**MOLLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**Clerk: Ginetta Best, Southview, Church Lane, Mollington. OX17 1AZ**

**Tel: 01295 750761 (Clerk Home)** **clerk@mollingtonoxon-pc.gov.uk**

**Chairman:** **mollingtonparishcouncil@gmail.com**

[**www.mollingtonoxon-pc.gov.uk**](http://www.mollingtonoxon-pc.gov.uk)

 **Draft Minutes for the Parish Council Meeting/AGM**

**Tuesday 27th May 2025 at 8.00pm**

**Present:**

Councillor Tim Banister

Councillor Phil John

Councillor David Sullivan

Councillor Peter Gorman

The Clerk

District councillor Chris Brant

Residents and Public – 7

**Welcome and introductions**

Members are reminded that this is a meeting in public, not a public meeting, and all points, questions and comments should be addressed through the Chair.

**Election of Chairman and Deputy Chairman**

Councillor Phil John was nominated and seconded to be Chairman. Nomination was agreed and Councillor John signed the acceptance of office form. Councillor Banister was nominated and seconded to be Vice Chairman. Nomination was agreed and Councillor Banister signed the declaration form.

**Apologies for Absence**

Received from District Councillor Phil Chapman

**Declarations of Interest** *Members are asked to declare any personal interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.*

**1195 Minutes of the meeting held 25th March 2025 (previously circulated) and Matters arising.** The minutes had been circulated in advance of the Meeting. They were agreed to be a true record of the Meeting and were signed by the Chairman. It was agreed that there were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**1196 Governance Arrangements**

**Delegation arrangements**

It was reported thatthe Parish Council have no delegated committees as the Parish Council meetings cover all matters.

**1197 Review and Adoption of standing orders and financial regulations and insurance policy (previously circulated and as amended)**

It was reported that Standing Orders and Financial Regulations based on the OALC template were amended in May 2025. No further amendments were proposed to either document and it was recommended that these be adopted for the forthcoming year.

The Insurance policy documents were reviewed and found to be acceptable – this is the third year of a three year contract, so new quotes will be sought for the next financial year.

Resolved: To accept the proposed Standing Orders and Financial Regulations for 2025-26, and the insurance policy documents

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**1198 Review of Arrangements with Local Authorities**

**OCC Grass Cutting:** It was reported that the Parish Council continued to undertake certain of the County Council’s functions relating to highways, public rights of way, watercourses and school crossing patrols under the Highways Act 1980, and if relevant the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Land Drainage Act 1991, and any other enactment giving the County Council the duty or the power to carry out the functions delegated under this agreement.

This relates to grass cutting as set out in the Schedule to the Deed.

**1199 Representation at external bodies and reporting arrangements:**

* **PC Local Cluster Group:**

It was noted that the PC Local Cluster Group, an informal quarterly meeting of the local parish councils that does not commit Mollington Parish Council to recommendations, had not met in the last five years. It was recommended that should the group be reconvened the Chairman and Clerk or Councillors attend. The chairman will feedback to the Parish Council on issues raised at the Cluster group and the Parish Council will consider, discuss and vote on recommendations as necessary. Mollington PC has questioned the cessation of these meetings and is continuing to discuss reconvening this group with local parishes.

* **CDC/OCC Parish Liaison:**

It was recommended that one or more councillors and the Clerk attend the Cherwell District Council/Oxfordshire County Council Parish Liaison meeting and report back to the subsequent parish council meeting, which will consider, discuss, and vote on recommendations as appropriate.

 **1200 Review of Asset Register and Insured Risks**

It was noted that the Asset Register and Risk assessments, previously circulated, had been updated and it was recommended to approve both documents for 2025/26.

Resolved: To accept the proposed Asset Register and Risk Assessment for 2025-26

**1201 Membership of other bodies:**

It was reported that the Parish Council continued to be members of the following bodies:

• SLCC

• OALC and NALC

**1202 Annual Review of Policies**

* **Complaints Procedure** - It was reported that the Parish Council complies with Cherwell District Council’s Code of Conduct, which all councillors have accepted. Complaints will be dealt with under this Code of Conduct.
* **Freedom of Information Act 2000** The Clerk will process any requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
* **General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR)** The Clerk will manage the use of data and process any requests made under the GDPR. The Parish Council had agreed the following in relation to GDPR: Information and Data Protection Policy;
* Data Privacy Notice and Consent to hold Contact; and
* Retention and Disposals policy; and
* list of Documents for Retention or Disposal.
* **Press and Media** It was reported thatthe Clerk will deal with issues involving press and media.
* **IT Policy** The IT Policy was updated and reviewed

Resolved – To accept the Review of the Annual Policies

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**1203 Date and time of meetings for the forthcoming year:** Parish Council and other meetings; to be held at 8pm in the Village Hall unless otherwise stated:

* 22 July 2025
* 23 September 2025
* 25 November 2025
* 27 January 2026
* 24 March 2026
* 28 April 2026 Annual Parish Meeting
* 26 May 2026 Annual General Meeting

A summons to meetings will be circulated to Councillors by email 3 clear days before the meeting, and will be posted on the notice board and parish web site.

