 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

- Cllr Brown had circulated the estimated cost for refurbishing the Saxons Heath and Fieldside Noticeboards: approximately £550. Approved.

2026/023 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr Casey-Rerhaye's report for February, sent by email, is attached in appendix A.

2026/024 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr Hope-Smith's report for February, sent by email, is attached in appendix B.

2026/025 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

P26/S0083/HH	Brook House High Street Long Wittenham	NSV
P26/S0209/DIS	Land to the NE of Didcot	NRR

2026/026 COMMUNITY HUB

There has been little progress as Pye Homes are continuing their investigations into drainage on the site. It is hoped that they will produce a viable plan in the near future.

2026/027 NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

Cllr Thompson attended a Neighbourhood Planning event on 28th January organised by SODC. The key takeaway from this was that while NDPs continue to carry statutory weight, only a level 2, or level 3 review will ensure maximum protection. The review carried out so far counts as a level 1. As a minimum, we would need to add or amend a policy and have the NDP examined (a level 2 review) in order to receive five years of protection.

It was agreed that Cllrs Thompson and Brown should meet to discuss the best option to ensure the maximum protection.



Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 19th February 2026

- 2026/028 SPEED INDICATOR DEVICES (SIDs)**
OCC installed the posts for the SIDs in January at a cost of £1,077.67. The devices cost £5,735.98. The £5,700 grant from the TVP Community Fund was received in October. Cllr Brown reported that the SIDs have been delivered and the necessary tests have been carried out to comply with the supplier recommendations. The required fixings have been obtained and padlocks will also be purchased to secure the devices. He asked the council to approve that Jim Brown helps with the installation and that he would be paid for his time. The cost of the installation is expected to be approximately £125. Approved.
- 2026/029 PARISH CLERK / RFO RECRUITMENT**
Three excellent candidates were interviewed at the end of January and the post has been offered to Liz Cruse. She has been sent a contract of Employment and it is expected that, following handovers from the current clerk and RFO in March, she will take over on 1st April.
- 2026/030 COUNCILLOR RECRUITMENT**
The chairman had circulated two draft website posts with a view to encouraging residents to join the PC.
- 2026/031 ACKLINGS AND BODKINS FENCES**
Logs Unlimited has carried out repairs to the picket fence and pedestrian gate at Acklings.
Logs have also provided a quotation of £585 plus VAT for the removal of the knee rail and replacing it with picket fencing at Bodkins. Since the meeting, Cllr Bolton has circulated an alternative quote of £400 from Mr Rainbow.
- 2026/032 ACKLINGS TABLE TENNIS TABLE**
Cllr Brown reported that our county councillor has approved a grant of £1,000 towards the cost of the table at Acklings and, subject to PC approval of the remainder of the costs, it should be possible to install the table during the May half term. Total cost is expected to be in the region of £3,000. Approved.
- 2026/033 POTHOLE**
There was a long discussion about the state of the roads around the village and particularly the road to Clifton Hampden which Cllr Hope-Smith described as the worst in his division. He said that all divisions on the council were experiencing the same problem (see his report in Appendix B). He said that residents should raise the issue with OCC Highways at every opportunity as this will add more weight for him to argue for his area to be prioritised. Potholes should be reported regularly on Fix My Street. Reports with photographs carry more weight. Although immediate short-term repairs are welcome, Cllr Hope-Smith was asked to ascertain the council's medium to long term approach to the issue.
- 2026/034 VILLAGE HALL MAP**
The map on the wall of the Village Hall is deteriorating. A new print will cost approximately £45. It was agreed to get a new one printed and for the map to be updated next year.

Actions: Clerk to have the Village Hall map reprinted.



Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 19th February 2026

2026/035 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

- Long Wittenham Athletic Club
The Playbus has been moved from the site.
The Warm Hub is proving popular. The organisers intend to submit a grant application for funds to help with running expenses.
- Village Hall Committee (VHC)
A new Village Hall Committee is now in place. It may make a grant application to help finance repairs and maintenance of the hall.

