

GROVE PARISH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2026**

Present: Cllr C T McCarthy (Chairman) Cllr K Jones
Cllr S K Dexter (Vice Chairman) Cllr J Leggott
Cllr W R Ackers Cllr F D Parnell
Cllr J Goodman Cllr K Rowland
Cllr A P Harker Cllr G Smeddle

In attendance: District Councillor K Bentley and Six members of the public

Clerk: Mr G M Mundy

142 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Parish Cllrs R Batstone, M Charlton, D Rolfe, and J M Stock. Apologies had also been received from County and District Cllr J Hannaby.

143 Declaration of Personal or Pecuniary Interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting

Cllr Dexter and McCarthy both declared in interest in item 154 as they are both members of the organising committee for the Grove Extravaganza 2026.

144 To sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 January 2026

It was **MOVED** the Chairman and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“that the minutes of the meeting are signed as a true record of the meeting”

145 Clerks’ summary report from the previous meeting

Clerk

(a) Minute 134(a) – Asset of Community Value (ACV). The Clerk informed the Council that he has now started the process of completing this action and will bring forward to Council in due course.

Clerk

(b) Minute 134(b) – Investments. The Clerk informed the Council that due to other commitments and annual leave this matter has not been progressed yet. He added that he hoped to arrange a meeting in due course.

Clerk

(c) Minute 134(d) – Millbrook Square CCTV. The Clerk informed the Council that he is waiting for the CCTV engineer to be available to carry out a site survey.

(d) Minute 134(f) – s106 funding for the Three Public Art project. The Clerk informed the Council that this matter will be further discussed under item 153 on the agenda for this meeting.

(e) Minute 138 – Redirected refund of £175 to the Grove Day Centre for the Elderly. The Clerk informed the Council that this has now been paid.

(f) Minute 139 – Meeting timetable for 2026-27 municipal year. The Clerk informed the Council that the meeting timetable has been distributed to all members, County and District Councillors and posted on the Council’s website.

- (g) Minute 140 – Proposed school crossing. The Clerk informed the Council that members attended a site meeting on Liberator Lane and discussed options. It was generally agreed that the best option was for a crossing East of the Norseman Road junction with Liberator Lane. The Clerk added that he has passed this information to Lawrence Keeling (Crossing designer). The Clerk said that he would ask Mr Keeling to expedite any quotes to the Parish Council for consideration.

The Clerk added that County Council Highways have said that “the road in question is not adopted and still the responsibility of Persimmon Homes, we cannot approve works on private roads and therefore would suggest a meeting with them to discuss how best to deliver this crossing; to be adoptable, it would need to form part of the Persimmon Homes s38 application”.

146 Questions from the public relevant to items on the agenda for this meeting

- (a) Mr Geoff Whitehead and Ricky Harrison had attended the meeting intending on asking a question related to Item 155. He explained that he lives at 60 Mayfield Avenue and an adult male was arrested at number 58 Mayfield Avenue.

He said that his wife had sent an email distributed to County Cllrs, District Cllrs and Mr Mundy (Parish Clerk), he added that Mr Mundy was the only one who responded and signposted my wife to a District Council email address.

The house at number 58 Mayfield Avenue is an Army house and there has been no issues with occupants for the last 40 years or so. The current occupants are an Afghan refugee family and wanted to know what the Council were doing about it.

A discussion ensued whereby Mr Whitehead said that no one had responded to his wife’s email about an Afghan male being arrested for alleged rape and other crimes. The Clerk responded and said that he had responded to the original email and had forwarded the email onto the Refugee Accommodation Programme Manager at the District Council who had forwarded it on to the MOD.

Another discussion ensued where Mr Whitehead asked what the Council was doing about it, the Chairman responded and said that whilst the Council can support you, the criminality issues are a matter for the Police.

Goodman Cllr Goodman said that he would take this matter up with the Police and Crime Commissioner and would like to meet Mr Whitehead privately.

- (b) Mr Ursulik asked who was responsible for the Garage blocks dotted around the village because a lot of them were derelict. The Clerk responded and said that the Garage block area, individual forecourts and entrance road is the responsibility of the individual garage owners.

District Cllr Bentley said that if the Garages are derelict, they may well attract rats and other vermin. Perhaps Mr Ursulik could contact the Environmental Health Department at the District Council, and they could find out who owned them.

147 To receive District and County Councillor reports

- (a) County and District Council reports. Parish, County and District Cllr R Batstone had submitted County and District Council written reports which can be found at Appendix 1 and 2 respectively below.

