

Minutes of meeting held on 7th April 2026 in the Village Hall.

PRESENT:

Cllr Fardon (Chair), 7 Parish Councillors, the Clerk to the Parish Council and 3 members of the public.

1. **Apologies:** Cllr. P. Olney, Cllr. R. Worker

2. **Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 1st April 2025:**

Copies of the minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and there were no matters arising.

3a) Report of the Parish Council:

Over the past year, Oakley Parish Council has continued to meet regularly to conduct the business of the parish, respond to residents' concerns, and support the wellbeing of our village.

Council Meetings and Governance

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the Parish Council held regular meetings to consider a wide range of parish matters. This included routine governance, reporting from the Clerk, financial oversight, and matters raised by residents during public question time. The Council publishes agendas and minutes to ensure transparency and accessibility for all residents. The Annual Parish Council Meeting allows the opportunity to reflect on priorities and progress with the community and our meeting in May is when councillors are reconfirmed and duties allocated. Members of the public may be interested to know that we do have one vacancy.

Planning and Development

Planning has remained a standing item throughout the year, with councillors reviewing and commenting on a range of applications affecting Oakley. Where applications raised concerns, the Council aimed to reflect residents' views constructively, while recognising the limits of parish council powers.

Housing at Station Road

One of the most significant developments coming to fruition now is the housing development on Station Road. The land will be developed by Guinness Housing Trust who wish to build up to 40 homes (subject to planning permission). The proposal is for 21 homes with shared ownership and 19 with social rent (for those people on the Borough Council's waiting list). The Parish Council met with developers three weeks ago to discuss proposed plans and give feedback. Residents have now received a flyer through their door inviting views. We recently agreed that site preparation work may start and requested certain conditions around the site access to minimize issues with the school day. The Trust will shortly be seeking planning permission. We know that the housing development goes towards fulfilling the quota for Oakley. Unfortunately, we all know that there is significant pressure around this area as school students arrive and leave. We are all too aware that it will increase traffic and parking issues and we do not have any easy solution to that. We are grateful to the residents on the NDP group who support the Parish Council in these matters.

Community Engagement, Fundraising, and the Village Quiz

Community spirit remains a real strength in Oakley. During the year, the Parish Council continued to support the monthly village quiz, which remains very well attended and much enjoyed. The quizzes have now risen over £5,000 since they began in September 2023, a fantastic achievement and a clear reflection of the generosity and enthusiasm of those who take part. I would like to offer particular thanks to Cllr. Richard Worker for his ongoing commitment to organising and running the quiz. His time, effort and consistency have played a key role in its success and the funding it has generated for village-based causes.

Youth Club – Challenges and Commitment

The Youth Club has remained an important and ongoing focus for the Parish Council. As a Council, we recognise how vital youth provision is in Oakley — not only as a safe place for young people to spend time, but also as a positive part of village life that supports families and community cohesion. Over the past 18 months or so Youth Club performance has been spasmodic. We found it hard to resource regularly and this year, we have found it very difficult to attract young people. As such, we have kept the Youth Club under review, discussed the position openly, and explored other options for management, which proved too expensive to pursue. We have agreed to pause activity for the immediate future and revisit and review the Youth Club over time to see what provision young people in Oakley need. Accordingly, the Youth Club will not open after this Easter Break. Thank you to the current team of employees who have worked extremely hard to offer an attractive night out for young people in Oakley.

Communications and the Parish Newsletter

There is a lot going on in Oakley and the parish newsletter continues to be an effective way of keeping residents informed about Council business, village news, and upcoming events. We wish to record thanks to Bill Chalker for his hard work and commitment to producing the newsletter. His contribution has made a genuine difference to communication within the village, and we are incredibly grateful for his time and effort.

Grants and Support to the Community

Over the course of the year, the Parish Council has continued to support Oakley through both direct contributions and by helping channel funding into village priorities. We seek to support groups that make a difference to Oakley.

Finance and Administration

Throughout the year, councillors have reviewed and approved payments, monitored expenditure against budget, and received regular financial reports from the Clerk. Required financial documents are published in line with regulations, demonstrating the Council's continuing commitment to sound fiscal management. A cursory glance at the accounts for Oakley Parish Council may leave residents believing we have large reserves. A lot of this money is ringfenced for specific uses and as such the Parish Council must keep a close eye on finances and projects it can undertake.

Volunteers and Thanks

I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their time, commitment, and willingness to deal with a wide range of issues throughout the year. Thank you to Councillor Robert Saunders for deputising for me when needed. A special note to Councillor Phyllis Jones for regularly checking the litter bins and raising issues when needed, helping to keep Oakley tidy and well maintained.

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I would also like to thank our Parish Clerk for her professionalism, organisation, and ongoing support, which enables the Council to function effectively and meet its responsibilities.

