

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF DRAYTON ST LEONARD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Drayton St Leonard Parish Council, held on Thursday 14 May 2026, at 7.30pm at the Drayton St Leonard Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs M Beardmore, G Farrant, E Hayter (Chairman), and D Hinde.

Parish Clerk: Mrs C Pinnells

01/26 Appointment of Chair – Councillor to sign Declaration of Office

It was resolved that Cllr Hayter be elected as Chairman for the ensuing year and duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

02/26 Appointment of Vice Chair - Councillor to sign Declaration of Office

It was resolved that Cllr Wellbelove be elected as Vice Chairman in his absence for the ensuing year. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office to be signed at the next Parish Council meeting.

03/26 Apologies for Absence

It was resolved that apologies had been received from Cllr C Wellbelove before the meeting started due to business commitments.

04/26 Minutes

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 12 March 2026, be signed with no amendments.

05/26 To **note** the minutes of the Annual Village meeting held on Thursday 12 March 2026.

It was resolved to note the minutes of the Annual Village meeting held on Thursday 12 March 2026.

06/26 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations – No declarations of interest or dispensations were declared.

07/26 Public Participation – There were no applications to address the Parish Council.

08/26 To **approve and adopt** the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

It was resolved to approve and re-adopt the Standing Orders as revised by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) of April 2025.

It was resolved to approve and re-adopt the adapted Financial Regulations as revised by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) at end of April 2025.

09/26 To retrospectively **approve** payments.

A Ian McCarthy, Village Equipment, Local Government (Misc. Provisions) Act 1976 s.19.
£900.00

To **approve** payments

B Great Haseley Parish Clerk, Internal Audit, Local Government Act 1972, s111

- £75.00
- C Clear Councils Insurance, Parish Council Insurance, Local Government Act 1972, s111
£TBC
- D Parish Administration, 2026 1st quarter payment, Local Government Act 1972, s111
£339.45
- E HMRC, PAYE National Insurance, Local Government Act 1972, s111
£84.80

10/26 To **receive and agree** the financial statements of accounts for the year to date. Current balances were noted as follows: NatWest Business Current Account Statement and Business Reserve Statement, bank reconciliation for both accounts were not available at the time of the meeting and would be presented at the next Parish Council meeting for approval and signature.

Income received: 1st precept £1,682.00, Tent Hire £40 and interest £0.00.
Expenditure: £900 for the six gazebo purchases.

It was resolved to delay signing the Financial Statements ending 31 March 2027 to the next meeting due to the financial statements were not available at the meeting.

11/26 To **receive and agree** the financial statements of accounts for the year ending 31 March 2026.

It was resolved to approve the Financial Statements without any changes for year ending 31 March 2026.

Current balances were noted as follows: NatWest Business Current Account Statement £48.71 and Business Reserve Statement £20,821.69. Bank reconciliation for both accounts were approved and signed.

12/26 To receive and agree the Internal Auditors report year ending 31 March 2026.

The audit was finalised after a meeting with the Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer on 5th May 2025 and did not require any adjustments to the information provided.

Some comments below on points arising from the Internal Audit are as follows:

1. Whilst I am aware the parish council discussed this point following last year's audit, I would urge you to reconsider applying for a Debit Card on the current account issued to the Clerk to purchase small sundry items i.e. stationery and to register the card for Microsoft monthly payments. This avoids the Clerk using her personal card and reduces the likelihood of error when claiming expenses and can be managed through proper processes and policies.
2. Minor points to highlight: a) a second signatory was missed from two payments dated 25 September 2025 and 12 March 2026.
3. It was noted that for 2024-2025 the commencement date of Notice of Electors Rights was the same as the Notice Date. The commencement date must follow at least one day after the date of the Notice.

The audit concluded that:

- The control objectives and processes have been achieved throughout the financial year ensuring the affairs of the Council and the actions of its elected members and staff are within their remit and comply with the various regulations.

The Receipt & Payment Account for the year ended 31 March 2026 is a fair reflection of the financial transactions that have taken place during the year.

It was noted that the requirement for the Clerk to have a debit card they would need to become a signatory on the NatWest account, it was decided that online approval was sufficient at this time.

The two invoices missing secondary signatures were corrected at the meeting.

It was noted that the date for Notice of Electors Rights was the same date and noted for future requirements.

It was resolved to approve the Annual Internal Auditor's report year ending 31 March 2026.
It was resolved that a letter of thanks be sent to Andrea Oughton on behalf of the Chairman and Parish Council for undertaking the Internal Audit so thoroughly.

13/26 To consider the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 redaction of the signatures on the web version to protect signatories from "specific and identifiable threats" of Identity theft and GDPR concerns.

