



## Minutes of West Hagbourne Parish Council Meeting

held at Hagbourne Village Hall on Tuesday 19 November 2025 at 7:30pm.

Present: Parish Cllrs: D. Tozer (Chair), M. Leishman, R. Wilkes, A. Wimshurst, J. Freeland; County Cllr. Johnny Hope-Smith, District Cllr. C. Topping, Mr. A. Wise (Parish Clerk) and 5 residents

25/1003 Opening of Meeting	DT opened the meeting at 19:30 hrs with a warm welcome to all attendees	
Administrative Matters		
25/1004 To receive Parish Councillor's apologies for absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District Cllr. A.M. Simpson</li> </ul>	
25/1005 Declarations of personal and prejudicial interest from Parish Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cllr Wimshurst announced that he had just been appointed Chair of Hagbourne Village Hall.</li> </ul>	
25/1006 To approve the minutes of the meeting of 10 September 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was proposed by DT, seconded ML, that the minutes be signed as a true record. Carried nem con.</li> </ul>	
25/1007 To agree any outstanding actions from minutes of the meeting of 10 September 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All action items had been completed</li> </ul>	
Open Session		
25/1008 To hear reports on OCC and SODC activities from any OCC or SODC Councillor's present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>SODC Report</u> - attachment 7</li> <li><u>OCC Report</u> – attachment 8</li> </ul> <p>JHS highlighted that Oxfordshire County Council has launched new Highways Asset Response Teams (HARTs) to deliver fast, visible improvements to local roads and footpaths - directly responding to resident concerns. These mobile teams are designed to “blitz” areas with clusters of small but noticeable issues reported via Fix My Street, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleaning street signs</li> <li>Removing damaged railings</li> <li>Clearing overgrown vegetation</li> <li>Resetting uneven slabs and kerbstones</li> <li>Cleaning debris from footways</li> <li>Removing fly posters and redundant street barriers</li> <li>Patching smaller road defects</li> <li>Repairing footway defects</li> </ul> <p><b>What parishes can do:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage residents to report issues (preferably with photos) via Fix My Street: <a href="https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk">https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk</a></li> </ul>	
25/1009 To hear representations from members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chris Lay asked if the PC had any update on the plans for the Horse &amp; Harrow. Chair responded by saying that the PC was aware of and concerned by the lack of activity in the development, and the appearance of graffiti on the hoardings. SODC were unable to help with identifying the current owners. Investigations by AF via the Land Registry identified the current owner as Hawthorn Leisure but the valuation information is clearly incorrect, which raises questions about the validity of the name. AW to contact Hawthorn Leisure to seek confirmation that they are the legal owner and, if so, what their intentions for the site are.</li> </ul>	AW
Planning Matters		