More broadly, thank you to all volunteers across the village — whether you participate in litter picking, helping with events, maintaining village spaces, supporting community groups, or quietly keeping an eye on things behind the scenes. These contributions, often unseen, make a real and lasting difference and are a vital part of what makes Oakley such a strong and caring community.

b) Parish Precept 2026/27:

The precept for this year has been set at £64,150 which is a 5% increase in the precept and which will increase the band D rate by 5% from £61.38 to £64.42.

c) Draft Accounts for 2025/2026:

In 2025/26 income amounted to £82,742.02 and expenditure to £82,018.38. Income increased slightly by approximately £1,777. The precept increased by £2,900 and an additional £1,001 was received in interest payments. This was offset by a decrease in grants of £1,443 as a £1,587 Ward Fund grant was received for ditch works and a new bin on the Green last year compared to a CPRE grant of £144 to maintain the hedge in Riverside this year. Newsletter and Directory advertisements also decreased by £847 as no Directory was published and fewer businesses advertised in the Newsletter.

Expenditure remained very similar to last year, increasing by just £519. Capital expenditure increased by £2,693 as new play equipment, a new seat on the Green, replacement bollards and a replacement bin were purchased compared to new Christmas lights, replacement bins, a new defibrillator case and a replacement flag bought in 2024/25. However, the remaining CIL monies from the Parrott Close development were used for most of the play equipment and the seat was paid for with a donation from the former Gardening Club. Expenditure on publicity increased by £1,288 as printing costs for five Newsletters fell into 2025/26 and we had to purchase a .gov.uk website domain name, which is now required by audit regulations. Wages/pension costs also increased by £1,575.

The increases in expenditure were offset by decreases of £2,113 in play equipment maintenance and repair costs, £1,035 less spent on the allotments as tree and ditch works were carried out in 2024/25 and £875 less given in grants to local organisations. In addition, the 2023 election costs of £1,539 were invoiced in 2024/25 and there were none in 2025/26

Donations totalling £5,150 were made to the Youth Club, the Village Hall, Oakley Day Centre, the Villager Bus, the Good Neighbours Scheme and Country Days who run an access to nature project at Felmersham Nature Reserve and £2,928.43 from the quiz to various youth groups in the village and towards the Good Neighbour Scheme start up costs. (There are differences in quiz receipts and payments because the proceeds from the March quiz, which will be included in the 2026/27 donations, have already been paid into the Council account and monies were spent on prizes and hire of the Village Hall).

d) Planning

During 2025/26 the Parish Council was consulted on and commented on a total of 25 planning and related applications, compared to 29 in 2024/25. As a general policy Council asks for trees and hedges not to be removed unless they cannot not be saved and, if they have to be felled, for replacements to be planted in their place.

Most applications were for relatively minor works but we objected to four. We objected to the reserved matters application for the ten houses off the High Street because of insufficient parking, concerns about drainage, problems with the layout and lack of information on the maintenance of open spaces and trees. The Borough Council has yet to make a decision on the application. We also objected to a recent application for a first floor extension on a property in The Drive that has already been carried out as it does not fit with the appearance of the house or the previous appearance of the garage block prior to the extension. Again, the Borough has yet to make a decision.

We objected to two applications for new developments. The first, an application for 68 affordable homes in Oakley Road, Bromham as the site is outside the Settlement Policy Area in the open countryside and would result in the loss of best agricultural land. The application has been refused by the Borough Council on these grounds and because the site is poorly connected to local services, would adversely affect the local character and landscape and there was no s. 106 agreement for affordable housing, healthcare and sports facilities. The second for an application for five to seven dwellings on land off Lovell Road, because Oakley has already allocated 50 houses in its Neighbourhood Plan, the site is outside the SPA in the open countryside and the development would contribute to coalescence between Oakley and Clapham. Again, the Borough has refused the application on these grounds plus they consider the proposed development would be cramped, removal of mature trees would result in further harm to the visual amenities of the area and no flood risk assessment was provided.

As the Chair has said, the reserved matters application for the Station Road site is shortly to be submitted to the Borough Council. When Councillors and members of the NDP Group met with the agents for the site we made suggestions on the layout e.g. moving the play area away from the entrance roundabout and placing restrictions on street parking to prevent inconsiderate parking by school parents/carers. We also asked for some of the houses to be allocated to those with a strong connection to Oakley and for sewage flooding problems to be pursued with Anglian Water.

The Borough Local Plan 2040 was withdrawn on the advice of the Planning Inspector, so the Borough Council no longer has a 5-year land supply. Parish Councils have therefore been advised to review their Neighbourhood Plans again and we have recently carried out a Housing Needs Survey as part of this process. Unfortunately, Neighbourhood Plans are not likely to be given the weight that they were previously due to upcoming changes in Planning law.

4. Questions from the Floor:

A resident thanked Council for their efforts in the village.

Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.