

Great Milton Parish Council

Clerk: Jacqueline Wren

Email: clerk@greatmilton-pc.gov.uk

DRAFT Minutes of the Great Milton Parish Council (GMPC) Parish Council Meeting held at the Pavilion on Monday 13th October 2025, at 7.30pm

Present: Stephen Harrod (SH), Bill Fox (Vice Chair, BF), Councillors David Harms (DH), Malcolm Horsley (MH), Andrew Noble (AN) and Sarah MacMahon (SM).

In attendance: Jacqueline Wren (Clerk), and 4 members of the public.

The outgoing Chair, Steve Harrod addressed the meeting to express his sadness that his time in Great Milton is coming to an end but also reminiscent of many happy memories and important milestones and achievements with the Parish Council. His speech will be published in the next Bulletin (Attachment 1) 'Don't let apathy rule!'

The Councillors and members of the public thanked SH for his leadership and dedication throughout the last 20 years on the Parish Council. He has always prioritised the village, was instrumental in saving the pub and will certainly be missed. Gifts were then presented.

89/25 Election of a new Chair

Cllr Harrod proposed Cllr Malcolm Horsley as Chair. Cllr Fox seconded. Cllr Horsley was unanimously elected as the new Chair.

90/25 Apologies for Absence

None.

91/25 Variation of order of business

None.

92/25 Declarations of members' interests

AN declared an interest in the following planning application: P25/S3043/PIP

93/25 Reports

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

The County Councillor's Report was received – see Attachment 2.

The Chair noted the response received from the County Councillor regarding the lack of objection from OCC on Highways issues around the planning for Haseley Trading Estate. AN noted that in the past OCC have been reluctant to address problems on the A329.

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)

The District Councillor's Report was received – see Attachment 3.

94/25 Haseley Trading Estate [P25/S1653/FUL](#)

This application was considered by the SODC Planning Committee on 8th October where Cllr Horsley spoke on behalf of GMPC. The application was granted permission to proceed with conditions regarding drainage, lighting and transport. There has been concern that the outcome was to some extent predetermined. There followed a lengthy discussion about the pros and cons of pursuing a Judicial Review (JR) of the planning process with regard to this application. The specialist planning solicitor has advised the initial cost would be £7,500 to examine the information and determine whether there is a

case and produce an application for a JR. It was noted that in order to proceed with a JR the costs would likely be £70,000 - £100,000 which would need to be available in a designated account. Funds should be held separately to the GMPC account which may require formation of a company for this purpose. Cllr Horsley noted that generous donors have pledged £50,000 so far. It was suggested that some of this money could be used to fund an initial investigation and application for a JR but further funds would be needed to complete the process.

Little Milton PC have initially stated they do not have the funds to contribute. Great Haseley PC are also asking residents whether they are willing to donate. Council members are in touch with the Le Manoir management team who are considering their position.

The response from the Monitoring Officer as well as the complaint submitted to the Information Commissioner's Office was noted.

Concerns were raised that if a JR is undertaken to review the planning process this may not scrutinise the site selection process which we suspect to be at fault. In which case a JR would be costly and would not change the outcome in planning terms. Cllr Harrod expressed that a JR should examine the whole process, not just planning.

A member of the public explained that there may not be grounds for a JR given that the Council may be seeking discovery to make a claim. He also felt that the FOI requests will not return sufficient detail to make a case. It was noted that a JR is usually for high level governance issues. It was noted that if you lose the case you may be liable for all costs from both sides. The member of the public also noted that to request a JR you must have evidence that a decision has been made illegally. There was discussion about a possible alternative to a JR being a pre-action protocol.

Cllr Harms noted that the Council have already resolved to spend £2,500 on legal consultation which has not yet been spent. **The Council resolved to ask the current donors whether they would give the additional £5,000 to engage a lawyer to examine whether there is a case and submit an application for judicial review if appropriate.** If the funds are secured Cllr Horsley will instruct the lawyer.

MH noted that he is due to go away soon and would not be able to manage this process while away. BF agreed to cover for this period.