148 Updates from the Grove Airfield Development Forum and or Crab Hill Development Forum

- (a) Grove Airfield Development Forum. The Clerk informed the Council that the next meeting is to be held on Thursday 26 February 2026.

- (b) Crab Hill Development forum meeting held on 12 February 2026. The minutes and slides were noted. It was also noted how detailed and informative the minutes and slides were.

149 Report from the Clerk headed 'Clerks update on Council Business'

The report was noted.

150 Recommendations from the Finance and General Purposes committee

- (a) "to recommend to Full Council to purchase the equipment and machinery from PA Turney on terms to be agreed"

Following a discussion, the Clerk recommended that the Council lease the equipment, rather than purchase the equipment from the Turney Group on the basis that the capital s106 receipts would stay in the bank account for longer, therefore accruing interest, which would pay the monthly lease charge.

Following a further discussion, but against the Clerks recommendation, it was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Parnell and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk **"that the Council purchase the equipment rather than lease hire from PA Turney"**

- (b) To grant delegated authority to the Clerk to purchase a 'staff welfare facility' up to the value of £5,000 without coming back to either the Finance and General Purposes committee and or Full Council. Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Goodman and **RESOLVED** eight in favour and two abstentions

Clerk **"to grant the Clerk delegated powers of expenditure from General Reserves up to the value of £5,000 to purchase a staff welfare facility"**

151 Governments consultation on the re-organisation of Oxfordshire

All Following a discussion, it was agreed that because the Government were going to make a decision on this matter, the Parish Council would not comment. Individual members were encouraged to comment as members of the public if they wished to do so.

152 Request from the District Council regarding using s106 contributions from the Lidl development to pay for the relocation of the sculpture 'Couple Holding Hands' from the public open space on the former dairy site, to the 'Peace Garden' in the grounds of the Health Centre

The Clerk informed the Council that this request had come about because several members of the public had concerns that they could not enjoy this sculpture because of the overgrown nature of the public open space upon which the sculpture sits. The Clerk added that the land in question is owned by the District Council.

Clerk Following a discussion, it was agreed to refuse this request on the grounds that the District Council which owns the public open space at the former dairy site should first seek to maintain the area around the sculpture for all to enjoy.

Bentley District Cllr Bentley (in attendance at this meeting) agreed to follow this up with the District Council's Property and Parks team.

153 Update on the Three (Two) bridges Art Project

- (a) Receive and agree an update from the Clerk regarding the Three (two) Bridges Art Project. The Clerk informed the Council that because the Parish Council does not own the Village Green pedestrian footbridge, it cannot place public art on the bridge balustrades and the owners (the County Council) claim that the bridge balustrades are not strong enough to support the weight of art panels.

He then explained that because of time constraints over funding, he had made a decision instead to install pieces of artwork in the form of decorative panels along the Letcombe Brook edge. He added that the Mary Green and the St Ives footbridge will have artistic panels on them.

Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Smeddle **SECONDED** Cllr Goodman and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“to accept and agree the update from the Clerk”

- (b) Retrospectively approve the signing of the agreement for funding the Three (two) Bridges Public Art project. Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Goodman **SECONDED** Cllr Smeddle and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“that the Council’s approved the signing of the s106 funding agreement for the Three (two) Bridges Public Art project”

154 Grove Extravaganza staff manning on Saturday 13 June 2026

Following a discussion, it was agreed that members would ‘man’ the Parish Council information stall during the extravaganza. It was agreed that the stall would be manned from midday until 4pm.

Clerk The Clerk was asked to co-ordinate the manning rota and distribute to those attending.

155 Response to the Oxford Mail article ‘Grove is the worst place to live in Oxfordshire’

Following a discussion, it was agreed that the Council would not make any response comment on this article.

156 Chairman’s Communications

- (a) Request from GroW to use the Parish Council as a proxy address to register as a Charity thus becoming a separate legal entity from the Parish Church. The Clerk explained that GroW wanted to break away from the Parish Church and become their Charity and they needed an office address where their correspondence would be sent and collected from.

The Clerk added that they would not be allowed access to the offices during out of hours and will not have any keys.

Clerk Following a discussion, it was agreed to allow GroW to use the Council offices and address to facilitate their transition to a separate Charity from the Parish Church.

157 Reports from Outside bodies

The Clerk informed the Council that he had not received any outside body reports.