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25/1010 Discussion and decisions on any new planning applications since the previous meeting	Planning applications reviewed - attachment 5 Planning Consultation – Manor Barn P25/S2925/HH. Chair and AW to take a look at the outbuilding concerned which had previously been subject to an enforcement notice (this application has been submitted as a result). Then to advise Clerk how to respond to SODC.	DT/AW
25/1011 Discussion and decisions on any other ongoing planning matters	None	
Drainage Matters		
25/1012 Any questions on ongoing highways matters (see report submitted– included here for reference)	<p>Flooding Summary Report for WHPC Meeting on Tuesday 18th November 2025 Activities Since Last Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCC Surveys of Underground Pipes at Enard Cottage and under York Farm: were completed in w/c 16 June 2025. Full reports have still not been received by OCC but their current feedback is: York Farm: couple of issues (an open joint and hole in the pipe), which might be expected with a culvert of such an age have been found but it is clear and flowing well. The current condition of the culvert is not increasing flood risk.</li> <li>• Enard Cottage: the larger main pipe is clear and in good condition and there are no issues of concern. Information on any apex in the pipe is still awaited (RW adds: this may be important, given water has tended to back up at this part of the ditch). The smaller pipe is badly broken, however, it is not clear whether this was intended to continue taking flow once the larger pipe was installed. Given this and the additional presence of a large tree above it, it is not seen as viable to replace or repair this pipe at this time.</li> <li>• GWP Didcot Drainage Investigations: SODC shared a list (not just the original three items) of largely hydrobrake-related remedial works identified for completion by Taylor Wimpey and their Drainage Consultant. SODC reviewed these works as complete on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and now just await a verification report from Taylor Wimpey’s Drainage Consultant. We hope this will mean water coming into the village from GWP Didcot will now be at expected levels, close to what it was before GWP was built.</li> <li>• Flood Group Work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Drains: after our work on drains across the village, OCC Highways further cleared all drain catchpots on 14 October 2025. The Main Street drain on the corner as you exit the village towards Didcot needs the pipework unblocked (our work has lessened the extent of the ‘puddle’ but not removed it completely). The Brook Lane drains have not yet been addressed, which has been highlighted to OCC Highways.</li> <li>- York Farm culvert: we have dug out a significant amount of silt from this area and it now looks much improved and flowing well.</li> <li>- Moor Lane Ditch: our thanks to the team, who have worked very hard in October and November on removing silt and cutting back vegetation along parts of the ditch from Main Street to where the concrete blocks have been in place. Work further on still needs to be decided upon and is for this discussion at this WHPC. Since our last meeting, no response has been received by RW from OCC regarding discussing ways forward with this.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Purchase of Equipment for Flood Group from WHPC funding: items focused on ditch clearing activities for the group (rakes, shovels, forks, brushes, trugs etc) have now been purchased (cost: £243.79). We propose drawing down on the remainder (£300) of the £1000 budget agreed, for consumables and replacement/additional items, as required. RW has requested an annual budget for the Flood Group and seeks agreement at this WHPC meeting for 2026 budget inclusion.</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of Water Pumps for the Village: These have been investigated and we anticipate costs of about £500 for a petrol pump and associated hoses/trolley. An electric puddle pump would cost about £250 all in. Should we want to pursue this asset for the village, an initial budget of up to £1000 is requested to purchase one of each option. RW wishes to thank Steve Carr for his help on this. A reminder that a stock of sandbags are held by the Parish Council and available to villagers in need. A very helpful website for assessing home flood resilience is to be found at floodmary.com and RW is happy to talk to villagers about potentially helpful flood prevention items for homes. Robin Wilkes, 17th November 2025.</li> <li>• RW to obtain quotes for the purchase of 2 water pumps to be paid for out of CIL money upto the value of £2K and then seek approval to purchase at the next meeting.</li> <li>• RW and DT to write to SODC to formally state concern about missing/failed drainage commitments by GWP developers, note that villagers have been impacted by such failures, request information on possible redress, seek assurances that SODC will schedule in regular inspections for the coming years and also that any further developments “upstream” of the village will be managed properly.</li> <li>• Add £1500:00 to the 2026/27 Budget for use by Drainage Team for consumables/equipment/work</li> <li>• RW to arrange for Rowan Napper to help with clearance work in Moor Lane ditch for which the PC will reimburse any expenses incurred by the use of his machinery</li> </ul>	<p>RW</p> <p>RW</p> <p>CLERK</p> <p>RW</p>
Highways and Transport		
25/1013 Any questions on ongoing highways matters (see report submitted– included here for reference)	<p>Roads, Traffic and PROW - report 18/11/2025</p> <p><b>Community Speedwatch Group</b> - the group continues to conduct regular sessions at a number of sites throughout the village, with 421 reported vehicles from a total of 2,759 monitored, to date.</p> <p><b>Traffic Management</b> - site meeting with Jon Beale, OCC Highways, 12/11/2025. The primary focus of the meeting was to discuss the single track section of Main Street between the pond and the junction with York Road. The present system is unsatisfactory as there are no clear warnings or instructions to drivers which leads to confusion and conflict. After observing the behaviour of drivers throughout this section it was decided to reinstate the middle white lines on the corner by the pond as the thoroughfare was frequently blocked by waiting vehicles. The introduction of a priority system was also discussed at length however, concerns were that vehicles giving way to oncoming traffic from one particular direction would block accesses to affected properties and cause hold-ups in the centre of the village. The effectiveness of the flashing VASs was also commented on and Jon will be considering options for clearer warning and instruction signage.</p> <p>Taking into account the continuing development of residences on Main Street westwards towards the A417, the erection of a new village name sign with gates next to the 20mph signs was put forward. The total cost to the PC would be approximately £4,000.</p> <p>Also reported was the remaining 30mph speed limit sign in Foxglove Lane which should now be replaced to the current limit within 28 days.</p> <p><b>Proposed footway next to Main Street from A417 - H&amp;H</b> - Advice was sought from Jon Beale on the feasibility of a much-needed, constructed footpath next to Main Street, leading from the Driftway (opp. H&amp;H) up to the nursery. This may be along the edge of an arable field (with permissive path agreement with landowner). The following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation needed with OCC Countryside Access Team. (P/P from SODC may be required).</li> <li>• Create a designated route to become a new PROW with agreement from the landowner (permissive rights can be rescinded at any time).</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A self-binding aggregate is an ideal surface (wood is slippery when wet).</li> <li>• Accesses - provide graded slopes with dropped kerbs from road surface at intervals.</li> </ul> <p>Chair reported that he had held discussion with the Lays (who own most of the section of the field on the north side of that section of Main Street opposite the new houses and the old pub) and a contractor who is working elsewhere in the village about the feasibility and ballpark costs for installing either a boardwalk along the field edge on the north side (“north-side boardwalk option”) or a proper pavement along the road on the south side in front of the affected house (“south-side pavement option”) (AW has previously noted that such a pavement was included originally in the planning conditions for the first set of new houses built along that stretch, but was later dropped from the requirements). For the north-side boardwalk option, Chair described the various challenges: the need to access the road via steps/ramps (which would require discussions with Highways re the road verge); the width of the path and the impact of the trees along that stretch requiring any boardwalk to be moved “infield” and so encroach on the cultivated area; and possible public liability issues. As a result, the PC decided to rule out the north-side boardwalk option. For the south-side pavement option, Chair reported that the contractor gave a rough ballpark estimate of £100K to construct the pavement to Highways specification (including moving / installing a new drainpipe in the existing ditch underneath).</p> <p>Chair, ML and AW to write to Highways seeking their support and for a site visit to discuss options and costs, with the view being that any such proposal would see contributions from PC, SODC Capital Grant and OCC Highways. Cllr Topping is supportive.</p> <p>Councillors suggested 3 areas for the Clerk to request for the Deep Clean Service by SODC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clean the graffiti off the old pub</li> <li>2. Clean the pavement out towards the old pub</li> <li>3. Litter picking in Brook Lane which isn’t safe for volunteers</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clerk to fill complete and return form before the end of November</li> </ul>	<p>DT</p> <p>CLERK</p>
<p>25/1014 Moor Lane byway update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair reported that the byway has now been re-opened to all legal users (including vehicular traffic)</li> <li>• ML/DT to propose a solution to how best provide some edging to the Moor Lane ditch without impeding clearance work.</li> </ul>	<p>ML/DT</p>
<p>25/1015 Community Matters (see report submitted– included here for reference)</p>	<p><b>JF Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JF reported that the Litter Picking was well attended and thanked all those involved last month</li> <li>• It was proposed JF and seconded DT, that the currently unused noticeboard in York Road be formally handed over to the WHVA for repair work and then to display their notices. WHVA to maintain usage of the main noticeboard at the bus shelter on Main Street. Budget of £200:00 to come from CIL Money, can be spent on repairing and painting the noticeboards. JF has obtained a quote for £400 to repair both noticeboards. It was proposed JF and seconded DT, that JF will ask the contractor to undertake the work and then invoice the clerk direct. Clerk to pay invoice in full and seek £200 from WHVA as their contribution for their noticeboard.</li> <li>• JF/ML to undertake a review of the location of bins in the village, come up with a plan for where they would like them located and then purchase some signs to stick on them.</li> <li>• As a number of Union Jack flags have appeared around the bus shelter/war memorial over recent weeks, Chair restated the PC’s policy that flags will continue to be displayed on public areas of the village at times of village and national celebration. Any flags that appear in such locations at other times will be</li> </ul>	<p>JF</p> <p>JF/ML</p>