95/25 Correspondence and Public Discussion

The list of correspondence was reviewed.

- The Council agreed the Christmas Tree collection point should be in the usual place – Clerk to action.
- AN to attend the Oxford Greenbelt Network meeting on 27th October.
- The introduction of the Oxford Congestion Charge has not been publicised to residents but starts on 29th October and Oxfordshire residents may apply for a free permit – Clerk to publicise on GMPC noticeboards, village Whatsapp and website.
- It was noted that there will be a public meeting about the development of Chalgrove Airfield on 22nd October – BF and DH will try and attend.

MH noted that lots of PIP applications are being submitted and alongside the withdrawal of the JLP it is concerning for the future of the green belt.

Miranda Cook expressed thanks from Freecycle for the Council's support.

96/25 The Village Larder

The Council noted the recent introduction of a 'Village Larder' in the form of an honesty shop outside the old shop which has already proved very popular with many residents.

Unfortunately there has been some theft. The Council agreed that they are fully in support of the initiative and hope it is a success.

97/25 Permission for parking on village green spaces

The Council discussed the principle of residents parking on village greens and whether the existing policy should be reconsidered. Currently GMPC's position is that residents with properties adjacent to village greens have a right of access across the land but do not have permission to park on this land. Where residents have no alternative parking available they may apply for planning permission to park on this area. The Clerk noted that in the past the process for applying for planning permission has been unclear.

The Council has received an informal request from a resident to park on an area of grass owned by the PC with the condition that the resident would also maintain the area in question. There are past cases where residents have sought planning permission to gravel these access points.

The Council also noted that with the increasing prevalence of electric vehicles residents will need access to charging points. Where residents do not have off-street parking this will result in the need to park on verges or install roadside charging points.

A member of the public asked who is responsible for the upkeep of these access points as many are so frequently used that the surface is failing and there are potholes and a scruffy appearance. Concerns were raised about setting a precedent and losing the amenity and appearance of our village greens.

The Council resolved that the current policy will remain unchanged that parking on village greens is not permitted, but residents can apply for planning permission to do so. The Clerk will seek information to clarify the process for gaining this permission and the responsibility for maintenance of these areas. The issue of electric vehicle charging will be added to a future meeting agenda.

98/25 Greater Oxford Unitary Authority

The Council discussed recent correspondence from the Oxford Green Belt Network who are a group of parish councils opposing the Greater Oxford Unitary Authority. All agreed it seems unlikely that we can affect the decision but resolved that AN to attend the meeting on 27th and the Clerk to sign the petition on behalf of GMPC.

99/25 Casual Vacancies

Councillors noted interest from several people in the village who have been invited to attend a future PC meeting to gain more information and consider standing.

100/25 Planning Applications

The following planning applications were considered:

P25/S2845/HH

Fairway, The Green, Great Milton, OX44 7NP

Two storey rear extension. Rebuild of existing garage to create habitable space attached to main house using glazed link. Loft conversion.

- Consultation period due to end 9th October – extension requested to 14th Oct.

The Council noted that the immediate neighbours are a let property and close family of the applicants. Neither have expressed any concerns about the plans. The issue of parking and access across the village green was noted. The Council resolved to support the application but note the concern about increased vehicle movements and parking on the green.

[P25/S3043/PIP](#)

Land south of Thame Road Great Milton Oxon

Erection of a minimum of five and maximum of nine residential dwellings (of which two would be self/custom build).

- Consultation ends 21st October.

It was noted that this application is very similar to a previous application for PIP for 5 to 9 houses on land to the east of 14 Thame Road, which was granted last month. SH noted that there is a housing need to be met and this location may be preferable compared to other places in the village. After some discussion the Council resolved to object on the same basis as the previous PIP in this area. It was also noted that some neighbouring properties were not consulted, as with the previous application. Clerk to investigate whether there have been errors in the statutory consultee list.

The following **planning decisions** were noted:

[P25/S2509/PIP](#)

Land east of 14 Thame Road, Great Milton OX44 7HY

Erection of a minimum of five and a maximum of nine residential dwellings (of which two dwellings would be self/custom build).

