



Benson Parish Council

Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson, Wallingford. OX10 6LZ

Tel: 01491 825038 e-mail: clerk@bensonpc.org.uk

Recreation & Lands Committee

Membership:

Chair Councillor Patricia Baylis, Councillor Robert Castelow-Sturges, Councillor Gavin McLauchlan, Councillor Phil Murray, Councillor Roger Moore and Councillor Tom Stevenson.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BENSON PARISH COUNCIL RECREATION AND LANDS COMMITTEE HELD IN THE PARISH HALL ON THURSDAY 11th SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 7.00PM

Present: Cllr Patricia Baylis (Chair), Cllr Robert Castelow-Sturges, Cllr Gavin McLauchlan, Cllr Phil Murray, Cllr Roger Moore, Cllr William Pattison and Cllr Tom Stevenson
Nicola Copland – Clerk
2 members of the public

Layla Johnston
17th September 2025

1. Apologies and absences - none

2. Declarations of interest

Two declarations of interest in respect of item 9

3. Public session

Two allotment plot holders came to talk about recent vandalism and thefts at the allotments. They explained that a lot of produce had been taken as well as tools and asked why no security cameras had been put up despite having been “promised” them a year ago. They would like to know what the Council were going to do about it. Cllr Baylis explained this was on the agenda and there would be a full discussion later in the meeting and that they would be welcome to stay for this. She also said that BPC had decided not to install cameras previously. It was suggested that they consider getting together with other tenants to form an Association and then put in place their own arrangements.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meetings of the Recreation and Lands Committee held on Thursday 10th July 2025 and sign as a true record of the meeting.

5. Actions from the last meeting.

- Paving millstream – quote from Aldridge Landscaping will be put forward to Finance.
- Oxfordshire Together – awaiting map. Consulted other Clerks to see if they have the map.
- DWH management plan – completed
- Skate park – completed
- Rivermead – Update later.
- Reprinting leaflet – b/f
- Cuckoo Pen – done
- Trees – rescheduled due to weather
- Allotments – on agenda
- Warwick Spinney – on agenda
- Basketball Hoop – getting quotes
- Cala green spaces – waiting for management plans
- Planting in play areas – Darren to do with Patricia.
- Cala park gate to be reversed
- War Memorial drop kerb – waiting for civil engineer’s quote



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- Thames Water compound – work pushed back until beginning Oct
- Waste – new bin ordered for by the new bridge at Warwick Spinney
- Notice boards in village centre overhaul – pending
- Village map – Layla to review as old map too out of date
- Litter picking group – no new date from the litter picking group yet.
- Interpretation boards – on agenda
- Footpath warden – on agenda
- Bollards – on agenda

6. Green Spaces

- a. Discuss the next steps for the management of the Green Spaces

Clerk is drawing up a staffing plan for this which will be initially discussed at Finance. There is now a map showing the various green spaces. Query- are they named and if not should we name them so that they are easy to identify? Maybe named in the NP. Also need to identify final commuted sum which will be available.

Action – Cllr Murray to extract the map and circulate. Cllr Pattison suggested using maps from planning website and will do this on paper. Clerk suggested better discussed in a separate meeting once we have the maps and plan what needs to be done as this feeds into staffing requirements.

7. Skate Park

- a. Any issues – no issues

8. Rivermead.

- a. Update on the refurbishment project.

Phil Woodward has been appointed as project manager and is coming up with an action plan. EA and SODC Environment agency have commented adversely on planning application regarding flooding - not relevant as not building anything. Cllr Pattison has addressed it. Also concern about trees being taken down and pointed out net gain with the orchard being planted across the road.

- b. Discuss recent anti-social behaviour at the site

Difficulties this summer with people camping overnight, night anglers and human waste being left. H&S officer at SODC has also received a complaint and there is a meeting tomorrow to discuss this. Consider whether to put CCTV cameras there. The mobility hub will be going to consultation on 24th September and we have an opportunity to put forward our ideas and wish list and includes not just the hub but the wider area so it may be an opportunity to get CCTV cameras (but not for 3 years). Likely that these behaviours will disappear once the weather breaks so should consider for next year. Cllr Pattison suggested sorting out the electricity box to accommodate our needs ie run CCTV. **Action** Make electric box bigger by building up brickwork (builder required) and ask the electrician to fit out. While waiting for Mobility Hub, consider putting up a trail camera (somewhere secure – gable end of the boat store?) and put up CCTV camera signs. Cllr Murray has a spare donated camera.

- c. Any issues - none

9. Allotments

- a. Report from Allotments Manager – report circulated. Small waiting list, the Grounds team cleared empty plots, consider changing troughs for push button taps – no, as already discussed.



