

# Launton Annual Parish Meeting 2025

DRAFT Minutes of the meeting  
held on Thursday 17 April 2025  
at 7.30pm

**Chairman:** Councillor Simon Turner (Chairman Launton PC)  
**Clerk:** Simon Turner (Acting Parish Clerk)  
**Launton Residents:** 13 residents  
**District Councillors:** None  
**County Councillor:** None  
**Police:** None  
**Guest Speaker:** Carole Hetherington, Langford Village Community Association

- 1. To accept apologies for absence**  
Apologies were received from two villagers.
- 2. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting on 18 April 2024**  
All were in favour of the Minutes being confirmed as an accurate record and they were signed by the Chairman.
- 3. Matters arising from these minutes**  
None.
- 4. Report from the Chairman of Launton Parish Council for the past year**  
The Parish Council usually meets on the first Thursday of the month, and meetings feature a public participation session from 7:15 p.m. (at which councillors are available for parishioners to talk to them about any subject they wish), prior to the council meeting starting at 7:30 p.m. Part of the meeting itself is set aside for members of the public to address the council about items on the agenda, subject to individual and overall time limits. Documents, including the agenda, are displayed for all to see using a data projector.

The agenda for the forthcoming meeting, and minutes of the previous meeting, are displayed on the two Parish Council notice boards outside the Parish Hall and near the War Memorial, and are also available from the council's web site at [www.launton-pc.gov.uk](http://www.launton-pc.gov.uk) along with other documents for the meetings.

The council has had its 12 regular monthly meetings this year, with three extraordinary meetings. We have seen 41 planning applications, a considerable increase on recent years (last year was 29). The number of consultation documents thankfully remains relatively small.

I have said many times in past reports that I did not know what we would do without our clerk, Jane Olds. We have now been forced to find out, as in September she was lured to Ambrosden Parish Council by reduced working hours, meaning a better work/life balance, and left us at the end of October. This was obviously a major blow, especially as nobody

expressed any interest in taking on the role; as a result I have taken over as acting clerk, which was formally confirmed at a meeting in December.

Combining the work necessary to keep the council running with being chairman, as well as trying to earn a living, has proved very challenging, especially since I am not an experienced clerk and, as a councillor, I cannot be paid anything by the council. An unfortunate side-effect of this is that things often run rather late, which has resulted in quite a few extraordinary meetings being necessary to enable us to catch up – indeed, we have one next week to allow us to finish some financial year-end items that would normally have been done at the regular April meeting, after health problems with elderly relatives used up the time I was expecting to have to complete the necessary documents. I have to express my gratitude to my fellow councillors for doing what they can to reduce my workload by taking things on that I would normally have done, and by putting up with things being somewhat haphazard at times.

Another aspect that has suffered is the Parish Council's communications, which is entirely my fault as I have not been able to find time to keep up the blog posts on the website and, as someone who doesn't use social media at all, I have been entirely absent from Facebook, meaning that there has been no council presence there. We realise that this has caused problems, especially recently with the Parish Hall re-roofing, and are determined to address this by other councillors taking on responsibility for communications where appropriate.

More than ever, I owe a huge debt of thanks to my fellow parish councillors for their continued hard work and support. This year has seen significant changes in the make-up of the council: having started the year with our full complement of seven councillors, we have had four resignations (Richard Walker, Lesley Thompson, Ed Sanders and Abi Dowman) due to various factors including work pressures and disappointing progress with the Parish Hall project; I would like to express my thanks to them for all their contributions over, in some cases, many years. We were very pleased to co-opt Jackie Hackett and Glyn Austin in the autumn; their contributions to the council during this difficult time have been invaluable. This leaves us with two vacancies to fill: I would urge people who feel that they might be able to contribute to talk to me, or any of the other councillors, about what being a parish councillor entails. All our contact details are on the website.

I am pleased to report that the Speedwatch group is back in action, after some sickening online and in-person abuse had caused them to suspend operations for a time last year. They are still reliant on a very small pool of volunteers: please consider giving an hour or two per month to help the group continue its valuable work.

On to happier things. Thanks to the enormously hard work of the Parish Hall Development Advisory Group, we have been able to secure funding and find a contractor to replace the roof on the Parish Hall, which is ongoing at the time of writing. Funding has come from the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund via Cherwell District Council, who have been extremely helpful and supportive, with matched funding from Friends of Launton Parish Hall – to whom we are very grateful – and, thanks to the efforts of Councillor Jackie Webber (again with great support from CDC), section 106 developer funding from the Mulberry Homes development. The Advisory Group continues to meet and is exploring what funding avenues there are; unfortunately the funding landscape is now a much more barren place than it used

to be, but work continues. They are also analysing the results of the recent survey to guide our next steps.

With the pressures already mentioned and the reduced size of the council, the Parish Hall Management Committee has not yet been fully formed, and we are currently reviewing its terms of reference; during the transition period we remain extremely grateful for the continued work and support of many of those who ran the Hall on behalf of the Parochial Church Council. People who care about the Hall are urged to put their names forward to join the new committee when it is formed.