**1204 Register of Members Interests –** It was reported that councillors were requested to complete theannual declaration of interests if any changes were made and return to the Clerk as soon as possible.

Whilst this was not mandatory it was agreed that it was good practice.

**1205 Adoption of Annual Governance Statements and Accounting Statement for 2024/25**

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25 Form 2 previously circulated was considered.
It was resolved to:

* declare Mollington Parish Council exempt from the requirement for a limited assurance review as both Income and Expenditure were below the threshold of £25,000;
* receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report;
* approve the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1);
* approve the Accounting Statements (Section 2) previously certified by The Clerk;
* publish the numerical and narrative explanations for significant variances in the accounting statements; and
* commence the public rights period to start on 6th June 2025 and ending on the 17th July 2025

**1206 Chairman’s Annual Report**

The Chairman reviewed the work of the Parish Council since the last Annual General Parish Council Meeting in May 2024.

The Chairman gave thanks to councillors David Sullivan, Peter Gorman, Tim Banister and past councillor Stephen Lapper (who resigned in Jan 25) who have served as councillors over the last 12 months, their continued support has been welcomed and appreciated, to Tim Banister for volunteering to be vice chairman and to David Sullivan for his tenure these past 12 months. PC members roles and responsibilities may change in the coming weeks and will be available on the website and the minutes.

The Chairman also gave thanks to Ginetta Best, the Clerk who manages the governance and financial affairs of the Parish Council, her guidance and experience has ensuring that the Councillors adhere to the role and responsibilities of being Parish Councillors.

The PC thanks and looks forward to increased attendance at meetings by Local District Councillors and provide where necessary their help, guidance and support.

The Chairman added a special mention to a now invigorated Village Hall Committee, led by Ann Ryan, who manage the Village Hall on behalf of the Trustees (Mollington Parish Council). Her leadership should be highly commended.

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Thanks was also given to those members of the public who had been able to attend meetings during this time and help to raise, question and make clear any concerns.

The increased precept in 24/25 enabled the PC to carry out further maintenance activities around the village and the 25/26 precept had a nominal increase ensuring that essential works within the village continue.

The PC are conscious of keeping the increases as low as possible but with the higher cost levels and extended works it was necessary to ensure that the PC financial position is healthy and able to undertake works including emergency / one off activities without a negative impact

Business for the Parish Council continued during the year with several planning applications, including tree works in the conservation area. Most applications were approved or withdrawn with some applications remaining to be determined by Cherwell District Council. Maintenance continues to be performed by Thomas Fox (Grass Cutting / hedge work) during the growing period and tree maintenance has been carried out by various contractors. It should be noted that the contract with Thomas Fox will finish in April 26. The PC will review future scope of work, and a new tender (3 + 1 years) will be issued later this year.

Everybody is aware of the propensity of poor road conditions, gullies/ drains and potholes throughout the village, with significant emails, FixMyStreet reporting and discussions taking place with Oxford Highways to get these upgraded, though with little success to date. Promises have been made by OCC and dates are set for gullies clearance to be completed end of June 25 and the ever-present water leakage repairs, close to the Green, is earmarked for later this summer but will require a 3-month road closure notice. Works on potholes can only be completed once the drainage issues have been completed. The PC continue to communicate with Highways Engagement Officer to seek completion dates. The PC thank Bob Wadsworth for his continued support in identifying/marking areas of concern where these works are required. In many ways we are restricted by OCC volume of works and budgetary constraints.

Highways department have also filled and replaced grit bins.

Perimeter posts have been purchased and installed on Church Lane and Roundhill.

The Orchard Piece Play Area has recently had tree works done and further works are planned to remove certain play equipment which is in poor condition. For safety reasons we will partially cordon off this immediate area. Steps are being taken to focus expenditure on the maintenance on the larger Mollington playing fields and to date additional bark has been added as well as application of weedkiller. The grass level of the football field will be shortened. The RoSPA inspection of the play areas are scheduled for July 25.

The PC undertook a consensus from all residents regarding the possibility of supporting the funding of the Church Renovation (roof etc). Steps were taken in various forms to all 207 residences in the village via a hand delivered voting form through the Mollington Matters issue. The overall result was that this was not supported. No further action was taken.