158 Accounts for payments, cash and bank balances (including reserves and investments since the last meeting and to note any losses or gains in the CCLA Property Fund

It was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Ackers and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“that the accounts for payment of £47,812.83 are adopted, the cash and bank balances noted and that the losses and or gains in the CCLA Property Fund are noted”

159 Staff Matters

- (a) Outside Services Manager. The Clerk informed the Council that the newly appointed Outside Services Manager had resigned from his position due to an offer of better employment opportunities from the Football Association.
- (b) Clerks Appraisal. Cllr Dexter informed the Council that the Clerks a very satisfactory appraisal had taken place with the assistance of Cllr Ackers and Cllr Goodman.
- (c) Seasonal Grounds Staff. The Clerk informed the Council that it was time to approve the employment of seasonal staff to assist with grounds maintenance during the summer months.

Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Ackers **SECONDED** Cllr Smeddle and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk **“to authorise the Clerk to employ seasonal workers as required”**

Meeting closed: 8.42pm

Confirmed: 7 April 2026

Chairman

County Council Report to Full Council on 24 February 2026

Introduction

The budget was passed at a lively all day full council. Preparation for next year's budget has started.

Council Budget

The OCC budget was passed on 10th February. The council has been able to deal with a budget shortfall of £5.4m while still investing extra in adult social care (£14m), children's services (£19m), highways, libraries and other services.

However, the authority already knows that it will need to find further savings of at least £15.5m from 2027/28.

The government will cut grant funding by £27.2m by 2028/29 and assumed the council will make up most of the difference with maximum council tax rises. The effect of this is that the county council will have to put up council tax by 4.99% each year only to see a lot of this money immediately being subtracted by the government and sent elsewhere.

£2 million in the capital is to be spent repairing the drainage system, bringing the total to be spent on our drains and gullies in 2026/2027 to £3.2 million.

The library refurbishment programme continues and will include upgrades to Wantage Library.

The council is already working to achieve a balanced budget for 1926/27. It will be difficult though.

There are government proposals to deal with the SEND debt and deficit, but details are still to be given.

Wantage and Grove Station

We had a briefing on 17th February on plans for the station. The document OxRAIL 2040 Plan for Rail includes plans for a station in phase 2 (2031 to 2037). However, as it says SESRO provides challenges and possible opportunities. Thames Water are still considering their plans for the use of rail.

Potholes

This is a major problem throughout Oxfordshire. Managed decline by previous administrations has left many roads in a bad state of repair. This combined with poor weather conditions has led to ideal conditions for potholes.

I was with council officers and cabinet members the other week with a repair team on the corner of Brereton Drive and Recreation Lane. Teams are out fixing holes, but it takes time and, in these circumstances, may not be effective. Continue reporting them on fixmystreet and escalate to me if no action.

Councillor Priority Fund

This is now available. See details at : www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/councillorpriorityfund. Please contact me if you have any possible projects.

I am in the process of allocating some money to Sweatbox.

Local Government Reorganisation

All three options have been submitted to government on time. They are now open for statutory consultation.

The one Oxfordshire proposal is documented in [Homepage | One Oxfordshire](#). I am keeping my options open but, in the end, central government will decide.

Government interest in creating a mayoral authority may be cooling. However, the council leaders are still pushing for it.

Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee

The meeting on 29th January considered:

The Director of Public Health Annual Report. This will be presented as an interactive report and was generally well received.

The Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan. Again, this was well received with contributions from people with learning difficulties. The report was clear and could serve as an example to other reports.

Maternity Services. This is a hot topic and there has been a lot of media interest. We have had private briefings as well. The Oxfordshire situation is not as bad as portrayed since only difficult cases go to the JR. However greater transparency and communication from the department are needed.

Planning & Regulation Committee

An interesting committee meeting on 19th January. The one item of discussion was Land at Former Wicklesham Quarry, Faringdon where a technology park was proposed and narrowly agreed. There was a lot of public interest and passionate speeches for and against the application. There is now an active social media group against the development.

Audit and Governance Committee

The meeting on January 14th was mainly concerned with the treasury strategy. The council seems to do a good job in ensuring that its investments provide a positive addition to council funds.

Road Closures

Recreation lane on 23rd February between 0930 and 1530.
Cane Lane on 18th to 20th February between 0930 and 1530.

Holiday

I am on holiday from 22nd February to 7th March

Ron Batstone

County Councillor
Grove Ward

District Council report to Full Council on 24 February 2026

District Budget

The district council agreed its £21million budget for 2026/27 on February 11th, setting out how it will protect essential local services, invest in community facilities and manage public money responsibly during a period of continued financial pressure on councils and households.

The budget maintains frontline services across the district, supports local communities and commits significant investment to public buildings and infrastructure, including leisure centres, waste services and housing support.

