

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting  
held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**Present:**

Keith Hickson	(KH)	Chair
Joe Deane	(JD)	Councillor
Robin Morley	(RM)	Councillor
Sandra Cosier	(SC)	Councillor & District Councillor
Jim Coleman	(JC)	Councillor
Trudi Gasser	(TG)	Parish Clerk

**In Attendance:**

Steve Cosier	(SCo)	District Councillor
10 Members of the public		

MIN REF	ITEM
<b>26/032</b>	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>                      Geoff Webster (GW) Vice-Chair                      Dan Levy (DL) County Councillor</p>
<b>26/033</b>	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>                      No interests were declared by the councillors present</p>
<b>26/034</b>	<p><b>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</b>                      Minutes Parish Council Meeting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026 were reviewed and approved by the chair.</p>
<b>26/035</b>	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING</b>                      26/021 - KH to contact D. Bury's agent.                      26/028 - J.Woodward instructed to carry out work.                      26/030 - TG to order additional bin                      26/027 - Baby changing unit installed.                      RM volunteered to join Dix Pit Group on behalf of PC</p>
<b>26/036</b>	<p><b>COUNTY &amp; DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS</b>                      See attached appendix for full report from Steve Cosier &amp; Sandra Cosier, District Councillors, WODC.</p>
<b>26/037</b>	<p><b>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</b></p> <p>Dix Pit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments had been made regarding the barbed wire along the footpath.</li> <li>• Dog waste bin - TG had contacted Ubico to empty the bin which is now accessible.</li> <li>• A litter pick had been undertaken; it was reported that there was difficulty in disposing of the litter – details of the location of the picked litter to be provided to the Clerk so collection could be arranged.</li> </ul> <p>Air Raid Shelter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No one appears to have a key, so it was proposed to break existing lock and replace, with the PC to hold new key. The PC approved of this action, to be confirmed to all parties prior to action.</li> <li>• The PC requested a copy of the risk assessment Prior to allowing access to members of the public at the RBL event in September</li> </ul>

	<p>Concern re contact with PC re cemetery issues. TG confirmed that there had been issues with PC emails – this was now resolved and all outstanding cemetery enquiries had been resolved. TG to publish details of contact regarding the cemetery on the PC website.</p> <p>Concern over new gate on Steadys Lane to Green Lane - not practical as too high and dangerous drop onto ditch – TG to take pictures and KH to contact the landowner.</p> <p>Trees on Sutton Lane had been partially cleared. OCC are contacting the landowner to clear the rest.</p>
<b>26/038</b>	<p><b>PLANNING</b></p> <p>Appeal against Enforcement Notice 2026/1 - Operational Development</p> <p>Appeal Reference: APP/D3125/C/26/3377615  Site Address: 28 Flexneys Paddock Stanton Harcourt Witney  Alleged Breach: Without planning permission:-</p> <p>The erection of an outbuilding with associated raised steps and patio area.</p> <p>Planning applications received for comment:</p> <p>APPLICATION NO: 26/00653/FUL  PROPOSAL: Proposed erection of one detached dwelling with associated garage, parking, landscaping and use of the existing access following the removal of the existing deteriorating building.  Town and Country Planning Act  LOCATION: Store And Premises Linch Hill Stanton Harcourt</p> <p>APPLICATION NO: 26/00485/LBC  PROPOSAL: Internal and external alterations to existing modern extension to form additional ground floor bedroom.  Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act</p> <p>APPLICATION NO: 26/00484/FUL  PROPOSAL: Works to existing modern extension and change of use of outbuilding to form two additional ground floor bedrooms.  Town and Country Planning Act  LOCATION: The Harcourt Arms Main Road Stanton Harcourt</p>
<b>26/039</b>	<p><b>ENVIRONMENT &amp; FLOODING</b></p> <p>OCC are offering funding for flood prevention. KH suggested a possibility of utilising the funds to minimise the runoff from fields onto the B4449 at Sutton which recently flooded. KH to arrange a walk around to establish the landowners.</p>
<b>26/040</b>	<p><b>ROADS</b></p> <p>Speed signs: The speedwatch group shared data from the VAS in Sutton. The group are to provide a formal proposal to the PC with costings, which may have increased slightly. It was suggested to include a buffer zone reducing the speed to 30mph then to 20mph.</p> <p>Speed Watch: There was no update on Speed Watch.</p> <p>Pot Holes: KH reported he's been out to mark up further pot holes.</p>