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	<p>considered to be donations for the next event, and so removed and stored appropriately with the Totterdells. Flags displayed on private property are of course a matter for the relevant land owner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Storage of PC records and village archive – AW reported that at the most recent Hagbourne Village Hall committee they agreed to the siting of a lockable storage cabinet in the village hall small meeting room.</li> <li>Clerk to arrange to deliver PC files to Sheila before she arranges for the filing cabinet to be delivered to the village hall.</li> <li>Village website – Clerk reported that this is almost ready to launch. Once Clerk has been trained in uploading/editing material, he will notify other Councillors for training that then notify the village about the new website.</li> </ul>	<p>CLERK</p> <p>CLERK</p>
Financial Matters		
25/1016 Approval of regular payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of payments. It was proposed DT, seconded AW, and carried nem con that the following invoices be paid: Parish Clerk's wages, Expenses, PAYE, Grass cutting, village hall hire, website development work, flooding prevention tools and donations x 3.</li> <li>It was proposed ML, seconded DT, that ML order a pair of white entrance picket gates and signs to be located at the entrance of the village from the A417 at approx. £4k to be fund by CIL receipts. Highways to send the invoice to the clerk who will fund the bill from CIL receipts.</li> <li>ML proposed to relocate the present village name sign from opposite the pub to the 20mph signs coming into the village from Upton.</li> <li>It was proposed DT, seconded ML, that the clerk be awarded a 5% pay rise effective from Jan'26. Clerk to update records and 26/27 budget accordingly.</li> <li>Clerk to add 2 more lines to draft 2026/27 budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flood Prevention work £1500.00</li> <li>Traffic Management £1000.00</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>ML</p> <p>CLERK</p>
25/1017 The current financial situation for 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Financial situation for 2024/25 – attachment 2 &amp; 3</li> </ul>	
25/1018 Risk Assessment Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DT signed off appropriate parts on the current Risk Assessment Checklist – attachment 5</li> </ul>	
25/1019 Agreement of items to include in Chairman's report for next monthly Parish Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair will send a report to Editor Sue Totterdell before the end of the month in time for the next edition of the Village Newsletter. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of bins in the village for dog mess</li> <li>Ideas for both OCC and SODC Councillor grants</li> <li>Reminder of what to do with planning applications if you are in the village conservation area</li> <li>Reminder of sand bag availability</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	DT
25/1020 Agreement of items to include in the agenda for the next WHPC meeting Wed 7 Jan 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clerk to draft agenda and circulate amongst councillors 10 days before next meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pub ownership</li> <li>Emergency Plan</li> <li>Clerk to circulate the 2026 meeting dates to councillors and post on new website</li> </ul> </li> <li>Next meeting to be held on 7 January 2026</li> </ul>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
25/102 Close of meeting	DT declared the meeting closed at 9:40pm	