Local Government Reorganisation

All three submitted options are now proceeding to the next stage which is the statutory consultation. The two unitary proposal for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire developed and supported by Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Berkshire and West Oxfordshire councils can be seen at <https://www.twocouncils.org/>. Progress on achieving a strategic mayoral authority seems to have slowed.

Joint Local Plan

A JLP procedural meeting was held on 12th February. A summary of the discussions follows

- **Agenda**

The agenda covered matters of process only, with discussion between the Inspectors and Council officers/ Michael Bedford our KC, and no other participants. There was, as expected, no discussion on the soundness or content of the plan, that will be for the future hearing sessions.

- **Summary of events**

The Inspectors ran through a summary of the events that had got to us to here. They explained that they still needed to decide on next steps, but on the positive side, they asked us about timings for additional documents to be submitted and hearings to take place.

- **Timeline for the next stage of hearings**

The Council proposed an indicative timeline, with short term dates for submission of documents and for the Inspectors to issue MIQs (matters, issues and questions) for participants to prepare statements on prior to the hearings. We suggested there might be 4 weeks of hearings and expressed a preference for gaps between weeks (this takes into consideration other workload like next local plan commencement notice required by 30 June 2026).

They will consider a simple timeline that we submit on 13 February. This will show our preference to complete hearings in June and July 2026. The Inspectors indicated that they want to re-open some of the topics that they heard last June.

- **Engagement**

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The Inspectors noted there are currently no specific requirements on how engagement should be treated as a soundness consideration (post-legal duty to cooperate). Michael Bedford our KC suggested examining the Plan in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (2023) paragraph 26, treating any cooperation-related issues as matters of policy effectiveness and soundness.

- **NPPF**

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The Inspectors confirmed that under the government's transitional arrangements, the JLP will be examined against the 2023 version of the National Planning Policy Framework, not the NPPF 2024 version, and not the draft NPPF 2025 that the government is currently consulting on.

- **Next steps**

The Councils will provide the Programme Officer with a summary of programme preferences and a timeline on 13 February. We will set out that we are happy to work with the Inspectors and will offer as much flex as possible.

The Councils will submit a Note by 27 Feb answering questions already set out in the Inspectors' letter ([ID13](#) para 4).

The Inspectors will publish a letter setting out the next steps, on the [Examination webpage](#).

P25/V1202/MPO Monks Farm

Nothing further to report. No decision issued.

Ron Batstone

District Councillor
Grove North Ward

Appendix 3

FULL COUNCIL MEETING 24 FEBRUARY 2026 Accounts for Payment from 9 JANUARY – 19 FEBRUARY 2026

Environmental Services	Incl VAT	Ex VAT
Castle Water, Cemetery water Dec 25	8.69	416.00
Amazon, Line marking paint for cemetery	27.43	22.86
Biffa, Bin service monthly	231.72	193.10
TOTAL	267.84	

Finance and General Purposes Committee	Incl VAT	Ex VAT
Land Registry Search x 4	56.00	
SSE, OMH 1 Nov – 30 Nov 25	595.66	470.24
Swift Digital Services, Photocopier copies	132.06	110.05
Grundon, Big bags	119.40	87.00
Seldram Supplies, OMH Cleaning products	98.53	82.11
Grove Computer Service Ltd, Computer services	40.00	
Swift Digital Services, Environmental Levy	6.00	5.00
Siemens Financial Services, Photocopier rental	274.44	228.70
Snob and Lock, Locks and Key cutting	102.00	
Citra HR Services Payroll & HR Fees Dec 25	450.00	375.00
Peopletime, Wages Jan 26	17,787.76	
SSE, OMH 1 Dec – 31 Dec 26	282.79	269.32
SSE, Storage shed 1 Dec -31 Dec 25	52.21	49.72
Mtech, Telephone/calls Dec 25	135.60	108.48
SSE, WG Pavillion 1 Nov – 31 Dec 25	637.17	606.83
BNP Paribas, Office Telecoms	321.04	267.53
Cintra HR Services, Tax and National Insurance Dec 25	5799.08	
British Gas OMH Gas, 22 Sep-20 Oct 25	124.69	118.76
Grenke, Telephone rental Nov 25	221.70	184.75
Vale of White Horse DC, Annual Premises Licence OMH	180.00	
Peopletime, November pension	1305.95	
Royal British Legion, Donation	80.00	
Castle Water, OMH Water Oct 25	105.96	
Lyreco, Stationery and postage stamps	242.10	230.42
Siemens, Photocopier lease rental, service fee & asset protection	100.00	83.33
Argos, SanDisk Flashdrive Pk 3	17.99	14.39
Grove Day Centre For the Elderly, WG Hire	90.00	
Grenke, Telephone equipment protection 2026	415.29	
Grenke, Phone system Dec 25	221.70	184.75
Grove Computer Services, Setup Rialtas accounts software	80.00	
Castle Water, OMH Water December	105.36	
Grove Computer Services, Setup new laptop & various	440.00	
Above & Beyond, Boiler repairs (2 visits)	532.50	443.75
Suzanne O'Driscoll, Public Art Phase 1	1200.00	1000.00
Currys, New Canon printer & consumables	88.57	
EE, New phone Clerks mobile	100.00	
British Gas, OMH 22 Nov-21 Dec	637.71	531.43
Grenke, Telephone rental Feb 25	221.70	184.75
Peoples Pension, Pension Jan 26	1307.41	
Land Registry Search	7.00	
Fortress Alarms UK, New CCTV camera set up	84.00	70.00
Seldram Supplies, OMH Cleaning products	90.75	75.63
Knights, Lease of land Cane Lane/Barwell Lane	1711.20	1426.00
Mtech, Telephone/calls Jan 26	162.72	135.60
British Gas, OMH 22 Dec 25 – 21 Jan 26	769.23	641.03
TOTAL	37,533.27	

