

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BERINSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL held on Monday 3rd February 2025 at 7.15 p.m. in the Church Hall, Wimblestraw Road, Berinsfield, Oxon.

PRESENT	Councillor S. Scott-Ely	Chairman
	Councillor P. Bridge	Vice Chairman
	Councillor F. I. Beeby	
	Councillor A. Jones	
	Councillor S. Crawford	
	Councillor A. Woodington	
	Councillor I. Bunyan	
	Councillor K. Chrisp	
	Councillor A. Head	
	Councillor T. Eltham	

Alex Marasco, Clerk to the Council
Councillor R. Bennet (South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council)
Four members of the public

1. Items raised by Members of the Public.

a) Flooding – A member of the public asked for an update on the flooding in Fane Drive at the junction with Kennet Close and Wimblestraw Road. The Chairman provided an update on the discussions the Parish Council has had with Carl Stallwood who is the officer responsible for drainage at OCC. It is believed there is an issue with the drainage in an adjacent field. Cllr Bridge reported that he has seen the team from OCC investigating and working on this and believes that progress will be seen.

b) Tree Works at Barrington Close – A member of the public asked who is responsible for tree maintenance near the bus stop at Barrington Close. The member of the public then explained his frustrations around the number of authorities responsible for different areas of the land around Berinsfield. The Chairman explained that if there are questions about specific locations then the Parish Council would be happy to advise on who is responsible. It was AGREED that the Clerk would report this tree maintenance issue to Highways.

c) Berinsfield Community Association Grant Awards - A member of the public acting in his capacity as Chair of Berinsfield Community Association thanked the Council for their support with grants in 2024. He explained that they had been able to put on several children's parties, an OAP Christmas party and SEN movie mornings which were appreciated by all. The Parish Council acknowledged his thanks and the Chairman expressed appreciation of his attendance.

d) Cancelled Football at The Recreation Ground – A member of the public acting in his capacity as Chair of Berinsfield Football Club raised an issue of cancelled football matches due to the Pavilion being out of use because of flooding. He explained that it is causing serious issues for his football club and that they have received fines for cancelled fixtures. He further explained that all rearranged or reversed fixtures have been facilitated and there is no option to do this for any more. He asked the Parish Council for an update on when the Pavilion will be available again and stated that in order for fixtures to go ahead then use of at least one changing room is required.

The Chairman gave an update that the Parish Council are proceeding with an insurance claim. A drying contractor is attending site on February 4th and the Parish Council will be able to provide an update with regards to works and timeline for completion of repairs. It was AGREED that the Clerk will enquire about getting one changing room up and running in order to facilitate football matches. It was AGREED that the Clerk will enquire about prices for temporary changing rooms and report them to the Open Spaces Committee at the February 5th meeting. It was AGREED that the Clerk will send details of the Parish Council's Grant Aid for 2025-26 to the member of the public.

e) Christmas Lights – A member of the public who volunteered to help with the putting up of the Christmas lights in 2024, asked the Parish Council if new Christmas lights could be purchased next year with a solar panel and battery integrated, and gave details of lights he had found through his own research, he will send these details to the Clerk. It was AGREED that the Clerk will enquire about the cost for replacing the current Christmas Lights with the suggested version. The Chairman thanked the volunteer for his help in 2024.

2. **Apologies for absence were received from** Councillors Scate and Sweetland.

3. **Declarations of Interest.**

Cllr Scott-Ely declared an interest in items 11. d) and 15. k) as the company involved is run by a member of his family.

4. **County Councillor's report.** County Councillor Robin Bennett had prepared a written report which had been circulated to all present at the meeting. The contents of the report were noted by the Parish Council.

5. **District Councillor's report.** District Councillor Robin Bennett had prepared a written report which had been circulated to all present at the meeting. The contents of the report were noted by the Parish Council.

6. **To receive and approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 6th January 2025.**

It was AGREED that the Clerk will readdress the issue of parking on minute 20. E) of the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on 6th January 2025. It was AGREED that the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 6th January 2025 should be APPROVED.

