

Draft & Unapproved Minutes of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council
meeting on Tuesday 16th June 2026



Present: Cllr J Davys (Chair), Cllr J Debney, Cllr M Freeman, Cllr G Gilgrass, Cllr C Hollebhone, Cllr K Sherman, Cllr R Nielsen

In attendance: N Gray (Clerk) Cllr AM Simpson (SODC), Cllr J Barlow (OCC), Cllr. C Topping (SODC)

1. Apologies for absence: Cllr J Harding (accepted), Cllr. R Nielsen (accepted), Cllr. D Fisher (accepted)

2. Declarations of Interest: Cllr. J Davys (Lawn Mower Grant Application)

3. Public Participation:

Mr R Todd attended to update the council on progress with the Village Hall.

Mr Todd explained that surplus funds remained available within the previously approved budget and requested approval to use £1800.00 to commission work to break the overall project into smaller, costed work packages. The intention is to create a series of delivered phases that could be undertaken as funding becomes available, rather than waiting until the full project cost is secured. It was noted that the current project cost remains substantial above the funds raised to date, and that inflation continues to increase project costs. Breaking the project into smaller phases would enable the Trustees, and the wider community, to prioritise works and pursue grant funding for specific elements of the scheme. Councillors acknowledged the significant fundraising efforts undertaken to date and the need to provide clarity on how funds could be spent in future.

The Council confirmed its agreement in principle to the proposed expenditure of £1800.00 to progress this work.

4. Reports from District & County Council:

Anne-Marie Simpson, District Councillor, provided an update on current District Council matters: report sent before the meeting.

Local government reorganisation: members were advised that District and County Councils continue to work collaboratively on proposals for future local government structures. Hearings relating to Joint Local Plan are expected to take place in early July.



Joint Local Plan: Council was informed that work is commencing on the next Joint Local Plan, currently referred to as Joint Local Plan 2, following government requirements for authorities to begin preparation of a new plan.

Planning Committee changes: members were advised of proposed Government changes to the planning system under the new arrangements only major planning applications are expected to be considered by planning committees, and smaller applications being determined by planning officers.

Neighbourhood plan: It was noted that the neighbourhood plans continue to carry significant weight in planning decisions and recent appeal decisions have demonstrated their importance.

Earth Trust Development: Discussion took place regarding development works at the Earth Trust Site. Councillors raised concerns regarding the appearance of the works undertaken and the extent to which development reflects previously approved plans. The District Councillor advised that officers are currently engaged in pre-applications discussions, which remain confidential until any formal application is submitted.

It was proposed by Cllr. Barlow that an invite could be sent to representatives of the Earth Trust to attend a parish council meeting to further provide updates on the work being carried out. Cllr. Barlow and Cllr. Topping will approach the Earth Trust representative to propose this

James Barlow, Oxfordshire County Councillor provided an update on current County Council matters: report sent before the meeting.

Cllr, James Barlow informed the Council that the County Council are seeking submissions of local priorities for the Oxfordshire Highways Maintenance Programme. Councillors may nominate up to three stretches of highway for consideration (this includes roads, pavements, footpaths and other publicly accessible routes not solely roads).

The condition of the road in Slade End was discussed. It was reported that this surface deteriorates significantly during colder and wetter months, resulting in



loose gravel, potholes and an uneven surface. A suggested from one Councillor was made that Slade End, as one of the main access routes into the village, should be considered for repair. Cllr, Barlow confirmed this could be included in the consultation responses and noted that concerns regarding its condition had been raised previously. It was noted that other village lanes have also been suggested by members of the public,

White Road Markings: Cllr. Barlow reported that no additional markings had been added, although Councillors believed otherwise. The matter had been referred to officers for clarification. The Parish Council reported that they will contact OCC once all local residents have been engaged.

5. Minutes – minutes confirmed and signed for meeting held on 19/6/2026: it was **RESOVLED** that the minutes be accepted as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

6. Update on progress from previous minutes:

- i) **Pavilion update: Cllr. R Nielsen:** No report was provided as Cllr. Nielsen was not in attendance.
- ii) **Village Hall update: Cllr. G Gilgrass:** An update was provided on the recent fundraising auction. It was reported that the even had been successful, generating positive discussion withing the village and helping to raise awareness of the project being supported. It was confirmed that approximately £20,000.00 had been raised, including Gift Aid contributions.

Trustees were scheduled to hold a meeting on 17/6/26 to consider the next steps and allocation of funds.

- iii) **Playground update: Cllr. G Gilgrass:** A brief update was provided regarding the playground areas.

No significant developments were reported.

It was noted that the tennis court posts still required painting, although no timescale for completion was available.

General maintenance matters, including management and routine upkeep, were discussed. It was reported that contractors had recently been working in the area.



7. Finance Report:

- **Bank Statements:** Bank Statements were circulated to all Councillors before the meeting for review.

- **Grants:** To consider any requests received: Lawnmower for St James' Churchyard – **Cllr. J Davys:**

A grant application had been submitted for a new mower for the cutting of St James' Churchyard grass for £500.00. The estimated cost was approximately £840.00, reduced through a supplier discount. The mower would support ongoing volunteer-led grass and meadow management. The Councillors generally agreed that a replacement mower would be beneficial.