Signed:

Date:

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## Attachments:

1. Agenda
2. Financial Statements
3. Expenditure against Budget 2024/2025
4. Planning Applications
5. Risk Assessment
7. OCC Report

<b>Title</b>	County Councillor's Report
<b>Author</b>	Cllr Johnny Hope-Smith
<b>Parishes</b>	Cholsey, East Hagbourne, Little Wittenham, Long Wittenham, Moulsoford, North Moreton, South Moreton, West Hagbourne
<b>Date</b>	November 2025
<b>Contact Details</b>	<a href="mailto:johnny.hope-smith@oxfordshire.gov.uk">johnny.hope-smith@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>

Dear Parish Councillors and Residents,

Here are some updates and news I have gathered for you. Please provide any feedback, if its too much or not enough and of course any more information on a specific topic I can help with. I have put in **BOLD** the items which I think may be specifically appropriate for the Parishes to consider advertising or acting upon

Best wishes,

Johnny

## **HART of the Community – Tackling Local Highways Issues**

Oxfordshire County Council has launched new Highways Asset Response Teams (HARTs) to deliver fast, visible improvements to local roads and footpaths - directly responding to resident concerns.

These mobile teams are designed to “blitz” areas with clusters of small but noticeable issues reported via Fix My Street, such as:

- Cleaning street signs
- Removing damaged railings
- Clearing overgrown vegetation
- Resetting uneven slabs and kerbstones
- Cleaning debris from footways
- Removing fly posters and redundant street barriers
- Patching smaller road defects
- Repairing footway defects

### **What parishes can do:**

- Encourage residents to report issues (preferably with photos) via Fix My Street: <https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk>



- **Highlight local hotspots to the County Council for future HART visits via the questionnaire – Have you received yours?**

**<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hart-of-the-community-new-teams-target-areas-most-in-need-of-highway-work/>**

## **Have Our Say – Science Vale Movement and Place Plan Consultation**

Oxfordshire County Council has launched a public consultation on the new Movement and Place (MAP) Plan for Science Vale — a long-term vision to improve transport, public spaces, and quality of life across the area.

