



MINUTES OF THE WATLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 7PM ON TUESDAY 10th FEBRUARY 2026 IN THE WEST ROOM

Present:

Councillors:

Nicky Smallbone (NS) – Chair
Karyn Buck (KB) – Vice-Chair
Steve Bolingbroke (SB)
Mike Deighton (MD)
Jules MacIntyre (JM)
Keith Jackson (KJ)
Tim Horton (TH)
Sylvia Glover (SG)
Lucy Papworth (LPA) – After co-option agenda item

Officer:

Kristina Tynan (KT)

County and District Councillor: Ben Higgins

In Attendance: Gill Bindoff (Planning and NPAB)

Press: Izzy Anderson – Henley Standard

Members of the Public: 3 (Jake with Ben Higgins), Fiona McClean (Town of Culture), Peter Marshall (Climate Action)

It was noted that the Henley Standard will be recording the meeting.

20/26 Apologies for Absence
Denise Mallon, Leo Pesci.

21/26 Co-option on the Parish Council
Resolved: That Lucy Papworth be co-opted onto the Parish Council.

22/26 To receive Declarations of Interest
There were none notified.

23/26 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 13th January 2026 to be agreed and signed as a correct record
Resolved: That these minutes be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record of this meeting

24/26 Action List Update

Item for Action	Details and Actions	By Whom	By When	Action Status
Cuxham Road Lighting	Lighting still not working on new poles	SB/NS	ASAP	SB continues to chase this. He has sent 195 emails on this issue to date

WRR	BH to arrange a public meeting with senior officers from OCC	NS/ BH/SB		BH will arrange a date for an appropriate time
£1M Strategy	Agenda Item for FC Meeting Feb in Confidential Session	SB	10/3/2025	Discussed in February Full Council and will also be an agenda item for March
Climate Actions Plan	Agenda Item FC Feb	KJ	05/02/2025	Paper Received
Bus Provision	Meeting to be organised with Dave Harrison OCC	BH	28/02/2026	To be arranged
Scribe Accounts	Order Package	KT	28/02/2026	Done
PSFC Liaison Group	Set up Meeting	KT	28/02/2026	Meeting took place 5/2/26 . Note been sent to Councillors
S106 Arts Funding	Agreement to be signed when received	KT	28/02/2026	Received and Signed
Letter 892 SODC Renumeration Panel	Letter to be sent to SODC	NS/SB	28/02/206	Sent to SODC. No response as yet

25/26 Matters arising from the Minutes

Watlington Relief Road (Minute 08/26 Refers) - NS thanked BH, FvM and SB for their prompt action in making the Green Party withdraw their recommendation for the OCC Budget to remove funding from the WWR. She also thanked everyone who wrote to the Green Party Councillors.

26/26 Chairman's Remarks

There were none.

27/26 Public Questions from Residents and Organisations

There were none notified.

28/26 County Councillors Report – Cllr Ben Higgins

1. OCC Budget Meeting – This was held earlier today. £3M additional funding was approved by the majority for the Watlington Relief Road. He reported that the Green Party had submitted a recommendation to remove all funding for the WRR but they withdrew it before the meeting due to action taken by the MP, himself, and local residents. BH said that the political leadership of OCC, our local Councillor and MP continue to support the delivery of the road and are working with officers to ensure the project is fully resourced and that progress is as rapid as possible. It has been made clear that a red line has been drawn on this and this is now a non-negotiable issue. He said that SB spoke brilliantly in support of the WRR and had a lot of favourable comments from other Councillors.

OCC will be getting a reduction of more than £24M funding from central government by 2028/29 but work has been going to ensure that the budget for the coming years delivers on their priorities. BH said that gully cleaning will now be done annually rather than every 4 years and more money has been allocated for road maintenance and potholes which will be the biggest programme in over 20 years they want to keep roads on a steady state rather than a decline basis.

SB thanked BH for speaking in support of the WRR issue at the budget meeting and said that if anyone wished to watch the meeting the WRR issue is 54 minutes into the video held on the OCC website. He stated that two people who are long term opponents of the WRR spoke against the WRR.

2. Local Government Re-organisation – The consultation is now live, BH urged all residents to respond to this, and the deadline is Thursday 26th March.

3. Nearly £5.5m invested in cleaner and better buses after new vehicle improvement grants – Grants of £1,405M have been awarded to bus companies and community transport groups to support upgrades to their vehicles for the benefit of passengers and the environment. The initiative has attracted an additional £4M in collective investment from the operators

4. Councillors drop-in session- BH said that our MP Freddie van Mierlo joined the February session which was very successful and thanked the Parish Council for arranging these sessions.

5. Shirburn Road - This will be surfaced dressed in the new financial year. TH reported that Chapel Street,

New Road, and the High Street are in extremely poor condition. BH said that he is speaking to officers about the best treatment which could be done earlier than the programme list and said he is happy to advocate this issue.