The PC is looking at ideas to improve the visual impact around the village and will be identifying areas where some planters and seating could be located, this was included in the 25/26 budget plans.

It is hoped that the PC will look at creating a volunteer ‘workforce” to support various minor works throughout the village during the next 12 months. This will be mentioned in the next Mollington Matters.

An updated / improved / informative Mollington Matters was produced, with thanks to Tim Bannister for taking ownership here. The recent issue raised some concerns on maintenance of hedgerows/trees especially adjacent to residences /properties and it is advised that villagers are made aware of the implications and limitations of the responsibilities taken by Oxford Highways.

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The Village Hall has continued to raise funds to supplement the previous grants and included coffee mornings, VE Day anniversary event and quizzes as well regular private bookings. The committee continue to work hard to organise events and in reviewing possible funding /maintenance issues. It should be noted the Village Hall needs significant refurbishment works in the coming years with limited financial resources and it is hoped that future events are well supported, any additional help would be greatly appreciated. The Spring 2025 Mollington Matters outlined their concerns.

The Ability bus remains popular and they continue to provide a service on Tuesday and Thursday to Banbury. Full details of this service are available on the Village notice board and in the village hall. It should be noted that they are able to provide customised travel service on request at a cost.

The Service 77A continues between Leamington Spa and Banbury which picks up and drops off at Mollington turn, Monday to Saturday.

Mollington Munch continues to have record numbers attending the lunches, our thanks must go to the team of volunteers who make it such a success. Special mention to Gill Zammett on her recent retirement from the team after 10 years service, thanks also to Val Davison for her continued leadership.

The regular monthly coffee mornings at the village hall continue to be successful.

Finally, I would like to welcome all those who have moved to the village and say a fond farewell to those who have left.

**1207 Clerks Report**

**Financial Statement**

The Clerk reported that 7 cheques had been raised in March and April 2025.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 789 | Thomas Fox | Play Area Bark and Weeding | 1444.80 | In Budget |
| 790 | Clerk | Salary | 754.30 | In Budget |
| 791 | HMRC | PAYE | 169.20 | In Budget |
| 792 | A M Best | Hedge Cutting | 500.00 | In Budget |
| 793 | Thomas Fox | Grass cutting 1 | 323.60 | In Budget |
| 794 | CDC | Dog bins | 308.88 | In Budget |
| 795 | P Gorman | Wooden posts | 203.00 | In Budget |

In March the VAT was claimed and April we received the reclaimed VAT from HMRC for £805.37; during April we received the first payment of the Parish Precept of £8673. A further £416.15 VAT has yet to be claimed.

Taking the above into account, the expected bank balance is £27,102.80 which is reconciled to the Bank statement at 30th April 2025. This balance contains the remaining reserves of £2857.50 for Orchard Piece Community Play Area. The General Fund at the end of April stands at £24,028.27.

Overall, 2024-25 was a saving against the budget of £1504.85.

The Parish Council had hoped to complete the works at the Orchard Piece play area, using the available budget, but the lack of access and inclement weather conditions meant that this has been deferred until the new financial year. Some of the Orchard Piece maintenance and bark budget was therefore used to increase the depth of the bark in the Chestnut Vale play area.

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The overspend on hedge cutting was offset by savings on election expenses, which need to be included in the budget each year, as the Parish Council can be charged in excess of £750 in any election year.

The budget for 2025-2026 reflects the need for more to be done to improve the overall appearance of the village and the essential tree work, as well as maintaining the ageing play area equipment.

Resolved:To accept the financial report

**1208 Consultations**

Parish Vacancies

It was reported that there was a vacancy for a Parish Councillor – details are available on the website, and interested parties can also talk contact the Clerk or Councillors.

If we are unable to fill the available vacancy, and in addition, another Councillor steps down, Mollington will be left with non-working parish council and the responsibilities will be handed to Cherwell District Council. This means there will be no local representatives to voice our village concerns and make things happen.

**1209 Planning matters**

**Applications**

* **25/01080/TCA Lanscombe, Church Lane. OX17 1AZ** Reduce Yew Tree crown *It was recommended that MPC do not object to this application*
* **25/00915/F Browdene, Whiteway OX17 1DW** Remove pitch roof and addition of first floor to existing bungalow *It was recommended that MPC visit the site before commenting on this application*
* **25/01203/TCA Sunnybrae, Main Street OX17 1BD** Tree works in conservation area – pollarding, reducing crown and removal of dead ash tree *It was recommended that MPC do not object to this application*
* **25/01254/TCA Cannonball Cottage, Main Street OX17 1BD** Reduce height of Leylandi in shared carpark to 4m *It was recommended that MPC do not object to this application*
* **25/01311/F Lavender Cottage, Main Street OX17 1BQ** Demolition of existing conservatory, erection of replacement single storey rear extension in reclaimed brick

