

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT CHURCH HOUSE, CHURCH STREET, BODICOTE
ON WEDNESDAY 15th APRIL 2026, COMMENCING AT 8PM**

PRESENT: Cllrs. Mrs J. Washburn (Chair), A. Conley, K. Corrigan, C. Elmitt , P. Jackson, R. Pattenden and J. Sacha

Mrs. C. Coles (Parish Clerk) and two villagers

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr J. Slade, County/District/Parish Cllr D. Hingley and District Cllr G. Blakeway

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON 16TH APRIL 2025 TO BE CONFIRMED AS A TRUE RECORD AND SIGNED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

The draft minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr. Jackson proposed they be accepted as a true record, seconded by the Chair and carried unanimously. The Chair signed the minutes.

3. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE PARISH COUNCIL (CLLR. MRS JOYCE WASHBURN)

The Chair read out her report.

Once again, a warm welcome to all of you who have shown interest in our village and are here tonight.

This annual get together is important. It gives the council the opportunity to provide an update on the activities and issues we have dealt with during the past twelve months. It also gives residents the chance to ask questions and share their thoughts.

We have now received the long-awaited news on the sale of Bodicote House, and we now await planning applications. We are hoping that Bodicote's allocation of houses can be accommodated on this site.

We have been working on the ongoing Neighbourhood Plan and I would like to say a big thankyou to Councillors for all their hard work. A special mention to Caroline who has worked her way through lots of paperwork and Jeremy for his help with green spaces.

During the year, we have dealt with many environmental matters and will continue to do so in the future.

Unfortunately, we have had to say goodbye to Chris Watts, who has stepped down from the council. Thank you Chris for all your work over the years. So at present we have a vacancy.

Members of the Parish council have worked hard to ensure that issues affecting this historic village of ours have been dealt with quickly and efficiently. I would like to thank them publicly for their commitment.

I would also like to give a special thank you to Jane Slade for her work on the website and the Parish Council newsletter and to Jeremy Sasha for his valuable input on environment issues.

Signed

Dated 14th April 2027

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One more thankyou goes to our District Councillors who work tirelessly for the village, to Phillipa who works tirelessly to keep our village free of litter and a big thankyou to our Parish Clerk, Christine Coles for all the work she does.

4. REPORTS FROM ANY PARISH ORGANISATIONS

Reports had been circulated. They were received from the Nelson Pittam Fund, Bishop Loveday School, Bodicote Welfare Fund and the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

Nelson Pittam Fund

The Nelson bequest started in 1961 with £100 and the Nelson Pittam Welfare fund was established with a capital of 9 shares contributed by the Pittam charity. The income can be used for charitable purposes within the parish of Bodicote.

Funds allocated within the parish from the Nelson Pittam Fund during 2025

Four students for higher education	£800
A Duke of Edinburgh Gold award participant	<u>£300</u>
Total	£1100

There is £579 carried over into this year since no other requests were received; the Rev. Hockliffe Essex is aware of this fund and of the Bodicote Bounty Welfare Fund.

Bishop Loveday School

We have had another busy year at Bishop Loveday. The school continues to grow, and we are now practically full at 424 pupils.

We have been accredited for our hard work in the arts gaining Arts Mark Gold in December and also for our approach to play, gaining platinum award for our Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL). A giant sandpit, amphitheatre and reading area have been three of the areas that we have developed this year outside.

Our ambassadors have continued to raise money for charities and recently our year 2s raised £1300 for Barnardo's.

Our choir were asked to participate in a choir performance at the Sheldonian in Oxford where they performed with opera singers, it was such an incredible experience for them. 7 weeks prior to this they sang in Birmingham arena at Young Voices with 6,000 other children.

We are looking forward to the end of term and ending our term with our services at church with Reverend Emily.

Bodicote Welfare Fund

The charity has had another busy year.

The hall continues to be hired out during the week and at weekends. The main hirer during the week is Kingsfield Nursery. They offer full day term time sessions from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday. The majority of children who attend the nursery live in the surrounding area. This is secured income for the hall.

A new three year fixed utilities agreement for gas and electric was agreed at the start of the financial year in January 2025. This has seen significant savings so far.

The trustees and members had to make the hard decision to discontinue the firework and bonfire display due to circumstances beyond their control. They lost use of the main car park at the Cherwell District Council offices which has now been sold for development and the layout of the village has changed with the new housing developments close by. It had run for 54 years and never made a loss and was the main fund raising event. It became a large event and running costs were increasing every year.

The play area had to be closed in late August due to the decline of the play area surface. Fund raising events have taken place to raise money to cover the repair work. Play area costs including repairs are costly.

Three long standing trustees and the groundsman decided to retire and stand down in September. An EGM was held in October and two trustees agreed to stay on and shadow new people until 31st January 2026.