PERMISSION GRANTED

[P25/S2646/FUL](#)

Land to east of Chilworth Rd, Great Milton

Change of use of land from grazing to an equestrian use, addition of a stable block and area of hardstanding for horse box access, and use of land to the rear of the stable as a small paddock.

PERMISSION GRANTED

[P25/S2248/HH](#)

Farriers Cottage, Church Rd, Great Milton OX44 7PB

New garden room with end store. New car port to existing gravel parking area.

PERMISSION GRANTED

[P25/S2539/HH](#)

Watt Cottage, Lower End, Great Milton OX44 7NF

First floor extension to rear. Replace existing conservatory with new single storey extension. New PV panels to south facing roof slopes.

PERMISSION GRANTED

[P25/S2618/LB](#)

The Old Vicarage, Church Rd, Great Milton OX44 7PB

Installation of a Starlink satellite dish on chimney 4.

PERMISSION GRANTED

[P25/S1224/FUL](#)

Mount Pleasant Farm, Thame Road, Great Milton, OX44 7HX

Erection of Two x 4 bedroom dwellings with x1 double garage and x1 single garage (resubmission of previously approved P19/S2605/FUL)

PERMISSION GRANTED

101/25 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the 15th September 2025 were approved and signed.

102/25 Finance

A The **Bank Reconciliation** and Statement of Accounts were received and signed.

B The following payments were authorised:

Payee	Element	Amount	Date	Minute Ref Order Agreed	Power to Spend
Shield Maintenance Ltd.	Dog waste – Oct 2025	£92.82	14/10/25	135/21	OSA s10
Bibby Financial Servies Ltd.	Tactical Facilities Management Ltd. Oct 25	£581.60	14/10/25	150/24	OSA s10
Jonathan Dudley	Bulletin - August	£330.52	14/10/25		LGA s142
Jonathan Dudley	Bulletin – October	£354.75	14/10/25		LGA s142
Gillett & Johnston	Church Clock Maintenance	£360.00	14/10/25		PCA s2
Castle Water	Allotments Water	£5.55	14/10/25		SH&AA s23

C The following monthly payments were noted;

Clerk's salary	£480.00	30/09/25
Scribe Accounts	£37.20	01/10/25
Bank Charges	£6.00	30/09/25

D Receipts:

South Oxfordshire District Council	£11,500.00	Precept 2 nd Instalment
BT plc	£50.00	??

It was noted that the contract with BT is unclear and monthly instalments have recently stopped before receiving the £50 credit. Clerk to investigate.

E Budget for 2026-27:

The need to draft a budget in order to determine the precept for next year was noted. The Clerk will meet with AN to formulate a first draft budget for next meeting.

F Reserves:

It was noted that the reserves currently exceed the guidance amount of 12 months expenditure and therefore the Council could consider using some reserves when determining the precept for next year. The internal audit report included a recommendation to write a reserves policy to justify the amount held. The Clerk will draft a reserves policy for presentation with budget.

103/25 Training

SH asked about the Planning training offered by OALC. The Clerk thought the date may have passed but will confirm.

104/25 Security in the village

There were no security updates.

105/25 Items for next agenda or information only

It was noted that Christmas Events in the village should be on the agenda for the November meeting – Clerk to action.

The meeting closed at 21.15

The next meeting of Great Milton Parish Council will be held on Monday 17th November starting at 7.30pm in The Pavilion.

Agenda items for the November meeting are due to the Clerk by Wednesday, 5th November 2025

Attachment 1

In my opinion – October 2025

It was February 2006 when Graham Orriss told me they needed young blood on the Parish Council, it met once a month, it was fun, and we went to the pub afterwards.

Fast forward 19 years and 9 months and the truth comes out: the blood isn't so young anymore, it's not all fun, and the pub is closed on a Monday when we meet! But we do still only meet once a month.