*It was recommended that MPC visit the site before commenting on this application*

**Decisions**

* **25/00440/DC Mansion House Farm OX17 1AY** Discharge of conditions 5 (doors and windows) 7 (enclosure to oil tank) and partial discharge of 8 (landscaping) *Application permitted*

**1210 Councillors Responsibilities**

It is proposed that responsibility in the Parish Council for the forthcoming term should be:

Councillor Banister– Planning, Mollington Matters

Councillor John – Trees and Grass maintenance, Village Hall representative

Councillor Gorman – Neighbourhood Watch, Police, Emergency and Neighbourhood Plans, Highways

Councillor Sullivan – Footpaths, Dogs, Village maintenance

Maintenance of the play areas to be a shared responsibility

**1211 Councillors Reports**

**Councillor John**

Maintenance: It was reported that Thomas Fox continues to cut grass as per the agreed schedule, Instructions have been given to increase the cut length throughout the village, and particularly the Mollington Playing Field. Additionally it has been requested that all grass areas (including the wild flower areas) be included as per the contracted scope of works.

Thomas Fox have been asked to provide a quotation for weedkiller and reseeding in the rough ground on Church Lane.

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There has been further email correspondence with Highways department on works in March Road, Lower Farm Road and the related water damage / pot holes. We have been advised that further clearance of drainage / gullies throughout the village will be completed by end of June 25, and are still awaiting detailed schedule of works / road closures to undertake outstanding works.

Village Hall : The monthly Molly Munch and VE Day anniversary events took place and were well attended. There continues to be an increase on private bookings and regular monthly coffee mornings held by village hall and church support teams. VH committee are currently identifying means to increase funds for future refurbishment works.

**Councillor Gorman**

It was reported that the Emergency Plan would continue to be updated, with particular emphasis on the disruption that could be caused by flooding and power failures.

A good relationship is continuing with Thames Valley police, who were able to send officers to the recent Fete, providing information to interested parties.

**Councillor Sullivan**

Councillor Sullivan reported that there aren't any current concerns with dogs. There has been the occasional dog fouling, and a note is regularly included in Mollington Matters to remind people to clean up after their dogs. The five dog bins, which are emptied periodically by Cherwell District Council, sometimes get full, but it hasn't proved a persistent problem.

Footpaths in the parish are believed to be in good order. Many people use Thacker Way, particularly due to the state of the road there, so the bushes have been cut back. Thanks to Councillor Gorman for keeping on top of this. One footpath in the parish has been diverted slightly but that isn't preventing its use.

As already noted, village maintenance is currently focused on the roads, trees, and the playing fields. There is also an issue with various contractors and delivery vans damaging road edges. Further edging posts have been placed around the Green and by the Church, which will hopefully limit any future damage. Again, thanks to Councillor Gorman. A concern, should the water leak affecting the hill down to March Road not be solved, is the danger there from a winter freeze. We have placed bags of salt near the roadway, but we shall be acquiring a salt bin for that road prior to next winter.

**Councillor Banister**

Councillor Banister covered the update on the planning matters under the previous agenda point.  He separately reported that the Spring edition of Mollington Matters was distributed to 207 houses at the end of April.  This latest edition, in addition to the normal topics, was focussed on the village fete and an update on village maintenance, particularly covering trees.

**1211 Councillors Points of Interest:**

The next Parish Liaison meeting will be held on 11th June, in the evening, at the new Council Office at Castle Quay. The Clerk is planning to attend, and Councillors are also encouraged to, if possible.

The RoSPA inspection of the two play areas and the equipment is scheduled for July. Councillors are looking to cancel the inspection for the Orchard Piece play area if work is scheduled.

**Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 22 July 2025 Mollington Village Hall at 8.00pm

**Parish Council meeting closed at 9 pm**

Chairman, Mollington Parish Council

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**Public Participation Session**

District Councillor Chris Brant introduced himself, and advised that he was also a County Councillor, and would like to be cc’d into any emails regarding highways and maintenance so that he could provide input and support.

He reported that there would soon be a public consultation on the proposal to form a Unitary Council, which will be a lot bigger than CDC, and would include the whole of Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. The concern is that local policies still need to remain local, within a whole county approach, possibly with a mayoral approach to smaller regions, for example Thames Valley.

This approach has been rolled out already in some areas of the country, with Oxfordshire being considered in one of the later phases.

CDC will liaise with Parish Councils as much as they can, but ultimately it will be a Government decision.

More details will be given at the upcoming Parish Liaison meeting.

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