

Chairman's Report - Milcombe Parish Council 2025-2026

This report covers the activities of Milcombe Parish Council during the period April 2025 to April 2026.

Milcombe Parish Council is funded by public money received via Cherwell District Council through the Council Tax. It is Milcombe Parish Council's responsibility to use these public funds in a responsible manner for the benefit of the whole of the village of Milcombe.

The Council meets bi-monthly plus the AGM and all meetings are open to the public however there continues to be a very low attendance rate. The current Council comprises Myra Peters Chairman, Nigel Davis Vice Chairman and Councillor Chris Hill. There are currently four vacancies to fill. During the year we received resignations from Councillors Mandie McCullagh, Tracy Scott and Oscar Chang-Anderson.

Mrs Theresa Goss is the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and oversees the efficient running of the Council affairs and statutory obligations. The precept for 2025/2026 will be £15600. Our thanks go to Cherwell District Councillor David Rogers and Oxfordshire County Councillor David Hingley in dealing with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

Four people had attended the defibrillator training in April 2025. It had been suggested at the session that two additional defibrillators should be made available in the village. The two possible locations were to be near to the pub and near to the shop. It was agreed that a donation of £180 be made to South Central Ambulance Charity for running the training session.

During the year the eight village gateways, two at each entrance, had been cleaned and repainted, ensuring an attractive welcome into the village of Milcombe.

Access at the Village Hall – Councillor Nigel Davis donated a Router to the Village Hall to provide internet access to Hall users and a sim card which would be paid by Milcombe Parish Council at a cost of circa £12 per month. The access code is MilcombeVH2025.

A constant running sore for the village was and still is the state of all the roads within the village due to the numerous potholes. Some resurfacing has been carried out at the western end of Main Road into Station Road during April 2026 exiting towards Hook Norton, but the main thoroughfare remains a tyre bursting array of holes and broken road edges with no discernible improvements in the near future by OCC Highways Department. The underlying rainwater drainpipes along Main Road are also causing problems due to their collapse thus resulting in a great deal of surface water remaining on the roads and footpaths after rainfall.

During the year OCC brought in 20mph speed limits to the village and replaced the two Vehicle Speed Indicators at both ends of the village to try and reduce the constant speeding along Main Road. OCC also erected several timber bollards along Main Road to prevent vehicles driving over the grass verges and over the island by the Horse & Groom public house.

Bus Stops - Two new bus stops had been installed by The Green and had bus stop signs. However, there were no timetables on the posts. They were paid for from Section 106 funds from Phase 1 of the Oak Farm development.

Throughout the year our Clerk, Mrs Theresa Goss, had been very persistent in attempting to get the Parish Council's request for a CCTV system installed in the play area. The pylon to accommodate the camera had been installed but the stumbling block was the insistence of Cherwell DC and National Grid to run an electrical service cable from The Dovecote instead of utilising the lamp post right outside the play area. This decision regarding the cable routing had been made via a Google map. Finally, a meeting was held between CDC, National Grid and Milcombe PC and common sense prevailed, and the cable was to be installed via the lamp post outside the play park. This was finally installed in February 2026. We can now go ahead and get the camera and monitoring system in place. The Council's thanks go to Mrs Goss for her persistence in getting this CCTV system up and running.

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) – Councillor Nigel Davis advised that there had not been any progress with the Plan. There were too few Councillors on the Parish Council to progress such a major project and unless support came forward from the community, it would not be progressed any further.

During the September 2025 meeting The Chairman highlighted that following two recent resignations, there were currently only four Councillors on the Parish Council, out of a possible seven seats. The legal quorum for the Parish Council to be able to function was three and should any other Councillors resign, and the number fell below three, many of the tasks which the Parish Council undertook, would not be able to happen anymore. These included verge and churchyard grass cutting, general village maintenance such as maintaining the gateways, objecting to large scale planning applications and speaking at Planning Committee meetings, maintaining benches/bus shelters/noticeboards, lobbying County and District Councillors to get the best for Milcombe and many other matters. The Parish Council very much needed new members and asked residents to get in touch with the Clerk for more information. Since that time one more Councillor has resigned leaving three parish councillors at the present time.

During the year the village had seen the death of Michael Haynes, a former Parish Councillor and Barry Woodward a very well known and liked villager. Also, due to failing health, Ivor Howse, another long standing villager relocated to a nursing home near Bicester. At Christmas 2025 we also lost our beloved former Clerk and then Chairman, Marlene Cowell. Marlene had been Clerk and Chairman for over 30 years and was also the organist at St Lawrence Church for very many years. The Council has requested that the paperwork that Marlene had amassed for the parish council, church and village hall be boxed up by her family and returned to the village hall.

Two notable planning applications were considered during the year. Firstly, an application from Rickfield Farm for more container storage units was given consent by Cherwell Planning Committee despite objections from the Parish Council on the grounds of increased traffic through the village.

Secondly an application from Arc Planning Associates, instructed by Neptune Land Promotion Ltd, Mr I Smith, Mrs L Smith and Mrs M Smith to submit a planning application which sought to address the reasons for refusal within planning reference 23/01144/OUT which was determined by the council on 7th June 2024. This planning application utilised the exact same red line, however the key differences between the two submissions included a reduction in numbers from 90 to 50 dwellings. This application was also approved by Cherwell Planning Committee despite objections from the Parish Council.

Regarding the already approved Planning Application 22/02104/F - Land to the rear of No.12 and South of Dismantled Railway, Heath Close Milcombe - Tim Northey from Abbeymill Homes had advised the Chairman that this land had been sold to another developer, Brampton Valley Homes. The reason for the sale was due to current market conditions and Abbeymill Homes needed to reinvest in the business and in other sites under option. Currently this site has not yet had any significant building work started.

During the course of the year the Government announced their intention to simplify the local government hierarchy. To this end there are plans afoot to introduce a unitary local government system with various options on the table to create either a two unitary authority or a three unitary authority for Oxfordshire.

During the year weed control along road edges and gutters was carried out by Complete Weed Control and the grass verges, cemetery and play park were cut on a monthly basis during the summer by Nigel Prickett.

Village Hall- On-going work to obtain grants to refurbish the village hall continues. The monthly coffee mornings are popular and well attended and thanks go to Raychel Pomroy and Doreen Wyatt who provide the lovely bacon sandwiches and cakes. Bookings for the hall remain low but the account is still in the black.

In conclusion, Milcombe remains a relatively small, thriving, friendly community in which to live.