New Committee update

The Bodicote Welfare Committee is moving through a significant transition, with a new committee taking shape and major behind the scenes work underway.

Core Summary

A long serving previous committee has formally stood down and a new team is now in place. They have expressed gratitude to all outgoing members whose years of volunteering supported key village traditions including the famous fireworks.

The new committee is currently reviewing the Fund's governance, documentation, and overall position. This transition period involves local residents and subject matter experts helping to secure the future of the village hall, playground and Kingsfield.

Park & Kingsfield Update

Temporary repair works are scheduled for 30th April and 1st May. If completed on time the park is expected to re-open for the May Bank Holiday. These works are a short term fix to allow safe use over the summer.

New Committee Officers

Chair: Rachel Whitrow

Vice-Chair: Chris Watts

Secretary: Christine Gibbins

Treasurer: Rob Douglas

Sports Liaison Officer: Steve Cracco

Additional representatives and experts are supporting the wider structure.

Current Priorities

- Reviewing and modernising all governance documents to ensure they are fit for purpose in 2026.
- Beginning work on financial sustainability, including exploring revenue streams and fundraising.
- Modernising processes including an online booking system for the village hall.
- Establishing clearer communication channels, including social media and formal contact points.

Signed

Dated 14th April 2027

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Next committee meeting

The committee will meet in Monday 20th April 2026 at 7.45pm to finalise key documents and agree next steps.

Parochial Church Council

We were delighted to welcome our new vicar, Reverend Emily Hockliffe Essex, along with her partner, Miranda, not forgetting their dog, Mimi, in November. This followed a long vacancy, and we are very thankful to our churchwardens who kept everything running smoothly during this time as well as to all the wonderful visiting clergy who led our services.

The church hosts an 8am Book of Common Prayer and a 9.45am Common Worship Communion service every Sunday as well as services to mark special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Remembrance and rites of passage. We also have the occasional evening service. Some of our 9.45am services are specifically “all-age” but children are very welcome at any of our services. There is a children’s corner if they need distraction, along with colouring packs they can use. We have a monthly Sunday Club on the last Sunday of each month when we have our own activities over in Church House.

Bodicote Church is open daily from 9am-4pm and hosts an adult book and jigsaw swap. The church is regularly used for private prayer and reflection, and children enjoy the opportunity to play in the children’s corner. We have boxes in the church for recycling many items, including used ink cartridges, currency, unwanted and broken jewelry and mobile phones, and collect food for the Banbury Food Bank.

Throughout the vacancy, due to the goodwill and commitment of our volunteers, we were able to continue to host our afternoon teas and bingo afternoons, enjoyed mainly by some of the older members of our community (although open to all!) The Wednesday teas have been registered with Cherwell Council as a warm space and Age UK send a representative every month to offer advice.

Our Lent lunches were not as well supported as usual, which may have been partly due to the change of day and a new format was tried recently for this year.

Everyone in England is born into a Church of England Parish where they have the right to be baptized, married under church law, have their funeral service and nominate and vote for church wardens. Contrary to popular belief, although this is the state church, it receives no government money and is funded by historic trusts and worshippers. No taxpayer’s money is used to pay for the church – we rely on our regular givers and fundraising efforts to maintain the building, pay for utilities and fund any projects we undertake.

One of our fundraising highlights was the community fete last May which involved many of our local groups and charities. The Bodicote Archive Group kindly arranged a display of old church related photographs which was much appreciated by all. The bell ringers opened the tower and there were various stalls run by local groups, who kept their proceeds for themselves. We also had a children’s treasure hunt around the churchyard and church. We have also had the usual Easter and Christmas fairs, quizzes and concerts plus a series of craft afternoons for our local families, all well attended.

We continue to forge links with our local primary schools and Fairholme, including providing some of the governing body for our church school, Bishop Loveday. Services at these had to be cut back during the vacancy, but these are gradually being built up again now we have Emily with us.

All our services and events are advertised in our weekly newsletter, on social media and in our parish magazine. This is now delivered to nearly 3,300 homes within our Ecclesiastical Parish and we are pleased to welcome anyone to any of these.

5. DRAFT ACCOUNTS OF PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026 FOR INFORMATION

Business Premium Account	£20,825.26
Community Account	£200.00
<u>Business Premium Account</u>	<u>£73,521.86</u>
Total	£94,547.12 (excluding Bodfest a/c)

The formal accounts will be presented at the next Parish Council meeting in May.

6. REPORTS FROM OUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

Report from County Cllr. D. Hingley (read by Cllr R. Pattenden)

It has now been almost four years since I was first elected to represent Bodicote on Cherwell District Council, having served on the Parish Council since 2021, and I remain extremely honoured to have been trusted with the task (and privilege!) of standing up for the village's interests at the council, alongside my Lib Dem colleagues Rob Pattenden and Gordon Blakeway.