7. **To consider planning applications and decisions received to date (if any).**

a) P24/S3955/S73 - The Berin Centre, Wimblestraw Road, Berinsfield - Removal of condition 6 (BREEAM rating) on application P24/S0483/FUL (Proposed community cafe) - not financially viable to achieve the target.

The Parish Council AGREED to support the removal of condition 6 on this application.

b) P24/S3655/HH – 60 Cherwell Road, Berinsfield, OX10 7PA – Garage Conversion. Decision Received – Planning Permission.

c) Planning decision. P24/S4025/HH -27 Chiltern Close, Berinsfield – Erection of a front porch extension. Planning Permission.

8. **UK SPF Funding for Berinsfield. Design and construction of a new pump track. Design and construction of an extension to the existing skateboard park. Repairs to the existing skateboard park.** To receive an update on the progress of the planning application and any other relevant information relating to the projects.

a) Planning permission had been slightly delayed, there had been a request for additional Biodiversity Net Gains through planting of trees and as a result the application must include a Habitat Management and Maintenance Plan before it will be reviewed for final decision. An exact date for a decision could not be confirmed at this time. Start dates would be confirmed once a planning decision had been received.

The Chairman provided an update for councillors on the progress of this item. A planning decision is expected this week.

b) Contracts for the works to the Pump Track have been signed by all parties. Contracts for the works to the Skatepark will be signed by Bendcrete.

c) Remaining SPF funding will be transferred to the Parish Council upon contracts being signed.

d) A preconstruction meeting for the Skatepark was held with Bendcrete on 30th January 2025. A preconstruction meeting for the pump track was held with C&K on 31st January 2025. Both meetings were attended by the Chairman and Clerk.

The contractor completing the Skatepark advised that the works will take approximately six weeks. The contractor completing the Pump Track advised that the works will take approximately three weeks.

9. **Abbey Woods Spinney.** To receive an update on the progress of the Abbey Woods Spinney scheme and any information arising between meetings.

a) Tree works are due to be carried out in Abbey Woods Spinney on 7th February with the removal of a Scots Pine tree.

b) Two new Scots Pine trees were being purchased in line with the TPO that was granted. A&W Grounds have submitted a quote for the planting of the trees of £160.00.

It was AGREED to accept the quote for the planting of the trees for £160.00 with A&W Grounds.

c) A magnifying post has been purchased and delivered to A&W Grounds who will install it as part of the quoted for grounds work.

d) Wild Oxfordshire are assisting in designing artwork for interpretational panel.

e) Hendriette Knouws is working with Wild Oxfordshire and SODC Ecologist on long-term biodiversity management plan which will be ready for Parish Council review in March.

Cllr Jones said that the councillors who are working on this project don't seem to have had adequate updates recently. It was AGREED that the Clerk would write to Hendriette to coordinate efforts to keep these councillors fully updated.

It was AGREED that the Clerk will enquire if funding will be available for maintenance of the new trees.

10. **Open Spaces Committee.** The Open Spaces Committee meeting will take place on 5th February 2025, at The Berin Centre, Wimblestraw Road, Berinsfield.

The Parish Council noted the change of venue for the meeting of the Open Spaces Committee.

The Parish Council AGREED to approve this quote.

11. **The Pavilion.** On 11th January 2025, a leak occurred in the loft of the Pavilion which led to extensive flooding and the collapse of the ceiling in the meeting room. The meeting room, kitchen, toilets and hall have been affected and there is flooding to the walls and ceiling.
- a) The Clerk had initiated an insurance claim for the damage to the Pavilion. The insurers had appointed a loss adjuster and a drying contractor. The drying contractors had provided a date of 4th February to attend site. The Clerk was enquiring with insurers if we can appoint another drying contractor sooner.
 - b) The Clerk had contacted all users to inform them that the Pavilion was not in a usable condition.
 - c) All three football teams had been affected by the damage sustained at the Pavilion. One of the football teams had negotiated the use of Abbey Sports Centre facilities during the closure of the Pavilion. This football team had asked for a reduction in the cost of the hire of the pitches, in lieu of the use of the Pavilion. The Parish Council was asked to consider this request.
 - d) The Parish Council was asked to consider a quote from BOE Trading of £390.00 for the stripping out of saturated materials from the Pavilion prior to drying.

