

CUMNOR PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of and Annual Parish Meeting for the Cumnor Parish Council
on Tuesday 6 May 2025 at 7.30pm
in Fogwell Road Pavilion, Fogwell Road, Dean Court.

Present.

Tom Christophers, Chairman, Laurence Waters, Vice-Chairman, Dona Foster, Paula Lopez, Judy Roberts, Chris Westcott, Oliver Wright and Tina Brock, Clerk.

County Councillors. James Plumb and Judy Roberts.

District Councillors. Scott Houghton and Judy Roberts

Visitors. None.

01/25 Apologies for Absence.

Basil England, (permitted leave of absence until September 2025), Alison Jenner (unwell), Gary Mason (work commitment), Ray Stone (prior commitment). Council resolved to approve this apology.

02/25 Chairman's Report.

We started the council year with 10 councillors in post and ended with 11 following co-option in June 2024 (carrying four vacancies), all ably supported by the clerk to the parish council.

All councillors and the clerk have served the community with distinction bringing with them huge enthusiasm, commitment and great experience to all aspects of parish life. Working to ensure our play parks and facilities remain safe and relevant to the local community, supporting initiatives to improve the safety of our road network, reviewing local planning applications and investigating solar farm proposals are some of the roles that our councillors have fulfilled for our benefit.

Our councillors also provide representatives to the following external parties: Botley traffic advisory committee; Brize Norton local consultative working group; Cumnor church of England school governors; Cumnor conservation group; Closes Field pavilion; Cumnor old school charity trust; Cumnor village hall; Dean Court community centre association; Fogwell Pavilion Management Committee; Farmoor village hall; and the Parish transport group.

Over the course of the year your parish council has been involved with various road safety and improvement initiatives. The campaign to install a signalled crossing, near to the Arnolds Way junction, to safely usher Matthew Arnold pupils and other pedestrians across Cumnor Hill was concluded in the Summer.

We have applied for a 7.5ton HGV weight limit through Cumnor Village and requested a speed reduction from Eynsham Road overbridge to Farmoor from 50mph to 40phm and 30mph past Hill End and Oaken Holt Care Home. Work continues on both.

We agreed to purchase a VAS (30mph) to be located at the mini roundabout, Farmoor, going towards the toll bridge, and a SID (20mph) at the bottom of Tumbledown.

We continue to respond to resident complaints and concerns about obstructions to the highway, and threats to pedestrian & cyclist safety, from parked car transporters at the top of Cumnor Hill, servicing Weylands car showrooms.

We continue to await the installation of a pavement by the relevant landowner through current building works, opposite Cumnor Village Hall, to shorten the gap for pedestrians as they approach the permissive path leading to Denman's Lane. We are indebted to Tony Harker for continuing as our volunteer footpath warden and ensuring that these vital public rights of way are kept in the best condition possible.

Moving to our play parks and open spaces. Remediation works were carried out during the council year to equipment and buildings at our Fogwell Road sports pavilion, Glebe Play Park, Closes Field Pavilion and Changing Places at the Old Forge Changing Rooms. Our Changing Places facility in the village was brought back into action after around a year due to a roof issue, which has

now been fixed by the freehold owner. We agreed to install a commemorative bench at Meadow Close play park in response to resident requests. In 2023, Council approved the purchase of a defibrillator case for a defibrillator to be installed at Cumnor Hurst. The defibrillator was donated by a member of the public and connection to a power source is to be covered by Cumnor Dog Lodge, with the unit being placed on the perimeter of the property so that 24/7 access can be made by the community. This installation work by the Lodge is still ongoing as part of private dwelling construction.

We kept abreast of the work undertaken by The Cumnor Conservation Group who maintain part of the Hurst on behalf of the parish council (the other part is managed and owned privately). Both sections are part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation. We have entered into discussions with the private charity that owns one part of the Hurst to transfer the title of deed to the Parish Council free of charge. This is expected to be completed during the coming year.

The other part of the Hurst belongs to All Souls College, Oxford University. Our lease to manage the All Souls College section ended earlier in 2025; however, we have been unable to agree a new lease that allows us to properly enact the management plan to upkeep this part of the SSSI site. All Souls College are willing to also transfer us their part of the Hurst but currently are wanting £75k in payment. This figure is not possible for us to pay. With no movement on a permanent transfer or a length of lease that fits the needs of the SSSI management plan the ability of us and, therefore, the Cumnor Conservation Group is in limbo.