Going through my Parish Council files recently, one of the first things I came across was a Housing Needs Survey the PC conducted in 2008 and it brought to mind the various issues we have dealt with over the past 20-odd years. Things like the Children's Centre in 2010, which eventually got sited in Wheatley and has proved a great success; the furore when the Manoir cut down two protected trees to make way for the beautiful orchard in 2011; the Parish Plan that was painstakingly drawn up by a separate committee in 2012; the battles we have fought and lost, like the nearby solar farms next to the M40; the on-going battles against Chalgrove and Harrington over-development; the waste truck depot currently focussing our attention; the fight to save but lose the 103 bus in 2015, thankfully replaced by the 46 service in recent years.

And then there have been the planning applications that caused some controversy, and I went back through my annual reports to remind myself of these: Brook Bank, in 2013; Crofts Furlong Farm in 2014; Milton Lodge – 2019; The plans for Le Manoir, submitted in 2019 initially, causing much consternation in the village, and ultimately approved in 2023; and most recently the plans for the redevelopment of the Bull, largely welcomed by all.

Common themes over the years have included roads, traffic and parking problems, with no solution in sight even now; sporadic incidents of anti-social behaviour have been reported over the years, but are thankfully of minimal overall impact; speeding, which was addressed in 2022 with the installation of the speed indicators at the three entrances to the village, and the adoption of the 20mph speed limit; and the constant battle to keep the greens free of parking and other obstructions.

The Bull was saved in 2013 and kept alive for ten years, through Covid, by a diligent management committee and a series of landlords, each with their own style of running the pub. It was purchased from Greene King by the community on 15th April 2013, and sold to Bob Hutton on 6th April 2023, with much of the long-necessary renovation work being implemented and underway as we speak. Long may it thrive.

But the time has come for change. My personal circumstances were flipped on their head in January this year, with the death of my wife Catherine, and I have made the decision to relocate to a family property in Herefordshire in early November, hence my standing down now, 13th October, as chairman, and as councillor from the end of October 2025.

My years on the PC have been invigorating and exhausting, interesting as well as dull, sometimes challenging, always different, mostly fun (except for the dog bins), and have kept me involved in the community for nearly 20 years, including six years as a District Councillor, and another seven years as County Councillor, representing this community at all levels of local government, which has been both a privilege and an honour for me. I leave the village now with a heavy heart, but also with loads of happy memories, and a clear plan for the future.

I can confidently hand over the reins to Malcolm Horsely, who will take over as chairman, and wish him and the rest of the council good luck in their upcoming skirmishes, with the District Council over the waste truck depot application especially, and with whatever curved balls the future has in store. This is a beautiful village, and in my opinion, worth fighting to preserve as long as possible.

Thank you all for your support and commitment over the years and I end with a quote from Keith Mitchell, former head of SODC, that I found in some notes from a meeting with him in October 2007, where he said, "The Parish Council is the bedrock of democracy. We need to keep listening to you." If only.....

Good luck, and don't let apathy rule!

Steve Harrod
Chairman
Great Milton Parish Council

Attachment 2



County Councillor Report Chalgrove & Thame West Division September 2025

Cllr Judith Edwards

My Meetings and Council Activity

After a break in August, September has been a very busy month, but I do feel that I'm starting to learn how the county council operates and make more progress. I made my maiden speech to Full Council, choosing to support a motion about the importance of Family Centres, highlighting the valuable work done by the Chalgrove & Watlington First Steps Family Hub.

I attended the Health Overview & Scrutiny meeting this month, where there was a strong focus on the state of ophthalmic services in Oxfordshire and the future of the eye hospital in Oxford. The major concern is that as large numbers of the basic eye interventions, such as cataract operations, are contracted out to private sector providers, this reduces both funding and training opportunities for the specialist NHS provision. The committee pushed hard on this issue and will keep the situation under review. I'd be interested to hear from anyone affected in this division positively or negatively and your thoughts about how we should see health develop.

I also attended the People Overview & Scrutiny meeting, where the focus was on adult social care. We considered the safeguarding function and the work that the county has done recently to support their "Age Well" policy which has seen a developing focus on early interventions and working in communities to ensure that older people are aware of local organisations that can help, tackling loneliness and isolation.