Cllr Bridge assumed the role of Chair as Cllr Scott-Ely had declared an interest in this item. The quote from BOE Trading was APPROVED.

12. **Internal Audit.** An interim audit report had been submitted by Theresa Goss, appointed internal auditor.

- a) The Council was asked to consider providing the Clerk with a debit card, in order to make purchases, as recommended by the internal auditor.

Cllr Bridge suggested there should tiers of clearance for payments. Lower level payments being authorised by the Clerk and payments over a certain amount requiring sign off by the Parish Council. It was AGREED to obtain a debit card for the Clerk to make purchases, as recommended by the internal auditor. It was AGREED for the Finance Committee to make recommendations on tiers of authorisation for purchases.

- b) The Parish Council was asked to consider adopting a ‘Reserves Policy’ and publishing it on its website.

It was AGREED that the Clerk will present a Reserves Policy to the Finance Committee for recommendations.

- c) The Parish Council was asked to consider adopting an ‘Investments Policy’.

It was AGREED that the Clerk will present an Investments Policy to the Finance Committee for recommendations.

- d) The Internal Auditor recommended that the Parish Council considered engaging the services of a payroll company to complete payroll for its members of staff monthly.

The Parish Council discussed this recommendation from the internal auditor and decided that an outsourced payroll service is not required.

13. **Berinsfield Regeneration Strategy.**

- a) A drop-in session for residents took place on Saturday 1st February 2025 and another will take place on Tuesday 4th February 2025 at St Mary and St Berin Church.
- b) The final draft strategy will go before SODC cabinet on 10th April 2025.

The Parish Council noted this information. It was AGREED that the Clerk will issue a collated response from the Parish Council based on the responses received by 5th February.

14. **Berinsfield Neighbourhood Plan.** The Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum will be held on 6th February 2025.

- a) Various local groups have organised meet ups and walks to the polling station.
- b) The final draft strategy will go before SODC cabinet on 10th April 2025.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item and the information provided.

15. **Correspondence and items for information.**

- a) Commemorative Plate – The Clerk had discussions with the library regarding the commemorative plate that was gifted to the Parish Council by relatives of service personnel stationed on Berinsfield. The library had agreed to take the plaque, subject to its viewing.

It was AGREED that Cllr Jones will deliver this commemorative plaque to Berinsfield Library.

- b) Green Lane – A&W Grounds had reported that Green Lane hedges (area no. 24 of the maintenance contract) had become overgrown either side and access was becoming restricted. They provided a quote of £450.00 for the cutting back of these hedges.

The Chairman said that this area has previously been cut by another organisation and not the Parish Council as recently as last year. It was AGREED to defer this matter to the next meeting of the Open Spaces Committee.

- c) Crutch Furlong – Communication had been received from a resident regarding maintenance of the grass verges in Crutch Furlong. A&W Grounds had been made aware and will attend the site to assess and cut back any overgrowth.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item and it was AGREED that the Clerk will provide an update to the council at the March meeting.

- d) The Berin Centre – Men In Sheds Project – The Clerk met with Sue Bright from The Berin Centre to discuss a project that they are bringing to Berinsfield. The Berin Centre was interested in the use of outdoor space in the carpark at the Pavilion for this project which supports mental health. The Parish Council was asked to consider if this space can be provided, and for what charge.

The Chairman advised councillors of the background of this project. Cllr Bridge said he is aware of discussions with other potential venues too. It was AGREED that the Clerk will arrange a meeting with Sue Bright and Cllr Scott-Ely to discuss the project in more detail.