<b>26/041</b>	<p><b>MAINTENANCE</b></p> <p>John Woodward now back in action.</p> <p>The concrete posts along the grass verge at the bus stop on Flexneys have now been removed and fencing at the Guardroom will be installed in coming weeks.</p> <p>Grass Cutting – RM proposed to increase the Grass Cutting rate by 5%. All were in favour.</p> <p>TG to chase Robin re Tree Trimming on The Green.</p> <p>Hedge on The Green - gaps need to be filled – KH had not ordered new hedging – needs to be resolved.</p> <p>Christmas tree on The Green – does not appear to be doing well – may need to be replaced- PC to explore late in the year.</p>
<b>26/042</b>	<p><b>S106</b></p> <p><b>Art Fund</b></p> <p>A proposal had been received from Standing with Giants – PC to invite Dan along to the next meeting to explore possibilities and progress. TG to circulate proposal to all.</p> <p><b>Leisure</b></p> <p>Nothing to report</p>
<b>26/043</b>	<p><b>VILLAGE VOICE</b></p> <p>Another excellent issue of Village Voice.</p> <p>The PC contribution to Village Voice was discussed. Jim to provide copy for the next issue.</p> <p>The deadline for VV content is the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.</p>
<b>26/044</b>	<p><b>GUARDROOM</b></p> <p>It was reported that bookings were steady – with a couple of bookings from outside the village.</p> <p>Baby changing facilities had been installed at the guardroom.</p> <p>The heating was discussed, again, clearer instructions to be provided to users of the Guardroom to ensure the settings of the wall heaters are not tampered with.</p>
<b>26/045</b>	<p><b>VILLAGE HALL</b></p> <p>Nothing to report</p>
<b>26/046</b>	<p><b>ANNUAL PARISH MEETING</b></p> <p>The Annual Parish Meeting was scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> May to coincide with the Village Market. KH to organise with help from other members of the PC.</p> <p>TG to check availability of the Holland Room.</p>
<b>26/047</b>	<p><b>CORRESPONDENCE</b></p> <p>Covered during the meeting.</p>
<b>26/048</b>	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p>It was reported that the battery in the defibrillator at the village hall was starting to lose charge, which would indicate it may be coming to the end of its life – TG proposed to purchase a replacements battery at the cost of £233 plus VAT and postage. All agreed.</p> <p>All were reminded that the District Councillor Elections would be taking place on 7<sup>th</sup> May. Details had been published on the PC noticeboard and PC Website</p>
<b>26/049</b>	<p><b>NEXT MEETING</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual Meeting of the Parish Council: 7.30pm Monday 11the May 2026 at the Old Guardroom.</li><li>• The next ordinary meeting of the PC will follow immediately after the Annual Meeting.</li></ul>
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Signed .....

Date .....

**Monthly Report – County Councillor – Dan Levy  
Stanton Harcourt Parish Council - April 2026**

**Fire Service**

The report following the public consultation on changes to Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue service has been published. It showed that there was significant concern about some of the suggested approaches. So the possible closure of Henley, Woodstock and Eynsham stations has been taken out of any action plan for the foreseeable future.

I appreciate that people are sceptical about consultations, but the County Council does genuinely listen. Consultations aren't a referendum, but when residents and stakeholders make constructive comments, they are always carefully considered, and make a real difference to the outcomes.

We still need to make sure that fire crews are in the right places at the right time, bearing in mind that most activity happens in day time rather than at night, and that road incidents are much more frequent than fires.

**Roads**

**Gully Clearance:** officially, a full sweep of Oxfordshire's gullies has been completed. In practice, some have been missed – either because of parked cars, because they are not marked on county records, or because of simple error. If gullies in your village have been missed, please let me know and I will chase this up. If it's just one or two in the village, the easiest way to do this is to report it on Fix My Street and send me the enquiry.