The MAP Plan is a 25-year strategy covering towns and villages including Didcot, Wantage, Harwell, East & West Hagbourne, North & South Moreton, Long & Little Wittenham, Sutton Courtenay, Milton, and others. It aims to support sustainable growth by:

- Improving walking, cycling, and public transport options
- Enhancing public spaces and village centres
- Reducing congestion and improving air quality
- Supporting access to jobs, education, and services
- Making travel safer and more inclusive

The plan is a “live” document, meaning it will be regularly updated to reflect community feedback and future needs.

### **What parishes can do:**

- Encourage residents to take part in the consultation before **1 December 2025**
- Share the MAP Plan summary and survey link locally
- Provide parish-level feedback on transport priorities and public space improvements

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/science-vale-map>

Your input will help shape the final version of the plan, which is due to be presented to the Council’s Cabinet in January 2026.

## **INFO & ACTION – Electric Blanket Safety Checks – Over One in Three Fail**

Following the recent electric blanket testing events promoted by my Septembers CC report, Oxfordshire County Council’s Trading Standards team has reported a concerning increase in failure rates.

Between 22 September and 10 October, over 920 electric blankets were tested at ten events across the county — nearly 200 more than last year. Alarming, 338 blankets failed safety checks, representing a 36.7% failure rate, up from the previous year.

Why this matters:

- Faulty electric blankets pose a serious risk of fire or injury, especially during colder months.
- Even newer blankets can fail safety tests.
- Common issues include exposed or bunched wires, wear and tear, and internal faults not visible to the eye.

### **What parishes can do:**

- Remind residents to check their electric blankets before use
- Share advice from Electrical Safety First on how to spot faults:

<https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk>



- Encourage safe disposal of old or damaged blankets at local recycling centres

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cpd2y0je4zqo>

## **INFO - New Lane Rental Scheme to Reduce Roadwork Disruption**

Oxfordshire County Council has received government approval to introduce a Lane Rental Scheme (LRS), aimed at reducing the disruption caused by roadworks on the county's busiest roads. The scheme allows the council to charge utility companies and developers a daily fee for carrying out works on key parts of the road network during peak times. This creates a financial incentive to:

- Complete works more quickly
- Avoid peak-hour disruption
- Improve coordination between different works promoters
- Use smarter planning and technology to minimise delays

Why this matters:

- Oxfordshire sees around 30,000 roadwork requests per year
- The current permit scheme only allows cost recovery — LRS goes further by encouraging better behaviour
- Roughly 9% of the network (the busiest roads, esp bus usage) will be subject to charges
- Surplus income will be reinvested into improving the highway network

What parishes can do:

- Share this update with residents to explain how the council is tackling roadwork disruption

## **REMINDER – Free Park and Ride Bus Travel & Temporary Congestion Charge**

As shared last month, Oxfordshire County Council is offering free bus travel from park and ride sites until the end of January 2026, alongside a temporary congestion charge in Oxford.

- Valid for up to 2 adults and 3 children with a park and ride parking ticket
- Applies to all bus services from the five park and ride sites

The £5 daily congestion charge applies to six key roads, but many exemptions and free permits are available — including for carers, blue badge holders, and Oxfordshire residents, 25 per car in our area.

The aim of the scheme is to cut congestion & improve air quality

**What parishes can do:**

- **Remind residents to take advantage of the free travel offer**
- **Share this informal but helpful guide** with tips and exemptions  
<https://oxfordclarion.uk/twelve-easy-hacks-to-beat-oxfords-congestion-charge-2/>
- or/and share official Permit info and applications site:  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestioncharge](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestioncharge)

## **REMINDER: Councillor Priority Fund – Supporting Local Projects**

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



priorities and strengthen community initiatives.

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

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

Key details:

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

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

**What parishes can do:**

- **Identify local projects that could benefit from modest funding**
- **Collaborate with community groups to develop proposals**
- **Submit applications early to allow time for review and payment**

Keep records and be prepared to report on outcomes

For more information or to apply, visit the Councillor Priority Fund page.

<https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/councillorpriorityfund>

## 8. SODC Report

<b>Title</b>	District Councillors' Report
<b>Councillors</b>	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson & Cllr Crispin Topping
<b>Parish</b>	West Hagbourne Parish Council
<b>Date</b>	18 November 2025

[Booking link](#) for planning surgeries for town and parish councils

## **Five out of seven councils back the two-unitary proposal for council reorganisation**

A consensus has emerged for the shape of Local Government Reorganisation in the area after five councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire have formally supported a proposal for two new, innovative, and locally accountable unitary authorities, aimed at addressing current inefficiencies, enhancing services, and saving millions in response to the government's call for reform of council structures.