The Cumnor Conservation Group also maintain the Cumnor pond on behalf of the parish.

Over the year we received a number of grant requests from qualifying organisations and agreed those that were submitted. This consisted of: Enrych Oxfordshire - £500, improve wellbeing for adults living with disability; Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal - £100, Remembrance Sunday Wreath; Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice - £500; Cumnor Pre-school - £500, boundary repairs; Home-Start Oxford - £500, support for Oxford families; North Hinksey Parish Council - £10,000, skatepark (technically this money was granted from the Cumnor Public Purposes Charity and not the Parish Council).

Planning and development within and neighbouring the parish continues to be a large portion of our activity as a governing body. We relied on the capability, expertise and local knowledge of our plan receivers, Councillors Mason, Waters and Westcott. We continue to integrate the policies from our Neighbourhood Plan in the deliberations we take on all planning applications received. Over the course of the year, we formally processed 69 planning applications. We supported 37, responded with comments and / or questions on 16 and objected to 16. We continue to be extensively involved in investigating and gathering detail on proposed solar power stations in green belt land at the Hurst / Millennium Field / Harcourt Hill area, on green belt land west of Red House Farm, Farmoor, and in the section within our parish of the Botley West scheme (also green belt). All proposals are worrying and have generated a lot of resident and stakeholder concern in this parish, with residents of North Hinksey parish for the first proposal as part of the land is in that region, and with residents in parishes up to and including Woodstock for the third proposal. Whilst North Hinksey parish council have not yet taken a position on that proposal we hope that they support their residents (and our) concerns at the potential loss of green belt and resultant biodiversity in touching distance of our SSSI site. Parishes affected by the Botley West scheme (and the previous neighbouring MP, Robert Courts), have taken a position in opposition to that proposal. We still continue to be in talks with our local MP, Layla Moran around gaining her formal support on our position. The new neighbouring MP, Charlie Maynard, has also not yet broken ground on his formal position. More details of the solar farm work can be found in other areas of our annual reporting.

When requested, and when appropriate / relevant, we submitted responses to a number of public consultations over the course of the council year: County Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy; Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system; SO/VWHDC Joint

Local Plan 2041; Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings; Oxford Greenways Let's Talk Oxfordshire; and, the OCC Traffic Sensitive Streets review.

We have begun planning to refresh the Neighbourhood Plan, ahead of time in order to allow the best chance of timely resubmission and reapproval.

Lastly, we carried out a parish wide survey during the year in order to gain a good baseline of data from which to build a long-term parish strategy. Our intention as your parish council is to look at a more formal and structured way in which we could continue to serve the community and ensure that we are working towards providing an amenity that meets the longer-term needs of the whole parish. We will now work up a proposed vision and values for the parish council's strategy, as well as strategic guiding principles for each sub-committee that will help us draft a parish council strategy that is fit for purpose and is able to cover all areas of our community in an equitable way. The key priorities drawn out from the survey results can be worked on over this and the next electoral cycle so that we focus on what the community feels is important to grow and develop our parish, as well as all of the normal business activity (and solar farm planning applications) we need to work through.

In all your parish council has delivered a wealth of activity across a breadth of areas. These are volunteers committed to the place in which we live and not willing to sit back and accept the status quo. We push a wide agenda on a number of avenues to respond to the requirements of each part of our community and are hugely grateful for a highly capable and devoted clerk, Tina Brock, who supports and guides us as we as a body work together.

We look forward to continued success in our agenda and are confident that we will be as effective during 2025/26 in delivering an effective provision of services and amenities to the community across our diverse parish.

03/25 Environment and Amenities Committee Report.

As ever this Committee has had a varied agenda over the year, ranging from provision of the parish's playparks, through speed limits, the lease agreement for the Hurst Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and public art.

In response to road traffic incidents and residents' concerns, we are working with the County Council to investigate reducing the speed limit along the B4044 from the A420 Eynsham Road overbridge to Farmoor from 50mph to 40mph, and 30mph past Hill End and Oaken Holt Care Home. Installing a mobile speed indicator device along Cumnor Road and Oxford Road, Farmoor is also being looked at.

The biennial tree survey concluded that some trees in the play parks needed to be felled due to disease. Turning to buildings in the playparks, new heating has been installed in the Closes pavilion and other improvement are being made.

