

GROVE PARISH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON TUESDAY 7 APRIL 2026**

Present: Cllr C T McCarthy (Chairman) Cllr F D Parnell
Cllr S K Dexter (Vice Chairman) Cllr D Rolfe
Cllr W R Ackers Cllr K Rowland
Cllr R Batstone Cllr G Smeddle
Cllr K Jones Cllr J M Stock
Cllr J Leggott

Clerk: Mr G M Mundy

161 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Parish Cllrs M Charlton and B McGinn. Apologies had also been received from County and District Cllr J Hannaby.

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

Cllr Rowland declared an interest in item 173 as she is the current Chairman of Grove Challengers FC.

163 To sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 February 2026

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

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

164 Clerks’ summary report from the previous meeting

- Clerk (a) Minute 145(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 the new Municipal Year.
- Clerk (b) Minute 145(b) – Investments. The Clerk informed the Council that due to other commitments and annual leave this matter has not been progressed. He added that he hoped to arrange a meeting in due course.
- Clerk (c) Minute 145(c) – Millbrook Square CCTV. The Clerk informed the Council that he is meeting the CCTV surveyor on 9 April 2026.
- (d) Minute 150(a) – Recommendation by Full Council. The Clerk informed the Council that he has notified PA Turney of the Council’s decision to purchase outright rather than lease hire.
- (e) Minute 150(b) – To grant delegated authority to the Clerk etc. The Clerk informed the Council that he has now purchased a ‘Crew Room’ for £4,500.
- (f) Minute 152 – Request from the District Council to use s106 funds from the Lid development to pay for the relocation of a sculpture. The Clerk informed the Council that he has notified the District Council of the Parish Council’s decision.
- Clerk (g) Minute 154 – Grove Extravaganza. The Clerk informed the Council that he will draw up a list once he has ascertained which members will be available.

- (h) Minute 156 – Chairman’s Communications. The Clerk informed the Council that he has informed GroW of the Parish Council’s decision.
- (i) Minute 159(c) – Staff Matters. The Clerk informed the Council that he has now employed a seasonal worker who started work on 1 April 2026. His contract will expire on 30 October 2026.

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

No members of the public were present.

166 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.

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

- (a) Grove Airfield Development Forum. The minutes and slides of the Grove Airfield Development Forum meeting held on 26 February 2026 were received and noted.

168 Correspondence from Paul Gander (Chairman of the Kingsgrove Community Collaboration Group (KCCG) regarding disseminating information to both Wantage and Grove residents

Following a discussion, it was agreed that whilst the Council was interested in supporting this initiative, more information was required. The Clerk was asked to write to Mr Gander and request further information and also request who was Priem and Cratus (both mentioned as members of KCCG).

Clerk

169 Quote from Rhino Security for the installation of retractable bollards at the maintenance Depot and the Wasbrough Field gate

The Clerk informed the Council that he had only sought one quote, as the Council already has a maintenance agreement with Rhino Security for its existing retractable bollards.

Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Rowland and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“to accept the quote from Rhino Security for the sum of £5,166.00 (incl VAT) for the installation of retractable bollards at the Maintenance Depot and the Wasbrough Field Gate”

Clerk

170 Governments consultation on the re-organisation of Oxfordshire

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

“to authorise the Clerk to purchase Cllr and Staff ID cards at no more than £10 per card”

171 Receive and approve the acceptance of the terms and conditions for the awarding of the s106 contribution of £12,817.79 for the proposed 3G ATP (preliminary fees only and to authorise the Chairman and the Clerk to sign on behalf of the Council

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

2924

“to approve the acceptance of the terms and conditions for the awarding of the s106 contribution of £12,817.79 for the proposed 3G ATP (preliminary fees only and to authorise the Chairman and the Clerk to sign on behalf of the Council”

Clerk

172 Interim Internal Audit report for 2025-26 FY from the internal auditor and to note the observation responses from the Clerk and to discuss the following observations specifically as follows