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After reviewing all three proposals for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, the majority of councils in the area have agreed that the two-unitary option offers the best outcomes for local residents and will urge the government to proceed with the proposal when a decision is made next year.

As the councils discussed the options, the clear benefits of the two-unitary proposal put it ahead of the other options. The key areas:

- **Delivering better services:** The proposal responds to what residents have said needs improving, from highways and social care to planning.
- **The best financial outcomes:** Delivers the greatest potential savings (£59.8m annually) and lowest financial risk of all three proposals, helping to protect key services and ensure long-term stability across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.
- **Boosting both rural and urban economies:** Drives sustainable growth across Oxford, market towns and rural areas, creating more jobs, better transport and the right homes in the right places.
- **Creates councils responsive to their communities:** Keeps councils close to all local communities and tailored to their specific needs, ensuring strong local accountability and representation.

Forming two unitary councils has the potential to save the most money of all the proposals for the area (based on shared PwC modelling) and, at the same time, creates authorities that are big enough to be efficient, stable, and reliable, but small enough to care for and be responsive to communities.

The Councils also raised concerns about the other proposals.

For the single-unitary proposal, they expressed concerns that it was too large, would be far too distant from communities and did not show the ambition local communities and businesses deserved.

For the three-unitary proposal, they expressed concerns that it would not create financially sustainable councils, did not meet the government criteria, and would negatively impact Oxford and the green belt.

Across the four Oxfordshire district councils and West Berkshire Council, members have been fully briefed on all three proposals and have discussed them in detail over recent weeks. At their full council meetings, they were asked for their views and to vote on the two-unitary option before their Cabinets and Executives made a decision. Of the 158 councillors in attendance across the areas, 142 voted to support the two-unitary proposal, 9 were against and 7 abstained, showing overwhelming support that the two-unitary option is the best for their areas.

Oxfordshire County Council did not ask their full council for its view before its Cabinet decided to submit the single Oxfordshire unitary proposal. The full council meeting at Oxford City Council will only discuss the proposals after its Cabinet decided to submit the three-unitary proposal.

The proposal will be submitted to the government before the 28 November deadline, and it is anticipated that the government will consult on all proposals for the area in spring 2026 before deciding later in the summer. The government's preferred model is scheduled to become fully operational in 2028.



Residents can read the full proposal or a shortened version on the website [www.twocouncils.org](http://www.twocouncils.org). The proposal covers all the key points, including how services will be run, financial modelling, implementation plans, and the vision for the future.

## **Councils to take positive steps to represent communities despite concerns with Inspectors' Local Plan decision**

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have written **two** letters to the Inspectors in response to the Planning Inspectors' letter published last month, which recommended the councils withdraw their Joint Local Plan from the examination process based on a single issue – the 'duty to co-operate' with Oxford city.

Their most recent letter was written in light of the Ministerial letter of 9 October 2025. Inspectors acknowledged receipt of this and confirmed that a more substantive response will be provided in due course.

In their first response to the Planning Inspectors the councils have defended the processes carried out to develop the plan. They go on to explain to the Inspectors that any decision on whether to withdraw the plan from examination would need to be taken at full Council meetings. The Joint Local Plan remains at examination and no decision to withdraw it has been made.

Despite the significant concerns with the Inspectors' conclusions, the councils' leaders have both committed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that future development in the areas remains sustainable, appropriate and well-planned.

On 6 October the Councils wrote to the Planning Inspectors about their letter - the [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

On 20 October the Councils wrote a second letter to the Inspectors in light of the Ministerial letter of 9 October 2025 – [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

The Inspectors have written to the Councils to acknowledge receipt of their letter of 20 October 2025 and confirm that a more substantive response will be provided in due course - [letter is available to view on the Councils' website](#).

## **Visit South Oxfordshire launches campaign to boost festive trade**

Visit Southern Oxfordshire, the official tourism and events hub for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, has launched a new initiative to support small, independent businesses this Christmas.

Local businesses and event organisers are invited to promote their festive events and activities for free through the Visit Southern Oxfordshire Christmas page, ensuring they reach hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors across the districts' market towns and surrounding areas. These festive happenings can include anything from Christmas markets and wreath-making workshops to late-night shopping evenings, carol singing and crafts.