He stated that OCC are working hard on ANPR enforcement of the 7.5 tonne limit and Watlington is now on the list and surveys will take place to put them. Once they are installed enforcement will be able to take place.

29/26 District Councillors Report - Cllr Ben Higgins

District Councillors Grant Fund – BH has the list of applications and has to make decisions on who to award a grant by the end of the week and then notifications will be sent to applicants.

New Leader – Cllr Maggie Filpova-Rivers has been appointed as the new SODC leader and would be happy to meet with the Parish Councillor and this will be arranged in due course.

30/26 To receive the Balance of Accounts, Receipts received and approve the list of Payments to be settled.

NS read out the Balance of Accounts. She then proposed that the list of payments be settled. [These are shown at the bottom of these minutes].

Resolved: That the Balances of Accounts be accepted, and the List of Payments be paid, and both reports were signed by the Chair and Vice-Chair.

31/26 Committees:

A: FINANCE – There has been no meeting

B. Planning – 3/2/2026 – Gill Bindoff

Resolved: That Council accept these minutes

SODC Planning Enforcement

Resolved: That the Parish Council send a letter to the Head of Planning copied into the Cabinet Member for Planning (Ann-Marie Simpson) and our District Councillor (Ben Higgins) on the very poor service by Planning Enforcement.

Air Quality – GB had written a paper on this and asked that a Parish Councillor take an interest in. It was agreed that this issue be put on the Operations Committee agenda.

C. OPERATIONS – 21/1/26 – Mike Deighton

Resolved: That Council accept these minutes

MD reported that the committee are very busy getting things done especially with the special projects. He thanked the office team and councillors for their support. The outside office space work started today. Some of the planters in town will be replaced shortly and a similar design in recycled plastic has been chosen.

The committee are also looking into increasing the height of the MUGA fence on 3 sides. Funding will sought for this project from the Football Foundation and other organisations.

Container Toilet at the Rec – MD said that he felt that this is not suitable or robust enough for public use and the committee will look at options for these.

D. PAVILION AND SPORTS FIELD LIAISON Group – 5/2/26 – Note was sent out to Councillors KB reported that this is still not a legal entity and they were made very clear that the WPC will take back the Pavilion on 1/4/26 if the lease is not signed by then but they are adamant that it will be signed by then. Once this has happened the Clerk will transfer all bills to the Sports Club.

E. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ADVISORY BOARD- GB reported that there have been no formal meetings

but the working group has been busy with the review of the NP.

F. ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE – 26/1/2026

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That Council accept these minutes

Allotment Committee Terms of Reference –attached

Resolved: That the revised Terms of Reference be accepted.

NS said that Josh and Kirsty are doing an amazing job and the Allotments have been transformed over the last two years.

32/26 Community Accessibility Strategy and Resource Pack – Paper was attached to the agenda

KB said that this is about making a community-wide accessibility resource pack is a practical way to make activities and services usable by more people from the start. Instead of addressing accessibility one request at a time, this project provides shared tools and guidance that help everyone design with inclusion in mind.

The resource pack will benefit people with disabilities while also improving access for older adults, people with temporary impairments, and those using different devices or needing different environments. This approach increases overall participation and reduces barriers across the community.

Resolved: To access the 25/26 £500 Comms Budget to pay for professional support to kick-start this initiative. If additional funding is required, then there may be a case to continue the funding through the 26/27 Comms Budget.

33/26 UK Town of Culture Competition – paper was attached to the agenda

SB said that UK Town of Culture is a DCMS initiative based on the City of Culture concept. Towns will compete in three categories: Small, Medium and Large. The overall winner will receive £3m and the two runners up getting £250k.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) has to be submitted by 31st March. Towns that pass the EOI stage will get £60k to write a full bid over the summer with the winners announced in early 2027. The programme is to be delivered in 2028. Over the last three weeks, Fiona McLean and I have been developing a proposal based on three principles:

1. It builds on the existing cultural and community activities in Watlington
2. It will share the stories of the town to create a sense of shared community across long-standing residents and newer arrivals and including a youth programme.
3. It defines “culture” broadly so that it involves all residents either experiencing the events, participating in them or developing their skill.

We have been recruiting organisations and individuals across the town to support the bid

Resolved: That Watlington PC will submit an Expression of Interest to the UK Town of Culture competition and delegates Steve Bolingbroke and Nicky Smallbone to approve the submission.

34/26 Financial Regulation Review – This was emailed to Councillors

Resolved: That the Financial Regulations, which have been reviewed be accepted.

35/26 Update from Working Groups if anything to report

a. **Flood Management** – There has been a meeting with the Support Fund regarding flooding.

b. **Arts Spine** –

1. **Update** – SB reported that the Landscaping work will be out for tender this month. There will be a launch of the trail in June around the summer event. Joseph Hillier is making the sculptures; Nick Foot’s sculpture is at the foundry for casting and Jo Ort has started his.