It was resolved to approve the redaction of signatures on the web version of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26.

14/26 To agree and sign the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26.

Drayton St Leonard Parish Council to ensure a sound system of internal control and that the systems will cover the preparation of accounting statements. The accounting statements for the year ending 31 March 2026 were confirmed to the best of the Parish Council's knowledge and belief. The Annual Governance Statement within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was approved and answered questions 1 to 10 were agreed.

It was resolved to agree and sign Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Part 2.

15/26 To **agree and sign** the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26. Part 2 and to certify as exempt from a limited assurance review.

It was resolved to approve and sign Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Part 2 and to certify as exempt for a limited assurance review.

The Clerk provided year end bank statements, bank reconciliation statement as of 31 March 2026, Breakdown of reserves held by Drayton St Leonard Parish Council, Explanation of variances 2025/26 and explained the figures to be inserted into the boxes marked *1 through to 10 and answers to be completed for 11a & 11b*.

Drayton St Leonard Parish Council annual gross income and expenditure is below £25,000 for 2025/26.

Total annual gross income for Drayton St Leonard PC 2025/26: £4,935.
Total annual gross expenditure for Drayton St Leonard PC 2025/26: £4,341.

16/26 To **note** the dates for the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return will be displayed in the Village noticeboard on Tuesday 2 June to commence from **Wednesday 3 June 2026** until **Tuesday 14 July 2026**.

17/26 To **receive an update** from the playground inspections and maintenance requirements.

Action for the Parish Clerk to contact Cllr Wellbelove for the latest play area inspection report to be emailed to the Councillors.

18/26 **Exchange** of Information.

Cllr Farrant informed that a meeting with Highways Engineers and Greenford Engineering Contractors had taken place regarding repairs for the raised walkway along the Stadhampton Road with a start date of 3 August 2026, with an anticipated road closure for 8 weeks. Haywards Bridge Road surface structural repair requirements will be reviewed; it is hoped that Highways will give permission for this work to take place at the same time.

Cllr Hinde informed the meeting that BT have provided an update that fibre broadband will be rolled out within the village next 12 months.

Cllr Beardmore informed the Parish Council that there were still issues with post, deliveries regarding the two unnamed streets in the village. There was a concern that the emergency services would not be able to find the locations within the village due to the roads having no identifying road name. It was agreed that Cllr Beardmore would contact the Street Naming and Numbering Officer at South Oxfordshire District Council to raise the Parish Council's concerns.

To **receive** an update from the Parish Path Warden (PPW)

Parish Path Warden – presented his report as follows.

Footpath 13 (War Memorial to Water Lane) Tree at 45 degrees across the footpath. This tree originates in wasteland and crosses onto the trees in the Rectory. This is safe and passable but needs removing. This will be arranged.

Footpaths across the iron bridge have now had the temporary electric fence removed.

The trees on the Ironbridge have been trimmed. There are no other significant problems to report. The Stile by the iron bridge is unstable but is not a recognised footpath. This will be discussed with the landowners.

The Parish Clerk will ensure that the PPW is invited to future Parish Council meetings.

The Parish Council thanked the PPW for his due diligence in keeping the village footpaths accessible.

To **receive** an Annual report from Oxfordshire County Councillor, Robin Jones.

Oxfordshire County Councillor Robin Jones presented his annual report to the meeting.

The County Council elections held in May 2025 resulted in significant changes to the administration at Oxfordshire County Council. While the previous joint administration between the

Green Party and Liberal Democrats ended, the Green Party increased its representation from three to seven councillors. The Liberal Democrats secured 36 of the 69 seats and now form the sole administration. Labour and the Conservative Alliance each hold 12 seats, with Reform holding one seat and one independent councillor remaining non-aligned. During the year, the Green Group successfully passed a number of motions, including proposals for improved emergency discharge modelling for the Abingdon Reservoir and for Oxfordshire County Council to pay all staff the Oxford Living Wage. The Group also contributed to constitutional review work aimed at improving council processes and governance arrangements.

At the February Full Council meeting, the Green Party secured acceptance of the only amendment to the County Council budget, resulting in £1 million of ring-fenced funding for the maintenance of pavements, paths and cycleways, alongside additional funding for social cohesion and environmental initiatives. The Council continues to face financial pressures due to reductions in central government funding, although Oxfordshire remains in a comparatively stronger position than many authorities, particularly following government support to offset SEND overspend liabilities.