2026/036 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- Cllr Brown said that two or three potholes have appeared on Northfield Lane. He said that they could be easily repaired for approximately £50. Approved.
- Cllr Yuille said that some residents had asked if a second dog bin could be installed at Neptune Wood as the current one is usually full. As this is private land owned by the Earth Trust, the chairman will advise them of the request.
- Cllr Bolton said that the small goal posts that had been moved from Acklings to the Athletic Club several years ago are well used but are in need of replacement. It was agreed that this should be a project for the new financial year. In the meantime, Cllr Bolton will get quotations for new posts.

Actions: Chairman to advise Earth Trust of the request for a second dog bin at Neptune Wood.
Cllr Bolton to seek quotations for new small goal posts at Bodkins.

2026/037 FINANCIAL REPORT

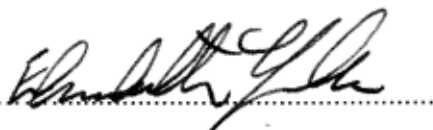
- CIL Funds held by SODC
Every 6 months, the council is asked to confirm that SODC should continue to hold the council's CIL funds on its behalf. Confirmed.
- Expenditure during January

05/01/2026	Savills Inv 1045445 (Acklings Rent)	£600.00
05/01/2026	Jim Brown Inv 1020 (Playground & Noticeboard Repairs)	£138.50
08/01/2026	Bosley Expenses (Payroll)	£246.39
08/01/2026	Bosley Expenses (Stationery)	£45.89
14/01/2026	Elliff Expenses (Website Hosting)	£28.80
14/01/2026	Clerk's Salary January 2026	£354.25
19/01/2026	Bank Service Charge	£4.25
21/01/2026	Storm Fireworks Inv 202602 (Bonfire Night Deposit)	£575.00
22/01/2026	Brown Expenses (Claire Michellis Gift)	£50.00
29/01/2026	LW Village Hall (Hall Hire Clerk-RFO Interviews)	£56.00
	January Expenditure Total	£2,099.08

Meeting Closed at 8:53pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 19th March 2026

Signed:



Date:

19/3/26

APPENDIX A

District Councillor Report – February 2026

Budget 2026-27

We are approaching the final major budget for the council before the government confirms the future council configuration for our area (which will then limit our ability to commit funds to things due to the accompanying legislation).

The good news I am hearing is that there will be no cuts to services in 2026, and a strong prospect of further investment in facilities and community grants, subject to approval at the council's budget meetings on 12th February. One thing already under discussion is a community cohesion project, to make sure as best we can that all our communities feel welcome, supported and included in South Oxfordshire, at a time when division is in the air.

I and my fellow Green councillors are scrutinising the budget papers on 3rd February, where I chair the Scrutiny Committee; and we intend to make suggestions for other activities/projects where the District council can add value to our public services using the substantial returns on investment from reserves that are reported in the budget.

Anyone can look at the budget papers on the SODC website Scrutiny Committee agenda page.

A secure short-term future for our local leisure facilities in uncertain times

With the government planning to reorganise councils in Oxfordshire in the coming years, a short-term contract extension - rather than a new long-term deal – has been agreed for leisure centres and pools in our area.

The council's current long term leisure services contract is nearing its end in August 2026. Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), a charitable community interest company who operate under the brand 'Better', has been the provider for leisure services on behalf of both District Councils since 2014 (and separately for both councils for several years before that). This covers seven locations in South Oxfordshire and four in Vale of White Horse, including outdoor pools in both areas, at Wallingford and Abingdon.

Changes within the new three-year extension will generate cost savings for the councils without any change to the service. There is also further significant investment earmarked for facilities across both districts in the remaining lifetime of the council, which is good news at a time when many councils have sold off or closed their leisure centres.

Councillor Grants agreed

I had lots of applications for this grant this year, which is great. It does mean that not all the applications will get the whole sum applied for, however. Working with the Council grants team, I have worked through them and applicants will be informed soon.

Talking of grants....

The CIL community grant is now open for applications.

Applications for the second round of the Community Infrastructure Levy Grant Fund opened on Friday 30 January for town and parish councils and not-for-profit community groups in South Oxfordshire. A total of £750,000 is available to support projects that improve or create new community amenities, such as community centres, sports and cultural facilities, play areas, and open spaces. Grants of £75,000 to £250,000 will be awarded for projects that are needed as a result of more development in the area.