I have also served as Oxfordshire County Councillor for Bodicote for the past 11 months, which together with serving as Leader of Cherwell has kept me very busy on behalf of residents. The following are just some of the main high-level matters; obviously, a lot of work goes into representing individual residents and dealing with specific casework which I will not go into here but which, suffice to say, is always a most fulfilling responsibility.

Bodicote House

One of the principal matters affecting the village this year as far as Cherwell is concerned has been the aftermath of the council's move from Bodicote House to Castle Quay, vacating the village after a half century in residence. The move to Banbury has bedded in well and has meant the council is operating from central, modern premises that have earned a high environmental / energy rating in line with the council's operating ethos. The site at Bodicote House has recently been announced as to be sold to the Graven Hill Village Development Company, which while owned by the council operates under its own structures with its own business plan and management. It is hoped that with the sale now in progress a suitable and sustainable plan will soon come forward for developing the site in line with the needs of the village and in accordance with the Cherwell Local Plan, which is currently progressing through the various stages of inspection prior to being adopted. The parish council will be kept fully informed as matters move forward with this important site.

Balanced Budgets

Both OCC and CDC have set balanced budgets for 26/27, despite a challenging national picture. In the case of OCC this was done in the face of significant government funding cuts but nonetheless covers essential services like adult social care and SEND, while also investing in valued services such as libraries and maintenance of highways and drains, tackling the previous administration's stated policy of 'managed decline' of our highways.

A programme of repairs and road surfacing has been instigated and is ongoing, however adverse weather conditions over the winter has necessitated further investment which the council has provided. It is important that where possible residents report deficiencies on Fix My Street so that they are added to the maintenance schedule, however these can also be reported to me so that I can escalate them directly.

With regard to CDC, the council under my leadership has succeeded in setting a balanced budget despite significant last-minute government changes to the council's finance settlement, which threatened to remove £2.335m from Cherwell between the provisional and final finance settlement stages, an unprecedented intervention from government. Following urgent and intense lobbying (including by myself), the government has supplied an Adjustment Support Grant to cover the shortfall in 26/27, however no such undertaking has been received as yet for future years, but we will continue to press the government for proper and meaningful funding levels for our residents.

For the 26/27 budget, the administration has been delighted to respond to calls for funding of Banbury Museum, increasing the level of funding proposed in the initial budget, and to protect front line services such as bin collections as well as investing more in temporary homelessness accommodation and in maintaining our popular health and wellbeing programmes. In short, CDC is very well placed for 26/27 and residents can be sure that their council is being run efficiently and sensibly.

Local Government Reorganisation

Of course both CDC and OCC are on course for being abolished by the government thanks to its programme of local government reorganisation (LGR). Under current plans, this will see the district and county councils removed by 2028 in favour of a unitary council that will cover all services currently provided by Cherwell and OCC. There are three proposals for LGR in Oxfordshire: a single county unitary favoured by the OCC Cabinet, which would see the whole county served by just the one authority; a two-unitary authority model favoured by the district councils, which in our case would cover Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Oxford City (the other authority to cover Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire and include West Berkshire); and a three-unitary model favoured by Oxford City Council which would see a Greater Oxford with the city boundaries expanded to include the southern section of Cherwell, leaving our area to be included in a small unitary serving the 'rest of Cherwell' (Banbury / Bicester and surrounding areas) plus West Oxfordshire. The government – not our councils – has the final say on the matter and has recently concluded its consultation – a decision on which model will be adopted will (we are told) be advised this summer. Once the decision is made the present councils will work flat out to set up the new body/bodies – as it is proposed that the unitary/unitaries will come online in April 2028, with a 'shadow' unitary being established from May 2027 to run alongside the final year of Cherwell and OCC.

Devolution

Discussions are also ongoing with regard to setting up a potential authority at the regional level, a so-called Mayoral or Foundation (non-mayoral) Strategic Authority. Talks have been progressing for such a body to cover the Thames Valley area of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, potentially including Swindon. Buckinghamshire have been invited to participate but have so far declined to engage in talks. No decision has yet been taken by the government as to whether to proceed with a devolved authority for our area or not.

In conclusion it has been a real pleasure representing the village I live in over the past year, as indeed it has been for the past four years. I am grateful for the support of my parish and district council colleagues, and look forward to serving the village into the future.

7. ANY PARISH AFFAIRS – QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

A member of the public asked if there was an update on the transfer of the land on the Cotefield estate.

Action: Cllr Pattenden to chase this up.

Cllr Sacha spoke about the sale of Bodicote House and if the Parish Council can be involved much earlier in S106 discussions rather than at the end. Cllr Pattenden suggested inviting Graven Hill and the CDC planning team at an appropriate time. The development at Arbor Park was mentioned and the state of the nearby roads. The developer does have a responsibility to look after the roads.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Signed

Dated 14th April 2027

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