**Potholes:** With the better weather, the County Council team is getting on top of things, though there is clearly much still to do. In the past month, more holes have been fixed than reported, which is exactly what you would expect at this time of the year. As ever, it is easier to notice the holes than the mended roads, but if, for instance, you use Lower Road or the Eynsham to Botley Road, you will see them now fixed. The A40 near Eynsham is scheduled to be repaired this week - I am sorry it has taken so long.

Please find a graphic summarising recent statistics.



**Road Resurfacing:** the county has announced £8 million of resurfacing and surface dressing works

for April-June. This is part of the long-term strategy to shift road maintenance spend towards preventative maintenance in order to reduce pothole formation and repair costs. Further sites will be announced later in the spring, and the sites can be seen here:  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/roadworks/how-we-maintain-our-roads>

**Flood Prevention Grants:** grants of up to £25,000 are available to help tackle flooding. Last year, there were more than 80 applications of which 40 were funded. Last year's grants funded surface drainage improvements; natural flood management schemes; ditch clearances and ditch construction; culvert inspections; water pumps; track repairs to reduce surface water flooding; the installation of timber dams; and flood sensors. <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/more-grants-on-offer-to-help-communities-tackle-flooding/> There is also a call out for Flood Wardens, which you can reach via the same link. Given the recent flooding in Sutton, I would recommend exploring the options.

**Flags:** Oxfordshire County Council has issued a Cease and Desist order to Raise the Colours Oxfordshire to prohibit the placing of flags on highways property such as lamp posts following repeated abuse of members of the public, blocking the highway, and threats against council staff. A man has since been arrested. It is unlawful to fix items to highway furniture. A reminder that the County Council flies the Union Flag every day, alongside the Oxfordshire flag and "special occasion" flags.

### **HWRCs**

There has been a lot of discussion about the new booking system for the Household Waste sites. The system has been introduced for three reasons:

1. Redbridge HWRC is about to close for renovation, prior to it falling onto the railway. It is the most used HWRC in Oxfordshire, and while it is closed, we expect additional use of the other sites, and are trying to prevent overcrowding.
2. There has been abuse of the HWRCs by people disposing unlawfully of trade waste. Trade Waste has to be charged and you can be sure that businesses have been charging their customers when taking trade waste, even when they then pocketed the money. The booking system will make this abuse much harder.
3. All the neighbouring authorities have a booking and charging system, meaning that Oxfordshire residents have to pay to use their HWRCs. We are reciprocating, so that non-Oxfordshire residents pay £15 per visit. This is to make the system fair for residents as well as to cover the additional costs we bear when handling their recycling and waste.

There is no evidence that a booking system causes fly tipping. As mentioned, all the neighbouring authorities have a booking system and there is no evidence that they have a worse fly tipping problem than Oxfordshire had. Fly tipping is criminal behaviour, and I don't believe Oxfordshire residents are going to turn into criminals because they have to go online or phone the call centre to book a slot at a HWRC.

We will keep the policy under review, and certainly once Redbridge is reopened take a decision on if it needs to continue.

### **Support for oil users.**

The government announced support for people who use fuel oil. The county and district councils are waiting for details and will then advise how residents can claim. There are a large number of people in Stanton Harcourt who use oil and I hope the situation will be clear soon. Contacting the

County Council While everything can be done online, including things like blue badge applications, vehicle related matters, and HWRC booking, for those who prefer not to go online, the helpdesk is on 01865 519800 for all enquiries. The County Council has invested in making the call centre award-winning, and more importantly user friendly.

**Contacting me.**

Please do. It is always good to have comments and questions.

[dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **District Councillor's Report – April 2026**

### **Thames Water – Meeting:**

Thames Water presented their proposed “inundation management” intervention to us, which involves installing non-leak manhole covers to reduce surface water entering the foul sewer network. This work is based on desktop modelling and would not involve any excavation or pipe repairs.

We argued that long-standing structural problems in the sewer network, including fractured clay pipes, displaced joints, root ingress and groundwater infiltration need to be dealt with first. These issues have caused repeated sewage flooding for more than a decade.