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Criminal damage - footage handed to us from an allotment holder's trail cameras, children identified and sent to respective schools.

b. Update on the water meter for the paddock – water meter has been located. A reading was taken on 3rd September and will measure usage for a month. We should point out to the tenant on the Paddock that going forward she will have to pay for water as this is in her tenancy agreement.

Action – write to the tenant.

c. Discuss recent allotment thefts – Agreed will put up standard warning signs that CCTV is in operation as this can be done for minimal cost. They are entitled to use their own cameras on their own allotment; the PC will not be installing CCTV. The ground staff are currently spending up to 30 hours a week dealing with the allotments. We should push the formation of an Allotment Association. Clerk will be researching a new tenancy agreement as part of her CILCA qualification. We have done some research on other Council's approach for comparison. A lot are managed by allotment societies and committees. Council feels strongly that the real cost to the Council of looking after allotments needs to be publicised. **Action** – put up CCTV signs

d. Discuss price increases - need to advise by end of September if going to increase next year. Agreed to separate into two stages – agree an increase now for the period 2026/27 and then launch a comprehensive review where we measure, standardise plots and account for the running and staff, water costs. Implementing a new agreement and rate adjustments. Water costs have increased 20-25% this year.

Action – The Committee voted in favour of increasing the rent to 14p per square metre and increasing the admin charge to £15. This would be taken to Finance committee.

e. Discuss carpets on allotments and trees.

The Benson Bulletin had notified us of receipt of a letter from an allotment plot holder complaining about the Council's behaviour in cutting down trees. BB gave us the right to reply but agreed on balance not to reply. BPC had cut down and pollarded a hazelnut and an apple tree which required a recognised degree of maintenance. If there is any lesson to be learnt it is that we did not inform people ahead of the work.

The new tenancy agreement will specify what is and is not allowed on allotments. Carpets will not be allowed because they release micro plastics into the soil.

Action – Cllr Tom Stevenson to look into obtaining a TPO on the Oak tree at the allotments.

f. Any other issues - none

10. Sunnyside

a. Update on Thames Water compound – delayed start until October - more tests being undertaken. No comms done yet. **Action** - Chase up notice of contract/licence.

b. Any other issues – Increase in litter again.

11. Play Areas

a. St Helen's fencing – The recommendation was amended to allow for scope to review exactly where the fencing would go (idea to keep dogs out of children's play area whilst allowing them a small area to run in).

Action - Cllrs Baylis, Stevenson and Clerk to review position of fencing. Recommendation agreed for FC as follows

Recommendation to Full Council to spend no more than £12,000 + VAT to erect a fence at St Helen's play area.

b. Discuss a request for permanent goal posts at St Helen's – request from resident whose boys take their own goalposts down to put some permanent ones in. Council agreed this was not possible. **Action** – inform resident of decision.

c. Any other issues - none



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12. Waste and bins.

a Update – new bin on order. Cllr Baylis and Clerk will choose location (near bridge)

13. Discuss tree report for the Cedars. – **Action** - Request an executive summary in layman's terms which explains the recommendation – ask for a set of instructions which can be given to tree surgeons.

14. General items

a. Update on the War Memorial – Cllr and a parishioner met with a contractor who will send a quote. Unfortunately, this will not be completed in time for Remembrance Day.

b. Discuss Interpretation Boards – in hand

c. Discuss the bollards at the Scout Hut – **Action** – get three quotes for lockable bollards and ask Scouts for a contribution.

d. Parking at College Farm – BPC owns the car park, slip road and the paving. Difficulty with a resident parking his camper van down there taking up more than 1 space. In addition residents have put their "no parking" signs up and should be asked to remove them. **Action** Find out who owns the garages at the back. One of the issues is that individuals have sold off their garages so have left themselves with no parking. Put signs up saying please limit your stay to 2 hours first. Secondly write letter to residents. Mark out some parking for residents. Cllr Baylis and Clerk to go down and have a look.

15. Cuckoo Pen

a. Update on this project - Landy Girls appointed to do the work. 100% grant applied for from FCC. Project to start in the new year.

16. Ladybrook Bridge

a. Update on a bridge – designs circulated. Although Cllrs liked the curved bridge, the cost and material (timber) were not suitable. The flat bridge is more practical and made of steel. **Action** Cllr Pattison to get prices for supply of flat bridge.

17. Footpaths.

a. To discuss footpath warden – Cllr Moore has stepped up into this role. He has received details from the OCC footpath warden and will contact the Warborough footpath warden. **Action** - announce at next FC [query put a post out to the village?]

18. Items for Councillors to note or for the next agenda.

Progress on Aldridge Triangle? – **Action** Cllr Pattison and Clerk to speak to residents.

Next agenda - discuss a name for the park near Elmbridge before adopting from Cala.

19. Any other business. Next meeting will be brought forward to 13th November

Date of next meeting.

Thursday 13th November 2025.