More information, including details on how to apply, is available on our website: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Grant Fund - open - South Oxfordshire District Council. The closing date for applications is 30 March 2026.

LGR - government consultation launching soon

The government's Local Government Reorganisation consultation is likely to launch in early February. They will seek views on all the three proposals put forward to reorganise local government in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.



Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 19th February 2026

The District council are working on an extensive communications and engagement campaign to run alongside the government consultation to publicise this and to encourage as many people as possible to take part. This includes a refreshed TwoCouncil.org website, which will be launching soon – this explains the option the District councils in South and Vale are favouring (Ridgeway and North Oxfordshire councils) plus links to the other two options, One Oxfordshire and the City Council's Greater Oxford 3 councils proposal.

New Council Tax billing method

Residents can now get their council tax bill by email instead of a paper bill in the post without needing to sign up for an online account with us. As part of the work to encourage people to use the digital services if possible, the easy e-bill sign up will reduce paper use and reliance on postal services, saving the councils money too. Residents can fill in a form on our website to switch to e-bills. If you do want to set up an account to handle everything online, you can do that on the Council website too.

Garden Waste Permits for 2026

Existing garden waste permits will expire on 31 March. To continue receiving fortnightly collections from 1 April and to avoid any interruption to their service, residents will need to buy a new permit. New permit sales will open mid-February. The vast majority of the 69,000+ customers will be able to buy their permit via their 'MyAccount' or by visiting southandvale.gov.uk/gardenwastepermit

Offline Support: Residents who need assistance, should call the Customer Services team on 01235 422422

Free Business Webinars

As the decarbonisation work - replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps and solar panels - continues at Park Sports Centre in Wheatley, the construction company AtkinsRéalis has, as part of its social value commitment, organised free online webinars for local community to develop a range of new skills. Please share

- Carbon Literacy for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) 11 February | 11am – 12.30pm
- Building Blocks for a Social Media Strategy 20 February | 10.20am – Midday
- A Social Value Guide for Small Businesses 24 February | 11am – Midday

Retirement

The Head of Service for Planning, Adrian Duffield, has announced his plans to retire after over 40 years working in local government and nearly 25 years at the councils, including 17 years jointly at South and Vale.

Cornerstone music events

Enjoy three standout nights of live music at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot this Spring. Beginning with Katy Rose Bennett & ISCA on Friday 6 February, bringing heartfelt folk songs, rich storytelling, and stunning a cappella harmonies from one of the UK's most distinctive vocal groups. Then on Saturday 14 March, award-winning singer and actress Patti Boulaye OBE presents Here I Am, a joyful one-woman show filled with unforgettable songs and hilarious stories from her remarkable career on stage, screen, and beyond.

And to finish with a bang, King Pleasure and The Biscuit Boys hit the stage on Saturday 28 March, delivering high-energy swing, blues, and rhythm & blues from one of the world's most celebrated vintage bands.

You can book Cornerstone website or call the box office: 01235 515144

sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk



APPENDIX B

County Councillor Report – February 2026

1. POTHoles

Following recent emails received from residents, conversations on the streets and general posts read on here I thought it might be a good idea to outline the current situation with highways and, yes, the dreaded pothole(s). As a motorist, cyclist, pedestrian and parent, I'm dealing with the same roads as everyone else and I completely share the frustration.

Key Details

- Long term issue: national underfunding of roads. For more than a decade, councils nationwide have faced reduced road maintenance grants, meaning less preventative resurfacing and more reactive pothole repairs.
- Recent weather has caused severe road deterioration. Heavy rain followed by repeated freezing temperatures is the worst possible combination for asphalt, causing rapid pothole formation across the whole country, not just Oxfordshire.
- Oxfordshire has more than doubled repair crews. The county council and its contractor now have twice as many teams out on the 3,000 mile network to tackle the surge in defects.
- Some repairs now require full structural work, not patches. Due to the scale of winter damage, many potholes can't simply be filled; larger failing sections need cutting out and resurfacing.