(a) Discuss and consider the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the following committees:

- I. Environmental Services and Planning committee ToR – It was **MOVED** Cllr Rolfe **SECONDED** Cllr Ackers and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“to accept the TOR as tabled”

- II. Leisure and Recreation committee ToR – It was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Rowland and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“to accept the TOR as tabled”

- III. Finance and General Services committee ToR – It was **MOVED** Cllr Parnell **SECONDED** Cllr Leggott and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“to accept the TOR as tabled”

(b) Discuss and consider the level of the Council’s fidelity insurance.

The Clerk explained that the Internal Auditor had picked this matter up on previous inspections. He said that he had spoken to the Council’s Insurance provider who had stated that because of the procedures in place when transferring monies from one account to another or from CCLA accounts to the deposit account and vice versa, the fidelity risk was either minimal or negligible.

Following a further discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Leggott and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“to leave the Council’s fidelity insurance cover at its current level and not increase it at this at this time”

(c) Discuss and consider hire charges at Old Mill Hall. The Clerk informed the Council that historically reduced hire fees have been levied at ‘regular’ hirers (those deemed regular are hirers that attend Old Mill Hall at least 40 weeks of the year). Irregular hire fees are levied at one off hirers (children’s birthday parties, funeral wakes etc).

Following a further discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter and **SECONDED** Cllr Parnell and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“that the matter of different hire fees for regular and irregular hirers has been considered and agreed that different fees are levied against regular and irregular hirers respectively”

(d) Discuss and consider the use of a Sales/debtors ledger. Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Parnell **SECONDED** Cllr Rolfe and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“that the Clerk/RFO incorporates a Sales and Debtors ledger in the financial accounting system”

- (e) Discuss and consider income arrangements and consider whether it is possible to have the raising of invoices and the recording of receipts carried out by different members of staff. Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Ackers and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“that this will be resolved once the Council has appointed a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)”

- (f) Discuss and consider obtaining specialist VAT advice on the potential impact of its increased level of activities and expenditure to clarify whether there may be an adverse impact on the Council’s ability to recover VAT. Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Parnell **SECONDED** Cllr Rowland and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“that the Clerk will obtain specialist VAT advice once the Council has appointed an RFO”

173 Receive and consider a request from the District Council to support an application for s106 funding from Grove Challengers FC (Agreement reference 16V67)

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

Clerk

“that Grove Parish Council supports the s106 application from Grove Challengers (Agreement reference 16V67)”

174 Discuss and consider granting the Clerk authorisation to employ staff as and when required consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council

The Clerk clarified that this authorisation was for temporary/seasonal staff and not permanent staff on a fixed contract.

Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Parnell **SECONDED** Cllr Stock and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“that the Council grants authorisation to the Clerk to employ temporary/seasonal staff as and when required in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council”

175 Reports from Outside Bodies

No reports had been received.

176 Chairman’s Communications

- (a) To note the resignation of former parish councillor James Goodman. The resignation was noted.
- (b) Discuss and consider an extended leave of absence from Cllr Maginn beyond the six-month period due to extenuating circumstances. Following a discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Smeddle and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk

“to grant Cllr Maginn and extended leave of absence from attending Council meetings until Dec 2026”

177 Planning application P26/V0651/RM

- (a) Reserved matters approval for 129 dwellings (Phase 3), including appearance, landscaping, layout and scale and approval of details in relation to Phase 3 on land at Monks Farm, Grove

Comment: No objection to this application

178 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 £102,701.74 are adopted, the cash and bank balances noted and that the losses and or gains in the CCLA Property Fund are noted”

179 Staff Matters

Clerk

- (a) Briefing paper – staffing matters. Following a discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk organise a Staff Sub-committee meeting to discuss the broader issues of staffing.
- (b) Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) appointment. Following a brief discussion, it was **MOVED** Cllr Dexter **SECONDED** Cllr Leggott and **RESOLVED** Unanimously

“that Mr Robert Watson is appointed as Responsible Financial Officer for Grove Parish Council with effect 14 April 2026”

Meeting closed: 9.03pm

Confirmed: 5 May 2026

Chairman

County Councillor report to Grove Parish Council 7 April 2026

Introduction

Back to normal after the budget was passed.