Listings should include a full description, image and a direct link to the business' own booking or information page. The Southern Oxfordshire team will actively promote these events across its social media channels and in local and regional media outreach, including magazine, website and outdoor poster advertisements, providing invaluable marketing support during the critical festive trading period.

Residents are also encouraged to make [southernoxfordshire.com/christmas](https://southernoxfordshire.com/christmas) their first stop for planning their festive activities. The page offers a comprehensive, up-to-date calendar of everything happening locally and is frequently updated.

## Beauty and the Beast

Pantomimes brings the much-loved classic Beauty and the Beast to Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot this Christmas.

Running from **Thursday 18 December to Wednesday 31 December**, this spectacular family production promises a festive experience filled with laughter, music and magic. Audiences can look forward to dazzling costumes, impressive special effects, toe-tapping musical numbers and even a few real panto pooches.

Featuring a talented professional cast alongside local young performers, Beauty and the Beast is set to be a true community celebration and the perfect festive treat for audiences of all ages.

Tickets are on sale [now on their website](#).

## Council launches 'Winter Campaign' to help residents stay warm, well and connected

As the colder months roll in, South Oxfordshire District Council is launching its 'Winter in South Oxfordshire' campaign - a seasonal initiative packed with practical advice, local events, and support to help residents stay warm, well and connected this winter.

The campaign brings together a wide range of services and resources from the council and partner organisations, including community activities, health advice, and support services to help residents through the winter months.

Highlights of the campaign include signposting to information on:

- **Winter activities and events:** From group walks to performances and workshops, there's something for everyone. Visit the Active Communities page or check out what's on at Cornerstone Arts Centre.
- **Energy-saving support:** Guidance is available on how to make simple home improvements, such as insulation, draught-proofing, and efficient heating, to help residents stay warm and reduce energy costs.



- **Community Hub support:** If people are struggling financially or need advice, the council's Community Hub is here to help — from food and housing support to mental health guidance.
- **Emergency preparedness:** Get ready for winter weather with tips on flooding, power cuts, and emergency kits.
- **Preventing damp and mould:** Tips on how to stop condensation building up in our homes and prevent mould growing.
- **Support for rough sleepers:** The council activates emergency accommodation during severe weather and works year-round to support people at risk of homelessness.
- **Warm spaces:** Local libraries, leisure centres and other venues are offering warm, welcoming places to relax, recharge and connect.
- **Health advice:** The NHS winter health guide offers tips for staying well.

Residents can find all the information and resources on the council's [Winter in South Oxfordshire page](#).

## Breaking the cycle of homelessness

Our proactive work to break the cycle of homelessness and improve people's lives is at the heart of our new Joint Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

We support many families and individuals who face multiple challenges in their lives to find sustainable, secure accommodation.

The joint strategy is now live on our webpages [South](#) / [Vale](#) and sets how we prevent homelessness wherever possible and help people access affordable housing which meets their needs. See our media release [South](#) / [Vale](#) for more on this. Please do share our social media posts and signpost people to our website for help with homelessness.

## Social housing allocation policy changes now in place

Following a public consultation we've now put in place an updated joint Housing Allocation Policy for both councils. The refreshed policy sets out the criteria on who can join the councils' housing register and the rules for how social housing is allocated. See the policy on our website [South](#) / [Vale](#)

## South East Strategic Option (SESRO) consultation

A reminder, following on from our email on 28 October regarding the launch of Thames Water's statutory consultation for the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO).

As well as an online survey available until 13 January 2026, Thames Water is also hosting community drop-in events.

# West Hagbourne Parish Council



Thames Water is also offering councillors dedicated sessions at the following location (Didcot session was 10 November):

- **The Beacon, Wantage: 26 November 1pm to 2pm**

If you have any questions about the consultation materials or process, please contact Thames Water at [info.SESRO@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:info.SESRO@thameswater.co.uk)

## **New Active Communities leaflet**

Active Communities has released a new leaflet packed with their free and low-cost sport and wellbeing activities.

The leaflet includes information about:

- Community Walks led by trained volunteers at multiple locations across the district.
- Move Together programme providing tailored support for individuals with health, mobility, or social isolation challenges.
- Family-friendly holiday sessions through the YouMove scheme, along with inclusive sports activities for all ages.
- Nature trails, running groups, Nordic walking, and more.

Download a copy from [\(South\)the Active Communities page](#) / [\(Vale\)the Active Communities page](#) or pick one up from the reception at Abbey House or our venues around the district.