Elsewhere in the playparks, all play equipment is inspected monthly, and repairs carried out asap. Despite requests not to do so, adults using the play equipment at The Glebe play park resulted in the trampoline needing to be repaired twice, with Council now waiting for a new mat to be fitted. All of this will cost £2000, with repairs carried out to the broken pendulum swing costing another £1,900.

On a more positive note, Council purchased 2 manmade notice boards for Farmoor and Dean Court, and a bench commemorating Pauline White, ex councillor, at Farmoor.

The lease on the Cumnor Hurst Unit 2 SSSI (viz the hill itself) expired In February despite Council having been in discussions with the owner, All Souls College, and its land agent, Savills, since September 2023. Council will continue to work towards a satisfactory outcome, one that ensures that the ecological conditions required to be maintained within a SSSI are resourced and undertaken.

Council's Cumnor Fit for the Future (F4F) steering group, assessed whether a piece of land close to the village cricket ground could be the site of a possible Jubilee Memorial Copse. Unfortunately, it was found to be unsuitable because of the flood risk.

F4F also met with Abigail Brown, Arts Development Officer at VWHDC to discuss using the allocated £60k (a section 106 contribution from the developer of the Kimmeridge Road estate) for public art.

From this meeting Council agreed that a Public Art working party should be set up with members from F4F and residents. The working party has drafted a brief which has been sent out to local artists for the artwork: a piece in a sustainable medium focusing upon the unique Cumnor dinosaur *Cumnorina prestwichii*.

The artwork would preferably be located at the entrance of Kimmeridge Road (with other locations further into the development possible), if permission is given by the landowner's management company. Ahead of the 12 May 2025 application deadline, 3 proposals have so far been received from local artists.

04/25 Planning Committee Report.

The Planning Committee meet on the third Monday of the month to consider planning applications within the Cumnor Parish.

It has been another busy year for planning applications within the Parish. In the period between April 2024 and April 2025 the Planning Committee received 67 planning applications, a total that includes a number of amendments. Of the 67 applications considered by the committee 35 were supported, the committee objected to 16 and had a planning response to a further 16. A further 2 applications were withdrawn prior to consideration by the Planning Committee.

Planning applications have ranged from permission to erect garden offices through to the demolition of existing buildings and their proposed replacement with larger structures. A number of proposals for backland development have also been considered. As with last year, extensions to existing dwellings, both single and two storey, have formed a large percentage of the applications over this period.

There are currently two unlawful developments within the Parish. Both have been served with enforcement notices by the VWHDC Planning Department and are currently under appeal.

The year began, as it ended, with an eagerly awaited outcome to a planning application to build a solar power station called 'Red House Farm' in the Farmoor valley, stretching from Farmoor itself to Dean Court. Last year the first application was withdrawn, only to be resubmitted just before Christmas.

The 100+ documents of the new application essentially tell the same story as the first application, save for the fact this time the applicant has chosen to purposely ignore any cumulative effects of the proposed Botley West power station (see below). The applicant is still proposing to dig up the B4044 and the Botley Road as far as Osney for the underground High Voltage cable and claims that the Farmoor Valley only floods (theoretically) once in a hundred years.

The Botley West application – and the associated permanent National Grid substation to the east of Tumbledown – has also been a recurrent theme all year. As this report is being prepared the Parish Council is also putting together its initial submission to the first of the public sessions being held by the Planning Inspectorate in the middle of May. These will continue over the summer into the autumn.

Much work has been done (do take a look at the [Planning page](#) on the Council's website) but a huge amount remains, not least working with other impacted Parishes on what is called 'Community Benefit'; aka compensation for having a power station built in the Parish.

I am sure that all of my fellow Councillors will agree that planning decisions within the Cumnor Parish have been made somewhat clearer (and I would suggest easier) with the adoption in recent years of the Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood plan forms an important part of the planning process and sets out clear criteria as to what are and what are not acceptable developments within our Parish.

Looking to the future, the Planning Committee await with interest on what effect the Government's proposal to 'speed up the planning process' may have on local planning issues.

Against that backdrop the Parish Council has begun a 'refresh' of the current Neighbourhood Plan. Just as the VWHDC Local Plan is currently being updated – with a draft plan running until 2041 being examined, the Parish Council is looking to ensure the relevance and applicability of its Plan doesn't get diminished in the years up to its end date of 2031. To that end the Parish Council has commissioned an Oxfordshire-based specialist Neighbourhood Planning consultancy to work with it on the refresh, with a view to having the new Neighbourhood Plan in place next year, running up to, hopefully, 2041.