We expressed concern that sealing manholes does not address the underlying causes of sewer flooding. In a surcharged system, blocking manholes simply displaces pressure to the next weak point, potentially forcing sewage through pipe fractures or into gardens, watercourses and properties. We also noted that Thames Water did not inspect the network during the recent prolonged rainfall and that residents often receive conflicting information from different departments.

Without pipe repair, lining and capacity improvements, the risk of sewage displacement remains. A coordinated response from Thames Water is required, including full CCTV surveys, a published repair plan and a single point of contact for sewerage issues.

We have requested a clear action plan from Thames Water and continue to log resident reports to maintain an evidence base.

### **Meeting with WASP:**

At a recent meeting attended by myself, Sandra, two independent wastewater experts, and representatives from WASP (Windrush Against Sewage Pollution), we explored in depth the ongoing failures in Thames Water's sewer network and the reasons our villages continue to experience sewage flooding, groundwater infiltration, and persistent pollution of local rivers. The discussion was frank, highly technical, and at times deeply concerning, but it has armed us with the information we need to challenge Thames Water more effectively.

The experts began by explaining the core problem: groundwater infiltration is not legally permissible, yet it has become the dominant cause of system overload across our area. Under normal dry-weather conditions, the sewer network copes. But because the clay pipes beneath our villages have deteriorated so badly, groundwater “dribbles in” continuously for weeks or even months. This sustained infiltration pushes the system beyond its designed capacity. Once the treatment works reach their limit, the excess is diverted into storm tanks which hold only two hours of flow before spilling directly into the river. As one expert put it, in a groundwater-dominated catchment a storm tank is “as useful as a chocolate teapot”.

The WASP representatives backed this up with their own evidence. In some catchments, including those near us, more water now enters the system through cracked pipes than from all households combined. They also described documented cases where Thames Water operatives have tipped sewage into manholes to bypass monitoring equipment, effectively falsifying the company's annual discharge figures. This is not an isolated issue — it is systemic across the Thames Water region.

WASP were clear that the only effective long-term solution is to repair or line the failing pipes and seal manholes to prevent further ingress. They reminded us that Thames Water promised to line pipes on New Road years ago but never delivered. This pattern of broken promises is familiar to many of us who have been dealing with repeated sewage incidents for more than a decade. When we asked why the government has not stepped in, the experts explained that legislation

already exists to place a failing water company into special administration overnight. Thames Water has breached financing conditions, its bonds have fallen to junk status, and regulators have placed the company under enhanced monitoring. Despite this, the company continues to avoid the investment required to fix its network. One expert compared Thames Water's inflated "regulated capital value" to claiming a wrecked car is worth £25,000 simply because of the petrol and oil poured into it over the years.

Sandra and I also raised the long-standing issue of manholes in our parish that have been bubbling with sewage for years. Thames Water routinely closes cases within minutes of them being reported, even when residents are standing in sewage. WASP confirmed that this behaviour is widespread and advised that we should not hesitate to use the media. They were clear: public pressure is one of the few tools that consistently forces Thames Water to act. They also explained that residents can legally dispute their bills if their sewage has not been treated in accordance with environmental law, and that Thames Water cannot send debt collectors while a dispute is ongoing.

Another important point raised was planning. The experts clarified that Thames Water is *not* a statutory consultee, despite being treated as one by many planning authorities. In law, they have no more formal status than any private company. This means parish councils are fully entitled to challenge or reject Thames Water's advice when considering planning applications, especially where sewage capacity is already inadequate.

The discussion ended with a shared message from the experts, WASP representatives and councillors must stay informed, united, and persistent. With thousands of new homes proposed across the district, our existing infrastructure cannot cope even with current demand. WASP emphasised that only sustained pressure, political, regulatory, financial, and public will force Thames Water to address the structural failures that have been ignored for more than a decade.

We left the meeting with a clearer understanding of the scale of the problem and a stronger sense of how we, as parish representatives, can challenge misinformation and push for real action. This is not about politics; it is about protecting our communities, our rivers, and the residents who pay for a service they are not receiving.

If you would like to discuss anything in this report, please contact Sandra and Steve.

Thank you

Sandra and Steve

Cllr Sandra and Steve Cosier  
West Oxfordshire District Council - SASH