A number of local infrastructure and community matters have also progressed during the year. These include new speed management measures on the A4074 corridor, approval and funding for the Culham Toucan Crossing, and continued development work on the Roman Road Cycle Route linking Berinsfield and Oxford. Oxfordshire County Council has also taken formal action regarding unauthorised flags placed on highway furniture by the group "Raise the Colours". In addition, significant investment is being directed towards pothole repairs and preventative road maintenance following severe winter damage across the county. Household waste disposal arrangements are also being monitored following the introduction of a registration system at recycling centres.

The ongoing Local Government Reorganisation process continues to be a major area of discussion, with proposals currently under consideration for either one, two or three new unitary authorities across Oxfordshire. Government indications suggest a provisional decision may be made later in 2026, with potential elections for any new authority structures taking place in 2027 ahead of implementation in 2028. Further uncertainty remains regarding the proposed Greater Oxford Development Corporation and wider Thames Valley devolution arrangements.

Councillor Priority Grant funding has now been fully allocated across local communities, supporting projects including playground improvements, community events, SEND musical equipment, speed indicator devices, community orchards and village signage. Finally, appreciation was expressed to parish councillors and local residents for their continued commitment, support and dedication to serving their communities throughout the year.

Thanks were given for Cllr Jones's written report and attendance at the meeting.

To **receive** an Annual report from South Oxfordshire District Councillor, Robin Bennett

Councillor Robin Bennett provided a written South Oxfordshire District Council Drayton St Leonard Annual Report, noting that despite the prospect of local government reorganisation within the next few years, it had remained a busy and productive year for the authority. Following the May 2025 elections, the Liberal Democrat group ended its six-year partnership with the Green Group and assumed sole control of the Council. Councillor Bennett was re-elected as Leader of the Green Group, which became the official opposition and assumed responsibility for chairing the Scrutiny Committees. Leadership changes also took place within the administration, with Councillor David Rouane stepping down as Leader in December 2025 and Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers subsequently elected as Leader and appointing a new Cabinet.

The Council also experienced significant senior management changes, including the appointment of Adrianna Partridge as the new joint Chief Executive Officer for South Oxfordshire

and Vale of White Horse District Councils in January 2026, alongside the recent appointment of Julian Osgathorpe as Deputy Chief Executive. Attention continues to focus on Local Government Reorganisation, with current expectations that elections for a new unitary authority may take place in May 2027 ahead of implementation in 2028, although the final structure and geography of any new authority remain undecided pending a government announcement expected later in 2026. This uncertainty has restricted the Council's ability to commit to long-term projects and contracts, including the shelving of proposals for new council offices at the Didcot Gateway site.

Members also noted the Government's proposal for a "Greater Oxford Development Corporation", which could assume strategic planning and development powers across a wide area of Oxfordshire. Concerns were expressed regarding the potential loss of local democratic oversight should such powers transfer to a centrally controlled body. Alongside this, proposals continue to develop for a wider Thames Valley Strategic Authority as part of the Government's devolution agenda.

Despite these uncertainties, South Oxfordshire District Council has continued delivery of its strategic priorities set out in "The Way Ahead", including action on climate change, financial stability, community wellbeing, infrastructure and housing. Examples highlighted included bringing empty homes back into use, supporting nature recovery and community resilience projects, improving arts and leisure facilities, promoting local businesses through the Visit Southern Oxfordshire initiative, reducing homelessness and tackling anti-social behaviour. Progress on the Joint Local Plan 2041 has continued following intervention from the Planning Inspectorate and changes to national planning policy, with public examination expected during summer 2026.

The Council has also continued to support local organisations through a range of grant schemes, including increased revenue grants, expanded councillor grant funding and Community Infrastructure Levy funding for local projects. New schemes supporting community-led housing and local nature initiatives were also approved through amendments proposed by the Green Group. Work to reduce the Council's carbon emissions has continued through the decarbonisation of leisure facilities and investment in electric waste and cleansing vehicles. Finally, it was noted that South Oxfordshire remains one of the top recycling districts in the country, with ongoing waste reduction campaigns and community recycling initiatives helping maintain high recycling performance across the district.

Thanks were given for Cllr Bennett's written report.

19/26 To **discuss** issues arising from the post bag/email correspondence or any urgent correspondence that arrived after the agenda was published.

There was nothing to discuss.

To raise items for the agenda for the Parish Council meeting on **Thursday, 10 September 2026** at 7.30pm at the Village Hall

- To review the Parish Council Risk Assessment
- To review the Parish Council Asset Register
- To discuss the Village Fireworks Event
- To receive an update from the playground inspections and maintenance
- To review the Parish Council Risk Assessment
- To invite the Oxford County Councillor Robin Jones
- To invoice South Oxfordshire District Councillor Robin Bennett
- To receive an update from the Parish Path Warden.

The meeting concluded at 8.55pm.

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