- e) Christmas Lights – Mr Garvey kindly volunteered to display the Christmas lights on behalf of the Parish Council in 2024. He was not able to remove the lights. Mr Garvey had suggested that the Parish Council may like to consider leaving the lights up year-round, but removing the batteries. He believed that this would be easier for the Parish Council in future years.

It was AGREED that the Clerk will enquire if there are any grants available to the Parish Council for Christmas Lights. It was AGREED that the Clerk will enquire about the different options of Christmas Lights that are available.

- f) Meeting with Freddie Van Mierlo MP – A date had been set for a meeting between Freddie Van Mierlo MP and the Parish Council. The meeting is scheduled to take place at 10.00am on Friday 11th April 2025 at the Pavilion, Lay Avenue.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item.

- g) The Clerk is operating a social media presence for Berinsfield Parish Council. Councillors were asked to note that the Facebook page has the user name BerinsfieldParishCouncil.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item.

- h) Pétanque Court – SOHA had confirmed a completion date for the court of 17th February. An agreement had been reached between SODC and SOHA for only one of the previously agreed pocket parks to be delivered. Berinsfield Garden Village Community Development Officer, Wendy Foster, would support the facility with a launch event and community taster sessions. SOHA will also install Lowther benches near the Pétanque Court.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item.

i) Nature Trail - UK SPF Arts funding was allocated to Fusion Arts to create a nature trail linking green spaces in Berinsfield, including pocket parks and community gardens, to encourage visits and enhance community identity. Fusion Arts was procuring local wooden animal carvings for installation at five locations – pending landowner approval:

1. St Mary & St Berin Church: Soaring Red Kite (4–5 feet tall) attached to tree stump.
2. Berin Centre: Badger.
3. Abbey Wood Spinney: Barn owl with spread wings (approx. 3 feet wide), attached to tree 8 feet from the ground.
4. Pétanque Court: Family of hedgehogs attached to sleeper sides of the court.
5. Location TBC: Squirrel (approx. 2 feet tall) sitting on an acorn.

The Parish Council was asked to consider a suggestion for the 5th location.

It was AGREED that the Clerk would suggest the Berinsfield Community Association as a 5th location.

j) SODC Tree Planting – SODC planting team will be planting additional trees during February at the following locations; Green Furlong, Kennet Close and Fane Drive.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item.

k) Seating – SODC will be installing one Lowther bench on Fane Drive, next to Elaine’s Ditch. The Clerk is working with Hendriette Knouws on the procurement and installation of Wicksteed benches to the Recreation Ground. BOE Trading had been appointed to install five of these benches, two of those were to be installed after the build to the Skatepark and Pump Track.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item.

l) Village Map – Correspondence had been received from Hendriette Knouws regarding a Village Map. It was proposed that given the changes that may come to Berinsfield in the near future, a noticeboard with a printed Village Map may be more appropriate. Styles of noticeboards had been circulated with this agenda and the Parish Council is asked to consider which option is its preference. Pending comments from the Parish Council, SODC would present map design options for the meeting of the Parish Council in March 2025.

Comments that had been requested from the Parish Council are as follows:

- Does the Parish Council still want a Village Map?
- Which facilities should be waymarked on the map?
- Whether the Parish Council would like any additional information included?
- Where would the Parish Council want this village map / noticeboard to be installed?

It was AGREED to defer this matter to the next meeting of the Open Spaces Committee.

- m) Grant Award - The Parish Council had received a grant award for a defibrillator that was applied for through Cllr Robin Bennett's grant scheme. Funds had been sent to the Parish Council.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item.

- n) Grant Aid Applications - An advert had been added to the Village Voice advising that the Parish Council is now accepting grant aid applications for 2025-2026. The deadline for applications is set as 7th March 2025 and they will be considered by the Finance Committee during its March meeting, with recommendations made to full council.
- o) SODC Performing Arts Grant Funds – SODC opened a performing arts grant scheme on 3rd February 2025. The scheme is open to voluntary and community organisations in South Oxfordshire, who are able to apply for up to £5,000 in funding for projects that improved community wellbeing across the district.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item.