Communities have been quite a theme this month, as I've also attended two sessions on Neighbourhood Governance. As part of planning for local government reorganisation, the county is considering the best methods for working alongside parishes and town councils to be as inclusive as possible and give communities a real say in the decisions affecting them. This is an area really close to my heart which is why I volunteered to act as Chair for the Henley & Thame Locality Committee, which gives councillors in an area an opportunity to really delve into the issues affecting an area.

This month I also attended parish council meetings in Little Milton, Stadhampton and Newington. Unfortunately, I unavoidably missed a few this month owing to being unwell in the first week or so of September and having several meeting clashes. I'm sorry if this was your parish and you were hoping to see me there. Please get in touch on judith.edwards@oxfordshire.gov.uk if there's a matter that you'd like to raise with me.

In respect of issues in the division, I've also had meetings with officers about Chalgrove Airfield, Great Haseley Industrial Estate and have been on a visit to Martin-Baker Ltd., to understand more about how the Chalgrove development would affect their business.

Lastly, it was a huge honour and pleasure to be asked to hand out the prizes at the Chalgrove Horticultural Show earlier this month which was celebrating its 60th anniversary. It was a real festival of produce, home cooking, flower arranging and photography. My absolute favourites were the contributions from local children, in a very popular category that's due to expand next year.



Chalgrove & Thame West news

Great Haseley Industrial Estate

I have been working hard with officers at the county council and my colleague Cllr Georgina Heritage (District Councillor for Haseley Grove) to reduce the impact of the proposed base for refuse collection vehicles at Great Haseley Industrial estate. I have also been working alongside Freddie van Mierlo MP to raise residents' concerns. The most significant issue is that of the large number of HGV movements that the site will generate, through the villages of Little Milton and Stadhampton in particular. The County Council Highways team has raised concerns about the volume of this traffic (the relevant section of the A329 is categorised as "Local Access") in the county's Freight Plan but frustratingly they have felt unable to go as far as to raise a formal objection. The planning application is expected to go to SODC's Planning Committee on 8 October. When available, [the agenda will be published here](#), and it's possible to watch the meeting live online.

Chalgrove Airfield Proposed Development

There's been a lot of discussion about the proposed housing development at Chalgrove airfield recently, so it felt useful to find out more about the current state of play. I asked for a briefing with OCC's planning team and also went with Freddie van Mierlo MP and Cllr David Turner (SODC, Chalgrove ward) to meet the leadership team at Martin-Baker to understand their perspective. My key takeaways from this learning are:



- The new SODC joint local plan should protect Chalgrove from a development of this size as Chalgrove is no longer in the plan, but unfortunately it is not yet in force. It is currently being examined by the Planning Inspector and confirmation of the plan is expected around December this year. Until the new plan is formally in place, the previous plan which did include Chalgrove is the most important policy which means that the site is vulnerable until that point.
- Martin-Baker Ltd. are clear that there is no viable alternative site for their operations, and they could not easily transfer the tests that they do elsewhere. The firm is crucial to the safety of air force jets around the world, and their systems have saved hundreds of lives over the years. They genuinely do not have a "Plan B" and are planning to fight not only the planning application but also any compulsory purchase order. Freddie van Mierlo MP has secured the promise of a meeting with the

Secretary of State for Defence to discuss the security implications of putting this important British company at risk.

STOP PRESS! Homes England is now clearly preparing to submit a planning application to SODC in the next few weeks. Homes England are inviting residents to a public consultation event in Chalgrove at the **John Hampden Hall between 2:30 and 7pm on 22nd October.**

Flooding issues

The long summer drought ended abruptly over the bank holiday weekend with a significant downpour, which was followed by several more days of rain in the first week of September. Several areas in the division suffered floods and areas which have been flooded previously were watching water levels closely. I've been in discussions with 4 parishes about these issues and I'm doing my best to get these raised with the county's highways team in a timely manner so that they can be addressed ahead of further heavy rainfall later in the winter.