Links

- A good overview of the national, systemic problems behind this - BBC Panorama episode "The Pothole Problem" broadcasted on 8th December 2025 and on iplayer is worth a watch <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m002nc89>
- Additional context from The Local Government Association <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/pothole-repair-funding-uk-has-reduced-more-majority-other-oecd-nations-lga-analysis>
- Additional crews link - <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/more-crews-repairing-potholes>
- Fix My Street Link - <https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

A statutory government consultation on the future structure of local government in Oxfordshire has launched and runs from 5 February to 26 March.

Key Details

- There are three options being consulted on:
 - One Oxfordshire – a single countywide unitary council (Oxfordshire Council)
 - Two unitary councils – Oxford & Shires Council and Ridgeway Council
 - Three unitary councils – Greater Oxford Council, Northern Oxfordshire Council and Ridgeway Council

Links

- Consultation Link with links to the three proposals <https://oneoxfordshire.org.uk/>

3. INFO - COUNTY COUNCIL SETS 2026/27 BUDGET

The FY 26/27 Budget was passed by Council on the 11th Feb

Key Details

- Central government will reduce Oxfordshire's grant funding by £27.2m by 2028/29, while assuming councils will fill the gap through the maximum 4.99% Council Tax rise every year
- Much of the extra Council Tax raised locally is immediately subtracted by the government through the new funding rules, meaning residents pay more but Oxfordshire receives less.
- Budget balanced for 2026/27 despite £5.4m shortfall, note that the council already knows it must find at least £15.5m in 2027/28, with more in later years due to continued grant cuts and demand pressures.

Links



Long Wittenham Parish Council meeting held on 19th February 2026

- Budget Changes on OCC website - <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/about-your-council/council-tax-and-finance/new-budget-changes>
- General link on countrywide context - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4gllzenpvpo>

4. INFO – PIZZA AND POLITICS AT WALLINGFORD TOWN HALL

On 6th February I attended the Pizza and politics youth engagement (secondary school) event, part Q&A, part workshop, lots of pizza.

Key Details

- The session was exceptionally positive - young participants came prepared with thoughtful, challenging and well considered questions.
- Their contributions showed a deep understanding of issues affecting local communities, as well as a clear desire to influence decisions made at county level.
- The event demonstrated the importance of ensuring young people's voices remain at the heart of Oxfordshire's policy making, particularly on themes such as education, transport, environment, and local services.

5. REMINDER INFO - Nearly 70,000 Gullies Cleaned Since April

Oxfordshire County Council is on track to clean every highway drainage gully in the county by March 2026, as part of a £2.6 million programme to improve drainage and reduce flooding risk.

Key Details

- Target: Clean 145,000 gullies and manholes in 12 months.
- Progress: 67,000 gullies cleaned by end of October; 17,000 in October alone.
- Investment: £1.5m additional funding approved in the 2025–26 budget.
- Delivery: Crews doubled from 6 to 12, working day and evening shifts for efficiency.

Benefits:

- Reduces surface water and flood risk.
- Protects roads by preventing potholes caused by standing water and freezing.
- Technology: Tankers use asset management software to log cleans and schedule revisits.

5. REMINDER: Councillor Priority Fund – Supporting Local Projects – HALF NOW ALLOCATED

The Councillor Priority Fund has reopened, offering each Oxfordshire County Councillor £10,000 to support community projects within their division. This funding is designed to help deliver local priorities and strengthen community initiatives.

Parish councils, community groups, and local organisations are encouraged to apply for funding to support projects that benefit residents. Examples might include:

- Improvements to community facilities
- Local environmental initiatives
- Activities that promote wellbeing or inclusion
- Smaller-scale projects are especially encouraged, as the fund is modest and intended to support a wide range of communities across Oxfordshire

Key details:

- Applications must be submitted by 30 November 2026
- Grants are typically paid within 28 days of approval
- Applicants must register for an account to apply and track progress
- Monitoring and reporting are required for successful projects

To ensure your project meets the funding criteria, please read the guidance document before applying.

Email: Johnny.Hope-Smith@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