- p) Proposed Speed Limit Reductions – OCC had opened consultation surrounding proposed speed limit reductions around Berinsfield. The Parish Council was asked to consider the following proposed reductions:

Nuneham Courtenay to Berinsfield.

- 50mph to replace the National Speed Limit (NSL), between the existing 20mph at Nuneham Courtenay and the existing 40mph at Berinsfield.

Dorchester Bypass.

50mph to replace the NSL, between the existing 40mph at Berinsfield and the existing 40mph north of Shillingford.

Note – plans are also being progressed to modify the lane markings and central hatching when the road is resurfaced later this year.

Comments or representations must be submitted by 28th February 2025.

It was AGREED that the Clerk will make representations that the Parish Council do not support these reductions to the speed limit as detailed and to ask that the Parish Council are kept updated about road markings being modified.

- q) Probation Period of the Clerk – The Clerk to the council has completed the probation period as set out in the contract of employment. The Parish Council was asked to consider whether to confirm the employment of the Clerk and declare that the probation period has been successful.

Cllr Chrisp proposed and Cllr Head seconded that the probation period of the Clerk be deemed as successful. It was AGREED that the Clerk's permanent employment be confirmed and that the probation period be confirmed as successful.

- r) Handover of Clerk Duties – The current Clerk is awaiting the handover of log in details and information relating to financial packages and systems. The former Clerk whom is acting in an advisory capacity held this information along with records and files. A date has been arranged of 10th February 2025 for these final items to be handed over. After

this period, the handover would be complete. The Parish Council was asked to note that as of 6th February the Clerk email address would be in the sole control of the new Clerk.

The Parish Council acknowledged this item.

- s) Berry Youth Centre – Berry Youth Centre had made contact with the Parish Council requesting approval to use the Recreation Ground on 12th July for Berinsfield Village Fete, Thursday 10th April for football and 2nd November 2025 for a firework display. The Parish Council were asked to consider this request.

It was AGREED to approve the request for these dates from the Berry Youth Centre.

16. Statement of Accounts for Payment in February 2025.

It was proposed by Cllr Bunyan and seconded by Cllr Crawford to accept the statement of accounts for payment in February 2025. It was AGREED that the statement of accounts for payment in February 2025 totalling £10,614.53 would be approved for payment.

17. Bank Statements.

The bank statements were inspected and the balances noted and were signed by Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely, the Chairman of the Parish Council.

18. Items for report to Chairman

- a) Tree Roots Outside Lower Shop – Cllr Chrisp reported complaints of tree roots causing nuisance outside of the lower shops. It was AGREED that the Clerk will take pictures of these and add them to Fixmystreet.
- b) Village History Talk – Cllr Bridge reported that there is a Village History Talk scheduled at the Berinsfield Community Association on Thursday 20th February at 7.30pm. It was AGREED the Clerk will share these details on social media.
- c) Village Video – Cllr Bridge reported that there is a showing of the video that was made documenting various organisations and groups within Berinsfield. The showing will be at the Berinsfield Community Association on February 28th 2025 at 7.30pm. Cllr Bridge encouraged all councillors to attend.
- d) Volunteers – Cllr Jones mentioned that it is her feeling that the Parish Council should exercise caution when using voluntary help.
- e) Patient Participation Group – Cllr Chrisp reported that the Berinsfield Health Centre will be holding its next Patient Participated Group meeting at the Health Centre on 12th February 2025 at 6.30pm.
- f) Grant for The Pavilion – Cllr Scott-Ely advised that the Parish Council had been successful in its application for Grant Aid for solar panels and other works to the Pavilion. Letters of acceptance will be signed in due course.

22. Date of next meeting – 3rd March 2025.