Deed of Variation from SODC for Arts Spine – They have sent us a variation to the original deed but this shows the sculptures in incorrect locations.

Resolved: That we amend the location plan and send back to SODC. Once we have the correct deed that this be signed by the Chair and Vice Chair and witnessed by the Clerk in accordance with our Standing Orders.

- c. **Youth-** The youth club is going well but they need more volunteers. They are looking for craft donations. The Youth Council has been reconvened at the school.
- d. **Climate Action Working Group-** KJ and Peter has prepared a paper which had been sent out to Councillors. SB said a lot of it is based on what he originally wrote in 2021 but changes have been made to targets based on OCC, SODC and our NP. He asked if this can be achievable. JM said that paper needs to be tighter on the how. KJ said that he accepted that some detail is missing at the moment. Why, What and How may need to be another covering document. It was suggested that the top 5 suggestions be followed up by the actions needed and KJ and PM were asked to make a schedule with priorities. JM said that this felt like it is an Advisory Strategic Paper not a Plan. It was stated that if we are serious about getting to Net Zero in 2045 there must be targets and another layer should be added. We need to focus on what we are able to do in Watlington. WCAG only raise awareness of issues and do not offer solutions. KJ and PM agreed to move up to the next stages needed.

36/26 Consultations

Local Government Re-organisation Consultation.

SB said he attended a seminar on this and about 55 other Parish/Towns attended and gave some feedback. There are 3 options on the table.

- o **Two Unitary Councils:** One covering the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire, and Another for West Oxfordshire and Cherwell, along with Oxford City.
- o **Three Unitary Councils:** One for Oxford City with expanded boundaries, one for the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire, and one for West Oxfordshire and Cherwell.
- o **A Single Unitary Council:** A proposal for a single council to govern the entire Oxfordshire area.

It was agreed that WPC send in a response and this will be on the agenda for the March Full Council meeting. Councillors to submit their comments to SB who will submit a response based on feedback.

37/26 Reports from Organisations and Representation on other bodies

There were no reports received.

38/26 Correspondence- List was attached to the agenda.

536) SODC – Do we want to take any CIL Funding in April 2026 - FC agreed to not take any CIL Funding in April 2026.

39/26 Confidential Session-

Resolved: It was agreed to go into confidential session to discuss the next agenda item

Confidential Items: EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC RESOLVED: THAT under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for items of business of the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 7,8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.

40/26 £1m+ project – Discussion

Public Minute: Three projects were agreed to be taken forward and the 5 lead Councillors; SB,KB, and JM ,LPA and KJ to submit papers on the projects for confidential discussion at the March Full Council meeting.

41/26. Other Matters for Discussion at the discretion of Chair

THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS TH4E MEETING CLOSED AT 9PM

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£1M Strategy	Agenda Item for FC Meeting Feb in Confidential Session	SB	10/3/2025	Discussed in February Full Council and will also be an agenda item for March
Climate Actions Plan	Agenda Item FC Feb	KJ	05/02/2025	Further discussion In March FC. Document to have detail added
Bus Provision	Meeting to be organised with Dave Harrison OCC	BH	10/02/2026	Arranged for 13/2/2026
Letter 892 SODC Renumeration Panel	Letter to sent to SODC	NS	28/02/206	Sent to SODC. No response as yet
Local Government Reorganisation Consultation	Response from WPC	SB	End date 26/3/26	All Councillors to send their comments to SB who will draft a response to be greed at March FC
Planning Enforcement	Letter to be sent to them regarding the poor service by Enforcement	GB	01/03/2026	GB To draft the letter
Air Quality	To be put on the Operations Agenda	MD	14/03/2026	Paper has been written by GB
UK Town of Culture	An EOI to be submitted to this competition	NS/SB	31/03/2026	To be drafted by SB and Fiona McLean and SB and NS delegated to approve submission
Deed of Variation for Arts Spine	The sculpture locations need to be amended and sent back to SODC	NS/KB	ASAP	Delegated to NS and KB to sign the deed of variation once amended
CIL Funding	Agreed not to take CIL funding in April	KT	ASAP	Inform SODC

2025/2026

BANK ACCOUNTS	At month end Jan	10/02/2026
Bank - Current A/C	2,890.32	5,893.59
Bank - High Interest Account	83,152.71	83,152.71
Bank - Business Premium Account	169,490.08	163,335.60
Pavilion and Sport Field Account	0.00	0.00
Unity Trust Bank Account	125,522.44	125,522.00
Total Bank Accounts	381,055.55	377,903.90

Date: 10/2/2026



Signed : Nicky Smallbone -Chair



Karyn Buck - Vice Chair