The proposal was discussed whereby the Parish Council would provide the requested £500.00 with a condition subject to the church maintaining at least 3 services per year, and to report back to the Councillors in July meeting.

- **Invoices for payment:** To consider invoices for payment itemised on the payment schedule. It was **RESOLVED to agree all payments.**

- ## 8. Planning: To Elect a Planning Committee:
- Cllr. D Fisher (Main Planning Councillor) was absent from the meeting. Councillors agreed that a committee could be instated in his absence and therefore Cllr. C Hollebhone, Cllr. J Debney and Cllr. D Fisher would be the 3 members of the Planning Committee as per Planning Committee Terms of Reference Policy.

Planning Applications to consider: P25/S0922/FUL Sweetcroft Development, Slade End. This application was discussed and Cllr. J Debney stated that there were still 3 unresolved issues that local residents are concerned about. **Cllr. J Debney will contact the planning officer for clarification and report back in July meeting.**

9. Parish Matters

a) Clerk's Report

A VAT reclaim of £624.26 has been submitted from November 2025 end of May 2026 – refund due.

A Purchase Order was raised from OCC for the grass cutting payment of £1295.36 – invoice has been raised by BcS and payment is awaited.



MB – a prospective new councillor had been contacted to ask if he was able to do Accountants: unfortunately, he does not have this skill set. It was agreed that we need to place advertisements for a new councillor who could take this role on board (later in the year) – **Cllr. K Sherman to post in The Villager newsletter**

i) Agar/ Internal Report – 25/26

ii) Internal Audit: – circulated to all Councillors for review: points which need reviewing will be further discussed at July meeting to agree a plan of action to improve the points raised.

iii) Annual Governance Statement: This was reviewed & discussed with all Councillors in the meeting and was duly signed by the Chair Cllr. James Davys and the Clerk Nettie Gray.

iv) Annual Accounting Statement: circulated to all Councillors before the meeting and duly signed by the Chair Cllr. James Davys.

v) Exercise of Public Rights: This was circulated and posted on 2 x noticeboards & Website with announcement 17/6/26 and commencing 18/7/26 ending on 29/7/26.

vi) Explanation of Variances & Bank reconciliation 25/26: Circulated to all Councillors to review and approve for 25/26 – **RESOLVED to agree by all Councillors.**

b) Councillor Responsibilities: Cllr K Sherman – this was reviewed with all Councillors and amendments made to update the roles of each Councillor.

c) ‘You are here’ Map: Cllr. K Sherman proposed a map for people to know where to find places in BcS. It was discussed at the meeting and a proposal to have this either at The Red Lion Pub or The Village Hall: it was agreed that this would be a good idea and **Cllr. J Davys** is going to source a map which was used for the open gardens and have this laminated for posting at an appropriate site: to review

d) Policies reviewed & re-adopted: Finance Regulations (Cllr. J Harding), Banking Mandate (Cllr. J Harding), Investment (Cllr. K Sherman), IT Policy (Cllr. M Freeman): all policies were circulated prior to the meeting and approved to re -adopt the policies and update the Website; policies were



- signed and dated by **Cllr. J Davys– Clerk to make relevant amendments to the Website.** Further review of policies to continue at next meeting in July.
- e) **Request for Memorial Bench along Croft Road:** Cllr. J Davys: A request had previously been made by a parishioner for a memorial bench on Croft Path. A discussion was held and it was decided that this position was not suitable due to lack of space and, that this area was owned by OCC. Therefore, it was proposed that Cllr, Davys send a letter offering an appropriate site for the bench: this would be the only option available. The other option would be a tree to be planted. **Cllr. J Davys to write to the parishioner.**
- f) **Trustee Role for Jubilee Pavilion:** Cllr. C Hollebhone requested information with regards to the automatic role of becoming a Trustee of the Jubilee Pavilion. Information was sourced and provided to Cllr. Hollebhone in the form of Insurances which cover Fraud and Dishonesty, information from C. Collett (previous Council Member) explaining why this has to be a role of a Councillor: Cllr. Hollebhone, Sherman and Freeman were all happy with the explanation of the role – **Clerk to update the Charity Commission Register with new details.** It was also noted that going forward there needs to be a form for any new Councillor to sign agreeing to Trustee position when enrolled as a new Councillor – **Clerk to arrange an information sheet for new Councillors.**
- g) **Email: re Mobile Fresh Produce -** Cllr. C Hollebhone: An email was received by the Clerk from a mobile fresh produce company asking for our support if they came into the village selling fresh vegetables. After a discussion it was agreed unanimously but all Councillors that this would be detrimental to The Village Store and that we would not support it. **Cllr. J Davys to reply to email with the Council decision.**
- h) **Parish Council Facebook page:** Cllr. M Freeman – a full explanation of the need for a Parish Council Facebook page was provided by Cllr. Freeman: for the purposes of contact with the local community, updating any road closures, tree problems, vacancies etc. A unanimous vote was agreed: **Cllr. M Freeman to set this up**

Items for information or next Agenda only

- Pavillion Update
- Village Hall Update
- Clerks Report
- Playground Update

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- Date of next meeting **Tuesday 21st July 2026**
- Parish Council Meeting was closed at **9.10pm**