- Tiddington had a major flood last year which was serious enough to spark a S.19 flood investigation. Teams from both county and district have spent time to understand the causes and I am hoping that we'll see prevention action soon.
- Little Milton's Haseley Road has been a regular problem spot for flooding, a situation compounded by the overload to the neighbouring sewage treatment works. However, I was able to get the Highways team to come and do some clearing of the road gulleys although I suspect that more work is needed.
- Great Haseley has suffered flooding around junction with Rectory Road, partly caused by a blocked drain, which had become so badly blocked that a tree was growing out of it. I've pushed hard on this, and the drain has now been partly cleared although the village is still waiting full resolution.
- Newington village has also suffered serious floods on the A329 in recent years, causing harm to two houses where the front doors are below the level of the road. Following an intervention from the parish council, I've been in touch with the highways team and will continue to push for action.

Recent gully clearance operations have made a big difference to the ability of local roads to cope with significant rainfall events but it does seem that previous cuts to this essential service have had their consequences. Some drains as in Great Haseley have been more difficult and costly to clear, and some drains may well be blocked at greater depth beneath the road. Please flag any issues in your area on Fix my street but do get in touch with me if there's a persistent problem near you.

County news

Oxford Temporary Congestion Charge

The county council's scheme to tackle traffic problems in Oxford in the short-term is planned to start on Wednesday 29 October.

The temporary congestion charge will reduce traffic in the city during Network Rail's extended closure of Botley Road, making journeys quicker, more connected, more flexible and more reliable. When Botley Road reopens, the council will be able to introduce its traffic filter trial as planned.

Cars with a valid permit will be able to drive free of charge through all six congestion charge locations in Oxford. Residents are now able to [apply for permits](#) ahead of the launch of Oxfordshire County Council's temporary congestion charge in Oxford, using an online permit registration system.

Grants available

Hardship fund: OCC's hardship fund (Resident Support Scheme) is launched in June. Phone: 01865 804171

Home Upgrade Grants: OCC & its partner AgilityEco is reaching out directly to households who will qualify to benefit from Home Upgrade Grants (to improve energy efficiency for 'off-grid' homes)

Councillors' priority grant is now available: OCC allocates a small pot of funding to each county councillor to spend on important projects in their division. This is now live for applications! All applications need to be made online – [further information and a link to the application form can be found here](#). The decision on how to spend the funding is down to each councillor. My priorities are families, community cohesion and the environment but I'm interested in hearing about your project, whatever the theme. Please note that the SODC councillors have a similar fund so please also consider them too.

Attachment 2

District Councillor Report
Haseley Brook ward
02 October 2025

CLlr Georgina Heritage



What I've been doing - Meetings and Council Activity

- The **Haseley Industrial Estate** planning application will be heard at planning committee on Wednesday 8th October. Committee members have received the agenda pack (which includes responses from the public) and I know from my own previous experience on planning committee how seriously members will consider the application and how deeply they will study the files. This meeting will be live-streamed via SODC's YouTube channel and recorded for later viewing. I will be speaking as ward member to highlight objections made by local residents and concerns about the suitability of some of the local road infrastructure in Haseley Brook, particularly the A329 through Little Milton. Following correspondence with the four local parish councils, I requested that each of these parish councils should be given a 5 minute slot to speak, as opposed to the usual single 5 minute slot for parish councils. Each parish council may have comments to make that are specific to their village, so I believe this is the correct and fair approach for such an application. The Head of Legal & Democratic has confirmed that he has approved my request, meaning Great Haseley, Great Milton, Little Milton and Stadhampton parish councils may all speak at planning committee if they wish to.
- I have been seeking further updates on the unauthorised **traveller site** in **Tetsworth** and I'm very sorry that I don't have a great deal of information in time for this report. I'm aware that recent planning application for the site is still going through the validation process and I will share any updates with Tetsworth parish council and other stakeholders as I receive them. I'm also aware that residents in Tetsworth have been concerned about waste collection arrangements from the site and I received the following email from SODC's waste team about this:

