



DRAFT MINUTES
Open Spaces Committee Meeting
20th July 2026, 7:30pm, Coffee Room, Merry Bells

In attendance: Chair Alison Sercombe, Councillors Aaron Brooks, Andrew Cooper and John Wolstenholme

Present: Locum Clerk, Assistant Clerk

#13/26-27 Apologies: Apologies were accepted from Councillors Toby Newman, Lucy Thomas and Paul Willmott. Councillor Anthony Shepherd was not in attendance.

#14/26-27 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations: None

#15/26-27 Public Participation

- i. Area Tree Officer (Oxford), Oxfordshire County Council Tree Service Owain Devey (OD) was in attendance to notify the Parish of significant ash die back works to take place along the A40 east bound from Forest Hill to Wheatley in the September timeframe. He noted the rate of decline is such to require the works to be done with an approximate number of 150-200 trees being removed. The chip will be removed.

The road will be kept open, but there will be a lane closure. The cycle path will remain open but there will be banksmen present.

Following the works, there will be standing stems of approximately 4 – 6 feet but due to the hedge, these may not be overly visible.

The intention is to allow natural regeneration. They will investigate other solutions (such as native species, i.e. resilient trees such as field maple, cherry) being very careful on selection.

It was noted that there is an area over Wheatley bridge by London Road, know locally as The Spinney, which needs some attention. OD noted this is an area of Highways special circumstances. The Assistant Clerk will email OD highlighting the area needing attention.

OD will be in touch with the Estates team at OCC regarding any overview needed of the path in between the village and Shotover.

The Assistant Clerk noted there are some trees near Asda petrol station which may need attention and she will email OD.

#16/26-27 Minutes of the meeting of the 18th May 2026: The Committee agreed and signed the minutes of the meeting of the 18th May 2026.

#17/26-27 The Committee received an update on outstanding actions with no decision:

- i. Blocked pipework on footpath from Beech Road to Kelham Drive and uneven tarmac: The Assistant Clerk noted there is no other update since the Full Council's July meeting. She is waiting for the contractor to submit a proposal of work needed to OCC for consideration.
- ii. Update on responsibility of St Mary's Close Alley roof: There is no further update since the Full Council's July meeting. This has been directed to the Highways team.
- iii. Contact the school regarding Smokefree Oxfordshire: The Locum Clerk emailed the school at the end of June but not had a response. She will follow up in September.
- iv. Investigation of new sign at Church Road Recreation Ground village sign: The Locum Clerk is working with a company regarding the sign and has asked the groundsman to measure.
- v. Investigation of larger signs about dogs in the play areas: The Locum Clerk is working with a company regarding the signed and has asked the groundsman to measure.
- vi. Church Road Recreation Ground (see agenda item #18/26-27)
- vii. Graffiti invoice: The graffiti from the alley has been removed and residents have paid invoices for their section.

There is some graffiti on play equipment at Church Road Recreation Ground. The groundsman will sand this off.
- viii. Tree register: Tree surveys are in progress. The Locum Clerk will investigate Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment grants for tree works.
- ix. Memorial Gardens
 - a. Solar lights: The Locum Clerk has emailed the contractor and is waiting to hear back. She will continue to follow up due to the necessary timescale.
 - b. Padlock of gates: Discussions are in progress with the Diocese as to the best way to keep the space open to avoid dogs being allowed to run loose in the Memorial Garden.

x. Maintenance tasks

- a. To have an update and consider any additional work needed:
The Locum Clerk noted that the groundsman has been carrying out play inspections, working on the hedge at memorial garden, weeding as well as other tasks, as needed. It was noted that the Locum Clerk will be obtaining quotes for the weeding of several areas in the village.
- xi. Allotments: The Assistant Clerk reported that some areas are looking untidy. A hedge needs chopping down and grass cutting to be done along the path. The Locum Clerk and Assistant Clerk will look to obtain quotes.
- xii. Quotes for Bus Shelter roofing repairs – King and Queen, London Road. There is no update since the Full Council's July meeting. The works are booked for 7/8 September.
- xiii. Littleworth Field: The primary school has installed 3 metre concrete barricades down the side of the field adjacent to the car park. There will be 8 barricades to prevent unlawful access.

The Chair would like a meeting of Littleworth Working Group on site in early September. They will review the Flood Attenuation Scheme and propose a way forward that is safe, possibly looking at a wider area which is shallower.

The lease is with OCC and following that will come to WPC at which time the Locum Clerk will call a meeting of WPC to consider it. The Locum Clerk is investigating fencing quotes.

#18/26-27 Play areas

- i. To consider quotes for Annual and Operational inspections: The Council resolved to proceed with RoSPA for the Annual and Operation Inspections through 31st March 2028.
- ii. Updates:
 - a. Grass and play surface: Edging completed
 - b. Snagging: There have been several snagging issues at Church Road Recreation Ground, but there has been no response from Homefront. The final invoice will not be paid until the issues are resolved. RoSPA's annual inspection report should be ready this month which will report any issues.

- c. Strimmer guard: The Locum Clerk/Assistant Clerk will follow up with Councillor Shepherd.
- d. Rubber spikes: These have been purchased and need to be installed.
- e. Painting of teen shelter: The Locum Clerk will look at a contractor to do this.
- f. Table tennis net: Councillor Barratt is due to assist with this.

#19/26-27 Make Space for Girls: The Assistant Clerk reported she has been in touch with Make Space for Girls as to what support they can offer. The Littleworth Working Group will consider speaking with them as to what suggestions they may have for a shelter at Littleworth Field.

#20/26-27 Tree Policy: The Council resolved to adopt the policy.

#21/26-27 Storage shed: The Chair proposed a 10 x 8 dark green storage shed for WPC's tools for the groundsman. The shed will have power and light and be situated in the Merry Bells car park. This has been approved by the Merry Bells Committee.

The Open Spaces Committee resolved to proceed. The WPC will need to apply for planning permission. Identity Hair is happy to provide the electrical source and will invoice WPC for this.

It was noted that WPC will continue looking for a more permanent solution.

#22/26-27 Correspondence: The Clerk noted the Winter Preparedness team of OCC has been in touch and the Clerks will order the bags of salt.

#23/26-27 Matters for report: None.

#23/26-27 Date of next meeting: The date of the next meeting was confirmed as the 21st September 2026 at 7:30pm in the WPC office. Councillor Wolstenholme sends apologies.

The meeting closed at 20:48.