Potholes

Hopefully the improved weather will mean less holes are generated. I believe Grove main roads are in pretty good condition, but I know that other roads are in poor condition. We continue to press for long term remedial measures to prevent hole formation.

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 have allocated some money to Sweatbox.

Local Government Reorganisation

This is now with central government. A decision is expected to be made in July. If the first set of decisions made in Hampshire are a guide government seems to favour a smaller unitary authority than suggested in the white paper. They also seem happy to ignore existing boundaries.

It appears that a mayoral strategic authority is off the cards. However, a strategic authority is still being considered.

Flags on Lampposts

See below message from the county council:

“Oxfordshire County Council has today issued a formal legal notice to Raise the Colours in response to their continued placing of flags across Oxfordshire.

This notice requires an individual or organisation to stop a specified activity. The council has taken this action following the repeated installation of flags on or near highways without consent.

If the group does not comply with the letter, the council will consider all available options to include, but not limited to, civil and criminal proceedings against the organisation and individuals affiliated with it to prevent further unauthorised action”.

Oxford Development Corporation

See below an excerpt from of a letter from central government:

“To take full advantage of Greater Oxford’s unique assets and ensure that we maximise its contribution to national economic growth, the government is convinced that a bold place-based intervention is required to address the constraints it faces. That is why earlier today we announced our intention to consult on establishing a centrally led development corporation to deliver nationally significant growth in Greater Oxford. Neale Coleman has been asked to factor this proposal into his ongoing work as Chair of the OGC.

A centrally led approach is intended to provide the stability, capability and capacity needed to coordinate complex infrastructure delivery across multiple local authorities, landowners, delivery partners and agencies, and to secure the significant public and private investment required to unlock growth at the desired scale.

We aim to launch a consultation before the end of the year and expect it to cover the following:

- The case for establishing a centrally led Urban Development Corporation.
- The proposed objectives and activities of the Development Corporation.

- The proposed geographical boundary in which the Development Corporation would operate.
- The proposed approach to powers that the Development Corporation would be granted"

I am quite unhappy with this proposal. It is very city centred and would probably try to include Harwell and Milton Park in greater Oxford. It could have interesting implications for LGR. It could also mean less house building in Oxford and more in the surrounding countryside.

Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee

The BOB Joint HOSC was held on 17 March. Because the BOB ICB is now replaced by the Thames Valley ICB this was the last meeting of the committee in this format.

A great deal of frustration was expressed by councillors at the lack of detail about the new organisation. Scrutiny will continue at the Oxfordshire level until a new ICB joint HOSC is created. We are very concerned that the level of local authority involvement could be reduced.

Localities

I chaired a meeting on 18 March. The locality is Wantage, Grove, Faringdon and the surrounding villages. Topics covered included:

Lane Rental Scheme - This will charge contractors for digging up the road. The scheme is due to go live on 5 May 2026.

Vision Zero - We had an update on projects including consultation on 20 mph speed limits in Grove.

Active Travel - Update from Andy Sweeney including Wantage Market Place project.

Flood Risk Management

We had an overview of flood risk management activity and the Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit.

A flood warden scheme has been rolled out across the county where volunteers monitor flood activities.

Road Adoption

I have a power point presentation explaining the issues associated with road adoption. I now have a route to follow on issues. Contact me for further information.

Ron Batstone

County Councillor
Grove Ward

District Council report to Grove Parish Council 7 April 2026

Local Government Reorganisation

The various proposals are now with central government with decisions expected in July 2026. After seeing their decisions for Hampshire, it seems the government favours relatively small unitary authorities which may favour the Ridgeway option. However, they also seem to like city centred options which may favour the three unitary option. Watch this space.