Despite what might be thought after the above, there are other aspects to the Parish Council's work than the Parish Hall! Among these are that we are continuing to maintain the areas of public space in Sherwood Close and The Glades, and have the pedestrian refuge on Station Road, and the walkway between Ancil Avenue and Sycamore Road, cleared, as well as cutting back the vegetation on highway verges. After increases in recent years as we took on new responsibilities, I am pleased to report that during the budget-setting process we were able to keep our precept at the same level as last year.

We continue to represent the village in dealings and meetings with external bodies, notably Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council; our former contact with the East West Rail Alliance team has now effectively ended. We continue to liaise and meet with the Police and representatives from other local Parish and Town Councils.

The council has continued to provide financial support to Launton Lines and St Mary's Church, as well as making contributions to the Friends of Island Pond Wood and making other charitable donations supporting organisations whose work provides benefits to the people of the village.

**5. Financial Report of Launton Parish Council for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

As most of you will be aware, at the end of October we lost our clerk, Jane Olds, to the attractions of a better work/life balance with reduced hours at Ambrosden Parish Council. Since then, with no applicants for the job, the Chairman has been Acting Clerk, Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, for which no payment is permitted as – by law – councillors cannot be paid by their council.

Balancing the considerable work required with earning a living, and without the vast experience that our previous clerk brought, has proved very challenging and, although the council continues to operate properly, some things have not been done in as timely a manner as previously. As a result, the Parish Council accounts for the year 2024/25, which would normally have been completed and closed by now, are still in the process of being finalised; there are very real deadlines in place, with the internal audit scheduled for next month and the statutory requirements for submitting the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

This year's draft Statement of Accounts, which explains last year's Parish finances, will shortly be available in the Finance section of the Parish Council website and will be formally considered at the May meeting.

Income and expenditure for the year have both increased due to the Parish Hall re-roofing project, which has involved significant income from grants, all of which goes out again as expenditure. Grants obtained by the Parish Council for this project are from the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund, match-funded by Friends of Launton Parish Hall, with Section 106 funding from the Mulberry development.

A full budget for the 2025/26 financial year was agreed in January and will shortly be confirmed at the 23 April extraordinary meeting. Following very careful consideration of the budget, this year the Precept remains unchanged at £51,592; this means that, with a slight increase in the Tax Base (broadly the number of Band D-equivalent properties in the village), Band D properties should pay slightly less over the year.

The Parish Council's responsibilities remain the same – including verge cutting, in and out of the village, emptying the numerous dog bins, and making sure that the Parish Council is compliant with all the legislation including data protection and transparency.

The Parish Council's Reserves Policy will shortly be reviewed, after draft agreement in January, in order to ensure that we are able to meet our various obligations; these include holding a percentage of the precept as a general contingency, the possibility of having to pay for an election (which is significantly more expensive than it used to be), and various other contingencies. Unless the Parish takes out a loan that is agreed by the Public Works and Loans Board, it is unable to borrow money, so it is essential that funds are set aside in earmarked reserves to pay for things when needed.

The Parish Council generally considers grants quarterly in April, July, October and January. These grants cannot be awarded to individuals, but over the last year the Parish has been pleased to be able to support the Friends of Island Pond Wood, grass cutting in St Mary's churchyard, the Royal British Legion, the Volunteer Driver Service, Clean Slate, Hope After Harm and the Launton Over-60s Club.

The Parish Council website has a wealth of information and a news section. If you haven't already signed up to receive our regular updates and meeting notices by email, please do – you can find a quick form on the left hand menu bar.

Also, if you're a user of Facebook the Parish Council also has its own presence – please do 'like' Launton Parish Council Page.

There were no questions.

## **6. Reports from representatives of village organisations**

The Clerk had contacted village organisations and 15 had submitted reports or presented them at the meeting. The following organisations responded:

Friends of Island Pond Wood

Friends of Launton Parish Hall (FoLPH)

Friends of Launton School

Launton Community Communications Group (incorporating *Launton Lines*, Facebook page and website)

Launton Community Speedwatch  
Launton Environmental Society  
Launton Historical Society  
Launton Over 60s Club\*  
Launton Plotters  
Launton Village Players  
Launton Village Rock Chorus  
Launton Women's Institute  
St Mary's PCC

\* The Launton Over 60s Club's report was submitted in time but fell foul of a spam filter; it was not discovered in time for the meeting and was therefore not read out.

The written reports were available on the Parish Council website.

**7. Report from the Cherwell District Councillor for Launton**

There was no report from the District Councillors, who were only given short notice of the meeting and were unable to attend.

**8. Report from the Oxfordshire County Councillor for Launton**

There was no report from Councillor Ian Corkin, who was only given short notice of the meeting and was unable to attend.

**9. Report from Thames Valley Police**

There was no report from Thames Valley Police, who were only given short notice of the meeting and no representative was able to attend.

**10. Report on London Road Level Crossing campaign by Langford Village Community Association**

Carole Hetherington, Chairman of Langford Village Community Association, addressed the meeting about the efforts being made by LVCA and MP Calum Miller to keep vehicle access along London Road instead of East West Rail's proposal to close the level crossing and only provide means for pedestrians to cross the railway line.

**11. Any other business**

No other business was raised.

**12. Date and venue of next meeting**

16 April 2026 in Launton Parish Hall at 7:30 pm.

**The meeting closed at 8:59 pm.**

Signed.....

Dated.....