I would like to thank the current members of the Planning Committee, the Parish Clerk, and the Parish Council for their hard work over the last year.

05/25 County Councillor Report.

CC Judy Roberts reported.

The government asked for upper tier councils to submit a desire to be in the fast track reorganisation for Combined Authorities by 10 January 2025. The County Council asked to be included but was unsuccessful. We have then been asked to submit proposals for Local government Reorganisation by March, and three proposals were received from Oxfordshire. The County Council submitted a One Oxfordshire proposal based on the document in 2017. Councillor Houghton has outlined the other two proposals in his district report. More detailed proposals are to be submitted by November 2025 after which we all will be told which plan will proceed.

Network Rail changed its position again about the closure of the Botley Road so that it is now planned to re-open in September 2026. This has caused great upset for Cumnor residents. This has severely restricted people's access to the City, especially the station and Westgate Centre. Thames Water has now closed one lane over Osney Bridge until December 2025, to repair the main water main for Oxford City. Because of all these sequential problems, Network Rail has set up a weekly email newsletter that has been able to inform people as each part of the construction has progressed. They have also funded a Botley flyer bus that goes to the centre of the City 3 times a day and 6 days a week, with a 9:30 service on Sunday. They will now open the Western Entrance Gate for station access for people with mobility problems. There is a bell to ring for attention and a kiosk for information. We are promised an additional bus shelter at St Frideswide Church that should be in place for the winter.

The Eynsham to Botley Community Path project now has a feasibility study finished from Eynsham Road junction with Westway to where Salt Cross will be built. It has gone into several active travel bids to the government but has not received funding for the build.

The two Solar farm applications are still live as stated in Councillor Houghton's report and I have applied to speak at the initial inspectorate meeting. The questions they want answered include the issue of the substation and I am troubled that the only information we have about that is a dotted line on a picture. I feel that the substation application should be decided before the solar farm impact can be assessed.

The Red House Farm one, I have called into the Planning Committee as that will be decided by the Vale council. Both applications have a community ask attached to them and one possible outcome is that the cable work from one to Osney substation and the other along the Eynsham Road to the West Oxford area would take the same route as the Community Path. Although I have investigated this with both projects: we might get the utilities investigation accomplished which could be fed into the Path project, but they are unlikely to fund the build.

The two pilot schemes on HGV management have been funded in this year's budget where through route analysis is being undertaken. There are no restrictions available for local traffic (approx. 60%) and the pilot schemes will be completed in June. This will allow officers to see which other physical restrictions, besides weight, such as traffic lights, one way systems and restricting over 18 ton traffic routes might be possible to solve local problems.

The Kennington Rail bridge replacement has been paused and continued to be held securely by props as there is insufficient money for the rebuild to go ahead.

The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme has received planning permission and will take 4 years to construct using the A34, and possibly Network Rail, as spoil removal routes. At the moment both this project and the remodelled Kennington Bridge that allows the extra span for the new channel do not have enough funding from the government to proceed.

The amount of severe flooding that Oxfordshire has experienced this year has increased local support for the scheme, so we await the government's reaction.

I am still trying to get the VAS 30 mph sign from the Eynsham Road moved to outside the Farmoor Stores site using my councillor priority fund, but it is proving to be very slow.

The Pelican crossing on Cumnor Hill, just above Arnold's Way, is now in operation and I welcome feedback as to whether there has been an increase of pedestrians crossing the Eynsham to use this route as there have already been two fatal accidents at this point.

The Oxford City traffic filters are planned to start when the Botley Road re-opens at the beginning of September 2026.

06/25 District Councillors Reports.

DC Scott Houghton reported.

I said that my first year as a councillor had been an interesting one, but my second has been even more so. A change in national government has brought with it changes for local government, the details of which are still being worked out. In a few years' time, it seems that the Vale of White Horse District Council will no longer exist, being replaced by a larger authority. Exactly what form this will take is yet to be seen, with final submissions to be made in November this year, but I am aware of three options on the table. The first is a combined Oxfordshire unitary authority which would merge the four districts with Oxford City and the County Council. The second is a pair of smaller unitaries, which would see the Vale merge with South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire to form "Ridgeway Council", with the City, Cherwell, and West Oxfordshire forming the other. The third would see Cumnor incorporated into an enlarged "Greater Oxford" along with other villages and towns nearby. Whichever proposal ends up going forward, I will push to ensure the best outcome I can for residents and for the local community.

