



**GORING-ON-THAMES
PARISH COUNCIL**

NEW COUNCILLOR PACK

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Quick Start Guide

However you like to work, here are the first few things worth focusing on as a new councillor. Each one is explained in more detail later in the pack – think of this as a first-week guide, not the full reading list.

- ☐ Contact your mentor or the Clerking team with any questions – no question is too small.
- ☐ Remember that no Councillor can act alone, if approached for any reason by a member of the public, thank them and refer them to the Clerk in the first instance and discuss with your mentor
- ☐ Attend your first meeting and introduce yourself to fellow councillors and the Clerking team.
- ☐ Read the agenda and any papers before each meeting (see Meetings, page 15).
- ☐ Complete and return your Register of Interests form within 28 days of your election or co-option (see page 12).
- ☐ Read the Code of Conduct (see page 11).
- ☐ Book an introductory OALC training course through the Clerking team (see Guidance & Training, page 14).

Welcome to Goring-on-Thames Parish Council

Congratulations on becoming a Parish Councillor, and welcome to Goring-on-Thames Parish Council (referred to as The Council). The Council looks forward to working with you, and thanks you for volunteering your time to serve the local community.

If this is new territory, there's no need to worry. Every councillor starts with little or no experience of council procedures, meetings, or local government law. This pack is designed to help explain how the Council works and where to find the information needed along the way. New councillors are also supported by the Clerking team and an experienced councillor who acts as a mentor. Questions are welcome at any time – no question is too small, and new councillors often bring fresh ideas and perspectives that help improve the way things are done.

What Does the Parish Council Do?

Goring-on-Thames Parish Council is the first tier of local government. Councillors are unpaid volunteers who work together to represent residents, maintain community facilities, and help shape the future of the village.

The Council manages a range of local services and facilities, works with other organisations on matters affecting residents, comments on planning applications, and helps support community projects and initiatives. Section 1 (page 6) sets out exactly what the Council is, and isn't, responsible for.

Your Councillor Resources

Each councillor is provided with a dedicated Parish Council e-mail account for council business. Agendas, meeting papers and other official correspondence are sent to this address.

Contact details and your photograph is added to the Councillors' page on the Parish Council website.

The website is the main source of information about the Council, and holds agendas, minutes, policies, reports and key governance documents.

Key Documents You Should Know About

As a councillor, there are a handful of documents worth being aware of early on – they're explained fully in Section 2 (page 10), but in summary:

- Standing Orders – the Council's rule book, setting out how meetings are conducted, how decisions are made, and how the Council carries out its business.
- Financial Regulations – the procedures for managing public money, including budgeting, spending, procurement and financial controls.
- Code of Conduct – the standards of behaviour expected of councillors, covered in Section 3 (page 11) alongside the wider standards of being a councillor.
- Communication & Media Policy – governs how councillors communicate with the public, the press, and on social media, to keep the Council's messaging consistent.

There's no need to study all these documents immediately – they are reference documents that become familiar over time. Copies are available on the website, and hard copies can be provided on request.

Key Planning Reference Documents

Planning and development are a core focus for the Council. Two local reference documents are particularly worth knowing about, both available on the Council website:

- The Goring Neighbourhood Plan (sometimes referred to as the GNP) – the Council's primary local development policy, which carries statutory weight in planning decisions.
- The Goring-on-Thames Conservation Area Appraisal – guidelines safeguarding the village's specific architectural and historical heritage.

Both are covered in more detail in Planning (page 15).

About This Pack

This pack introduces:

- How the Council is organised
- Councillor responsibilities and standards
- Meetings and decision-making
- Finance and budgeting
- Planning matters
- Training and support available to councillors
- Key policies and documents

Most of the documents referred to in this pack can also be accessed through the Goring-on-Thames Parish Council website, www.goringparishcouncil.gov.uk with links provided throughout. If a link is broken, or information appears out of date, please let the Clerking team know.

We hope you enjoy your time as a councillor and find the role both rewarding and interesting.