"Since the location was inhabited over a month ago the Environmental Enforcement Team have been monitoring the location for any increases in littering or fly-tipping and to-date, we aren't seeing any major increases. If members of the public are aware of any specific areas where there is an increase, then we'd be grateful if they could report them through the council's website - [How to report fly-tipping, littering and dumped waste - South Oxfordshire District Council](#) My team have been in dialogue with the Traveller Liaison Team at the County Council and they are recommending that we treat it as an unauthorised site (for the time being) and not provide any waste collection provision (such as bins or sacks) for the waste which is being generated. Technical Officers from within the team are monitoring and there is, as yet nothing having been presented outside the site or at the entrance. So as a reassurance to local residents we will continue to monitor the situation and take direction from the Traveller Liaison and Planning Enforcement Teams."

- I chaired the **Health Improvement Board**, which is a committee held at County Hall for Oxfordshire's District and City councils to work on the priorities of the statutory multi-agency Health & Wellbeing Board in a localised, district focused way. In this particular meeting we considered physical activity indicators, Healthwatch activities, suicide and mental health, and the drug and alcohol needs assessment. Speakers included representatives from Healthwatch, the Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Concordat, and representatives from OCC.
- I also represented SODC on two statutory **Health & Wellbeing Board** meetings. The first was an extraordinary meeting to discuss the new NHS 10 Year Plan, and in the second meeting I gave a report on the Districts' Health Improvement Board work. At this meeting we considered, among many items on the agenda, the Oxfordshire Winter Plan, the Joint Needs Strategic Assessment and the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. There was also a presentation from Healthwatch, and I'd like to comment that SODC and OCC are particularly keen to

continue supporting the valued work of Healthwatch – the independent patients’ voice for people using health and social care services – following the news that the government has withdrawn its function as part of their new NHS 10 Year Plan.

Joint Local Plan

Yesterday afternoon we received some incredibly disappointing news regarding South & Vale’s Joint Local Plan submission. I’m afraid that if I try to express my own view on the matter it may result in a political rant entirely unsuitable for a monthly parish report. I hope to articulate my thoughts in a reasoned manner in due course, and we’re still very much in the process of digesting this news and exploring the next steps. SODC has released the following statement:

A statement on behalf of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

Over the past four years, South and Vale have worked incredibly hard together to create an innovative, forward-looking and positive plan for housing and development in our areas that seeks to raise standards, actively address the need for genuinely affordable social housing and sustainable infrastructure, and to tackle the climate emergency and restore nature.

We’ve done this through widespread and extensive consultation and engagement with the thousands of stakeholders who have willingly and constructively engaged in the process, including members of the public, community representatives, partner organisations, neighbouring councils, the development industry and other businesses in the area.

We are therefore disheartened and very disappointed that the Planning Inspectors have recommended that we withdraw the plan from the examination process over a single issue - namely the “duty to co-operate”, specifically with Oxford City Council. The city council itself was forced to withdraw its own local plan from examination earlier this year on several issues regarding the duty to co-operate.

It’s no secret that there’s disagreement within Oxfordshire on how many homes the rural districts should provide on Oxford’s behalf. Nevertheless, all councils in Oxfordshire are working towards what they believe to be in the best interests of their residents and their area.

Cllr Bethia Thomas, Leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council, said: “We take our responsibilities towards the duty to co-operate very seriously, and our Joint Local Plan sets out how both districts would together provide around 7,000 homes for Oxford for this very reason. It would be very difficult to conclude that the rural districts in Oxfordshire weren’t doing enough to support Oxford’s housing need. We are doing so now and have been for decades.

“During our extensive public consultation and engagement, we received widespread community support for our plan to tackle the need for genuinely affordable homes in our area in a sustainable and forward-thinking way. Given the recent high levels of housebuilding in the area, this was our chance to address the need for the infrastructure that our residents are calling out for.”

South and Vale used the government’s standard method calculating housing need for the Joint Local Plan. Our decision to do so was in line with the firm advice from the Planning Inspector of Oxford City Council’s plan who set out that the city hadn’t provided sufficient justification to use a different method.