It now seems that the government is moving towards a strategic authority but not a mayor. We are still very keen to not include Swindon.

Joint Local Plan

No further information. It appears that the inspectors require updates on a range of documents before further hearings

P25/V1202/MPO Monks Farm

This was declined. Please see https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=3070810857&CODE=BD11A6A11525CE0BA43A50C7C443B696 for the letter from the council.

Scrutiny Committee 23 March

The committee considered the annual delivery plan and the Beacon development plan. The Beacon is improving both financially and with its offering. However, it does need structural improvements which need capital funding. We urged cabinet to complete this work as soon as possible.

Planning Committee 25 March

The committee considered the application P25/V2747/FUL - Bradfield Grove Farm, Cow Lane, Grove, OX12 0DL. I stood down from the committee and objected on behalf of West Hanney Parish Council. The main objections to a temporary distribution depot were change of use from agriculture and increased traffic. The application was approved with confirmation that its use would be temporary.

I am still worried that it may be difficult to enforce the temporary use.

Ron Batstone

District Councillor
Grove North Ward

Appendix 3

FULL COUNCIL MEETING 24 FEBRUARY 2026
Accounts for Payment from 20 JANUARY – 31 MARCH 2026

Environmental Services	Incl VAT	Ex VAT
Castle Water, Cemetery water Jan 26	8.32	
Biffa, Bin service Jan 26	164.32	136.93
Biffa, Bin service Feb 26	178.08	148.40
Grant & Stone, Cemetery maintenance	89.42	74.52
Grant & Stone, Cemetery maintenance	140.14	116.78
Edward T Sim, Cemetery gardening services	480.00	
Shield Maintenance, dog waste removal Feb 26	499.20	416.00
TOTAL	1,599.48	

Finance and General Purposes Committee	Incl VAT	Ex VAT
HMRC PAYE & NI Jan 26	6,678.71	
Staff salaries Feb 26	17,943.13	
Christmas tree grant to Grove Day Centre for the Elderly	175.00	
Onecom, payment of early release from contract fee	3,910.07	
Wantage Branch RBL, Chairman's allowance	250.00	
PA Turney, Ransomes Ride on Mower	35,940.00	29,950.00
OALC annual membership 2026/27	2,207.64	1,839.70
Suzzane O'Driscoll, Public Art design phase	1,200.00	1,000.00
IAC, Interim Internal Audit 2025/26	474.00	395.00
Paul Chapman, OMH Window cleaning March 2026	60.00	
Executive Safety Solutions, OMH Fire Extinguisher check	159.00	132.50
Scottish Terrier Breeders Association, refund of security deposit	300.00	
Cintra HR Services & Payroll Fees Jan 26	450.00	375.00
Cintra HR Services & Payroll Fees Feb 26	483.60	403.00
Cathedral Leasing	455.47	379.56
Grove Village Hall, Hire charge to WG CFF	80.00	
Grove Church Rooms, Hire charge to WG CFF	88.00	
Grove Church Rooms, Hire charge to WG CFF	33.00	
SSE, WG Pavillion 1 Dec 25 – 31 Jan 26 elec	381.81	363.63
SSE, WG Pavillion 01 Jan 26 – 28 Feb 26 elec	345.99	329.51
BNP Paribas, Office Telecoms 20 Feb/19 Mar 26	354.58	295.48
BNP Paribas, Office Telecoms 20 Mar/19 Apr 26	354.58	295.48
LM Gas Services, OMH boiler repairs	198.00	165.00
British Gas OMH Gas, 22 Jan-16 Feb 26	275.92	262.79
Castle Water, OMH Water Jan 26	59.66	
Castle Water, OMH Water Feb 26	74.80	
Amazon UK, Thermostat lock box	9.67	8.53
Amazon UK, Thermostat control lock box	9.80	6.92
Amazon UK, Rechargeable AAA batteries	12.59	10.49
EE, Clerk and OSM mobile phone	61.93	51.61
Peoples Pension, Pension Feb 26	1,301.49	
Seldram Supplies, OMH Cleaning products	109.57	91.32
Knights, Lease of land Cane Lane/Barwell Lane – Final invoice	902.70	714.75
Staff salaries, Mar 26	15,528.35	
M Tech, phone bill Feb 26	162.72	135.60
TOTAL	91,031.81	