Leisure & Recreation Committee	Incl VAT	Ex VAT
EE, Clerks mobile	75.41	60.33
RJR Tree Work, Tree @ Catmore Close	294.00	245.00
Charlton Park GC, Gas butane x 2	113.95	108.52
Paul Chapman, OMH Window Cleaning Jan 26	60.00	
Castle Water, Tractor Shed water Dec 25	25.98	
RJR Tree Work, Christmas Tree Installation	1188.00	990.00
LJ & CA Cannings, Maintenance materials	2300.44	1917.05
SSE, Lighting recreation ground Jul-Sep 25	344.80	328.38
Amazon, Car relay kit	7.78	6.48
Amazon, Garden edging grass cutter/trimmer	17.88	14.90
Amazon, Brush cutter heads x 2	39.95	33.29
Smiths DIY, Various maintenance items	319.86	255.89
APS, Cut off wheel	19.97	16.64
RJR Tree Work, Tree @ Green near Boucher Close	1452.00	1210.00
Grant & Stone, Wood, nails, felt for new lean-to	2542.36	2118.63
Grant & Stone, Truss clips x 18	10.75	8.96
Grant & Stone, Various maintenance materials	28.87	24.06
Grant & Stone, Truss clips x 82	49.01	40.84
LJ & CA Cannings, Maintenance materials	670.71	558.91
ROSPA, PlaySafety Qrtly Inspections Play Grounds	450.00	375.00
TOTAL	10011.72	

Chairman _____

TOTAL EXPENDITURE £47,812.83

A/c balances as at 13 February 2026

Charity A/c	-	£4,383.76
Community Directplus A/c	-	£113,845.76
Instant Deposit A/c	-	£81,184.79
Petty Cash	-	£145.20

Total Cash in Bank - £199,559.51

Investments (including Reserves)

CCLA – Public Sector Deposit Fund (Average yield is 3.77%)	-	£760,000 ** – (Yield to date this FY is £29,389.23 = 3.87%)
CCLA – Local Authorities Property Fund current LAPF (4.05%)	-	£120,000 ** – (Yield to date this FY is £4,864.71 = value as at 31 Jan 26 is £107,650.64 (a Loss of £12,349.36))

Total Investments - £880,000.00

Total Bank and Investments - £1,079,559.50

Reserves breakdown as 13 February 2026

General Reserves	-	£120,783
Specific (Earmarked) Reserves:		
• Future Projects Reserve	-	£1,001
• Allotment Deposits Reserve	-	£1,850
• Balancing Pond	-	£505
• Community Infrastructure Levy	-	£28,173 (CIL payment 4/25)
• Depreciation Reserve	-	£65,006
• Grove Meadows Reserve	-	£118,176 (s106 contributions)
• GAD Community Facilities Fund	-	£66,814* (s106 contributions)
• GAD Open Spaces maintenance fund	-	£76,078 (s106 contributions)
• GAD Drainage maintenance fund	-	£225,265 (s106 contributions)
• GAD Replacement Sports Facilities Fund	-	£14,202 (s106 contributions)

Total Specific (Earmarked) Reserves - £597,070

Minus CCLA Property Fund - £120,000

Total available reserves - £597,853