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We are disappointed but not surprised given recent rulings from Planning Inspectors nationally – an increasing number of emerging local plans around the country are being recommended for withdrawal for this issue in particular; Horsham and Mid Sussex spring to mind as recent examples.

“We developed a constructive and collaborative plan and engaged with the city through a variety of methods, even when there was clear disagreement over both the need and the approach. It is not clear what more we could have done on this front.

“Our approach to measuring housing need was in line with the Inspectors of Oxford’s plan last year. Since our examination hearings in June, Oxford’s latest local plan consultation shows that using the government’s standard method there would be no more homes for us to find for Oxford.

“There are aspects of the Inspectors’ letter that we’re keen to review, but our most important role is to ensure where we can that we represent our communities and their needs.”

The councils are in discussions about the next steps and will provide a further update in due course.

The [Inspectors’ letter is available on the councils’ website](#).

Food and Warmth Grant Scheme

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have launched a Food and Warmth Grant Scheme to help local organisations who are directly supporting residents struggling with the rising cost of living. The scheme will distribute grants to local not-for-profit organisations delivering projects that improve access to food and help people keep their homes warm. It is funded through the Government’s Household Support Fund which is allocated via Oxfordshire County Council.

Grants are available for a six-week application window with the scheme closing for applications midday 6 November 2025. Local groups can apply for up to £2,000 if un-constituted, £2,000–£5,000 if constituted, and up to £10,000 for collaborations between three or more not-for-profit organisations led by a constituted group.

The funding can support a wide range of initiatives, including:

- Supplying food and essential household items such as toiletries (including period products) and cleaning products
- Providing warm equipment like blankets, hot water bottles and energy-efficient cooking equipment
- Covering costs linked to running Warm Welcome Spaces
- Purchasing equipment to support food and warmth projects such as cooking or gardening clubs
- Short-term staffing, venue or fuel costs to deliver projects
- Educational activities that promote healthy eating, energy saving, budgeting and household resilience

Eligible applicants include constituted and un-constituted not-for-profit groups, voluntary and community organisations, Community Interest Companies (CICs), preschools and PTAs (for non-statutory items), parish and town councils, food banks, community fridges and redistribution groups.

For queries, organisations can contact the Community Hub Team at communityconnectors@southandvale.gov.uk or call 01235 422 600 (option 3).

The funding is part of the wider Household Support Fund, which also includes targeted support to address period poverty.

Half-term activities across South and Vale

Families across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse can look forward to an exciting week of free and low-cost activities from 25 October to 1 November. As Cabinet Member for Communities at SODC I'm thrilled to offer such a wide variety of activities – from creative workshops and theatre at Cornerstone, to outdoor challenges and a free family fun day. It's a fantastic chance for families to play, learn, and spend quality time together. The week of activities includes:

- Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 October – '**Spot's Birthday Party**' at Cornerstone, Didcot – a lively show full of songs, dancing, party hats and a meet-and-greet with Spot after the performance.
- Monday 27 October – take part and enjoy a variety of free activities at the **Thame Leisure Centre Fun Day**, run in partnership with Better Leisure.
- Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 October – join the **Xplorer navigation challenge**. Explore a local park to find the markers, it's educational and gives children a sense of adventure!
- Thursday 30 October – come along to Cornerstone in Didcot to **meet the cast of this year's pantomime 'Beauty and the Beast'**. At The Beacon in Wantage, young children can enjoy '**Playtime with The Last Baguette Theatre Company**', with **free** sessions as part of the Wantage Literary Festival, and also get hands-on and crafty at the **Halloween Hand Puppet Workshop** with local artist Eden Fay.
- Saturday 1 November – illustrator **Nick Sharratt's Picture Book Drawalong** wraps the week up at Cornerstone when children can learn to draw favourite characters from his books and discover new tips, games and techniques.

For more information, including details on how to reserve your place or book tickets, visit southandvale.gov.uk/holidayactivities