Leisure & Recreation Committee	Incl VAT	Ex VAT
SSE, Storage shed, Recreation Lane, elec Jan 26	52.21	49.72
SSE, Tractor shed, School Lane, elec Jan 26	173.93	165.65
SSE, Tractor shed, School Lane, elec Dec 25	102.04	97.17
Executive Safety Solutions, Veh and Tractor shed extinguisher check	129.60	108.00
TLB (Oxford), Crew container	5,400.00	
George Brown's, hire of vertidrain	1,458.00	1,215.00
Amazon UK, Universal Brush Cutter	39.95	33.29
Wilts and Berks Canal Trust, annual subscription 2026/27	25.00	
KTM Machinery, 8Ft Spring Tine Assembly	1,221.70	1018.08
Castle Water, Millbridge allotments	8.32	
Castle Water, Millbridge allotments	126.89	
LJ & CA Cannings, Maintenance materials	240.68	217.24
Castle Water, Tractor shed, School Lane water Jan 26	56.17	
Grant & Stone, Playground maintenance	98.92	82.43
Grant & Stone, Miscellaneous maintenance items	40.16	33.47
Grant & Stone, Treated timber	61.92	51.60
Grant & Stone, 8m tape measure	7.39	6.16
Grant & Stone, Wood, nails, felt for new lean-to	84.40	70.33
Grant & Stone, Round wire nails	10.75	8.96
Grant & Stone, Round wire nails	8.63	7.19
Grant & Stone, Sand Pallet	24.98	20.82
Grant & Stone, playground maintenance	12.97	10.81
Savills IK, Wasbrough Field Rent 25/03/26-23/06/26	685.84	
TOTAL	10,070.45	

Chairman _____ (Original signed)

TOTAL EXPENDITURE £102,701.74

A/c balances as at 31 March 2026

Charity A/c	-	£4,419.35
Community Directplus A/c	-	£42,867.06
Instant Deposit A/c	-	£81,184.79
Petty Cash	-	£204.65
Total Cash in Bank	-	£128,675.85

Investments (including Reserves)

CCLA – Public Sector Deposit Fund (Average yield is 3.77%)-	£760,000 – (Ytd this FY is £31,583.56 = 4.16%)
CCLA – Local Authorities Property Fund current LAPF	£120,000 – (Ytd this FY is £4,864.71 = 4.05%)
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 - **£1,008,675.80**

Reserves breakdown as 31 March 2026

General Reserves	-	£287,191
Specific (Earmarked) Reserves:		
• Future Projects Reserve	-	£1,001
• Balancing Pond	-	£505
• Community Infrastructure Levy	-	£28,173 (CIL payment 4/25)
• Depreciation Reserve	-	£95,506
• Grove Meadows Reserve	-	£103,176 (s106 contributions)
• GAD Community Facilities Fund	-	£66,501 (s106 contributions)
• GAD Open Spaces maintenance fund	-	£27,104 (s106 contributions)
• GAD Drainage maintenance fund	-	£225,265 (s106 contributions)
• GAD Replacement Sports Facilities Fund	-	£10,176 (s106 contributions)
• Three Bridges Public Art project	-	£54,788 (s106 contributions)
Total Specific (Earmarked) Reserves	-	£612,195
Minus CCLA Property Fund	-	£120,000
Total available reserves	-	£779,386