A major achievement for the council this year was the submission of our Joint Local Plan. Following a successful consultation this was submitted to the planning inspectorate at the end of 2024 and is set for examination hearings from the 3rd to the 5th of June this year. If this is approved, it will set the targets and policies for the area for many years to come.

My committee responsibilities this year have remained the same as last year, those being the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC), and the Planning Committee. On the former, there have been ups and downs this year. The main negative point has been our recommendation

of a review of the council's interim carbon reduction target due to better data now being available, and due to a single target not really giving us a clear roadmap to the eventual goal of net zero. I will note that this recommendation was made before the government's decision to reorganise councils, so I am not sure what impact that will have. On the plus side, two major victories were the success of the Climate Action Fund, which gave approximately £140,000 to a wide range of projects to help with carbon reduction and nature recovery, and also the delivery of the first electric bin lorry to the council, which will save over 20 tonnes of CO2 per year compared to its diesel equivalent and is the first step in rejuvenating the council's fleet of waste vehicles.

The Planning Committee has again proven to be a lot of work, but extremely rewarding, and I have visited several sites across the Vale to ensure I can get a proper view on the impacts that any developments would have on the local area before making a decision. In this regard, the Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan has yet again proven its utility in helping to ensure that we get what is best for Cumnor, with it being a critical deciding point in several committee decisions and appeals to the planning inspectorate. I would encourage all residents to offer their input to the renewal of this plan, to ensure that it stays relevant for the future, and makes Cumnor the place we want it to be. I have done my best to support residents with unwanted developments, offering advice where I can and speaking on their behalf at Planning Committee meetings.

As was true last year, a pair of solar farm projects remain a major concern in the parish. Regarding Botley West, this is now at the pre-examination stage of the application with the Planning Inspectorate, with hearings to take place in May 2025. The Vale has made multiple submissions in regard of this plan, and Vale Officers will be speaking at the hearings. Regarding the Red House Farm application, the original application was withdrawn, but a modified plan has been submitted and will be decided on in the near future.

I have also continued my efforts to get the council to do what it can to hold Thames Water and the Environment Agency to account regarding the state of our rivers and the increasingly frequent flooding we are seeing. In particular, I spoke at length in support of a motion put forward by fellow councillors in December 2024, following the decision not to go ahead with the Thames Valley Flood Scheme, to ask the Government why, despite the issues so regularly seen, schemes like this keep getting cancelled. I have yet to see a response but shall continue to try and hold these bodies to account wherever I can.

DC Judy Robers reported.

I have worked with Councillor Houghton over some of the planning committee applications which have meant that we have both had 3 minutes to speak as I represented the parish. The solar farm applications have meant that the Parish, District and County functions have all been called upon to try to achieve the best outcomes for the Parish. We will get some decisions on both during this year as they progress through the Vale and the National Planning Inspectorate.

As a member of Scrutiny, Joint Scrutiny and Audit and Governance for the last year, the Vale has contracted a new Waste service site in Great Haseley. It was the only site that it could purchase in the timescale required. It will be able to house electric vehicles but will need route changes for the new provider. The Leisure and Waste contracts will still need to be renewed in 2026 which will be affected by the Local Government reorganisation.

The council has been able to provide refugee housing using the government grant and this has meant that it has become a corporate landlord. The policies for this are in place but the council; would like to be able to expand this role in the future.

07/25 Questions from Electorate.

Judy Roberts had been asked by a resident to ask the following questions.

There are a group of 4 Ash trees located at the rear of 5 Tilbury Lane, Dean Court. Could a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) be requested to protect them from felling? Judy would take some photos of the trees, and the Clerk would apply for a TPO.

The Cumnor fit for the Future (CFFF) is carrying out an Ancient Oak Tree survey with the

information being uploaded to the [CFFF website](#). Could other important trees be added to the survey. The Clerk would ask the question at the next CFFF meeting.

08/25 Next meeting.

The next Annual Parish Meeting will take place on **Tuesday 5 May 2026** at **7.30pm** venue to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

Signed..... Date.....2025