1. The Council

Goring-on-Thames Parish Council is a busy local council. It is the first tier of local government, and plays an important role in representing the village, promoting its interests, and supporting the work of different groups in the community. Parish Councillors do not represent political parties, and are unpaid volunteers serving their local community.

The Council's Purpose

Beyond the list of services and facilities below, it's worth understanding what a Parish Council is for. Parish Councils are the tier of government closest to residents – closer than the district, county or national government – and exist to give local communities a democratic voice in decisions that affect them. Councillors are elected, or co-opted, to represent that voice: raising issues on residents' behalf, scrutinising decisions made by others that affect the village, and taking direct action where the Council has the power and budget to do so. Keeping this wider purpose in mind, rather than just the list of services below, can make the role feel less like committee administration and more like the community representation it's designed to be.

The Council's Powers (General Power of Competence)

Local Councils in England were given a General Power of Competence in the Localism Act 2011, Sections 1-8. This means that Councils, once adopting the power, no longer need to ask whether they have a specific power to act. The Localism Act 2011 s1 (1) gives local authorities including town councils “the power to do anything that individuals generally may do as long as they do not break any other laws”. It is a power of first resort.

Restrictions in law which apply to the use of the General Power of Competence include the duties on councils to act to prevent crime and disorder; to respect human rights; to consider biodiversity; and to protect personal data. Sometimes a council can do things that an individual can't do such as creating byelaws, raising a precept or issuing fixed penalty notices but it must do so using the specific original legislation. The General Power of Competence does not mean the Council can delegate decisions to individual councillors. This procedural matter remains enshrined in law.

In order to be eligible for the General Power of Competence there are two criteria that must be fulfilled:

- At the time when the General Power of Competence is adopted, at least two-thirds of the total seats on the council must be held by members who stood at the last ordinary election or subsequent by-election, i.e. council members who have been elected (even if unopposed) rather than co-opted or appointed.
- The Clerk must hold the Certificate in Local Council Administration or an equivalent qualification. (CiLCA)

In addition, the Council must decide, at a full meeting of the council, that it meets the criteria for eligibility at that particular point in time. A resolution to this effect must be written clearly in the minutes of that meeting. The council is then required to revisit that decision and make a new resolution at every 'relevant' annual meeting of the council to confirm that it still meets the criteria (if it does). This means that eligibility remains in place until the first annual meeting of the council after the ordinary election even if the condition of the eligibility criteria has changed.

Our Role & Responsibilities

The Council has responsibility for the following areas, services and assets:

- Gardiner Pavilion & Recreation Ground & Playground
- Bourdillon Recreation Ground & Playground
- Sheepecot Pavilion & Recreation Ground
- Rectory Garden
- Ferry Lane Open Space
- White Hills Burial Ground
- Litter and dog-waste bins on Council-owned land and open spaces
- Streetlighting (in the areas maintained by the Council)
- Grass cutting (on Council-owned land)

What We're Not Responsible For

It's just as useful to know what the Council does not look after, since residents will sometimes raise these with councillors, and it helps to know where to point them:

- Household bins and waste collection – this is run by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), not the Goring-on-Thames Parish Council. We look after the litter and dog-waste bins on our own land as above and most of the street bins (excluding outside the School, Rectory Gardens, the Arcade and the Station)
- The Community Centre
- Storton Lodge, Scout Hut close to the Fire Station
- Goring Village Hall, managed by the GVH Committee
- The Wheel Orchard Car Park
- Street cleaning
- Housing issues
- Health and social services
- Schools and education
- Libraries
- Street cleaning, pavements, health and social services, schools and libraries are dealt with by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), the second tier of local government:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/>

- Highways, including parking and public rights of way, are dealt with by Oxfordshire County Council. They have a comprehensive website where most highway issues can be reported directly:
- <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>
- <http://www.fixmystreet.com>

The Council is not the planning authority, although it is consulted on planning applications submitted within the parish, and sometimes beyond (see Planning, page 15, for the full detail).

An Annual Report is presented each Spring at the Annual Parish Meeting (see page 14), giving an overview of the topics the Council has handled and bringing residents up to date on recent activity. This report is posted on the Council's website.

Councillors

A list of current Councillors and their e-mail addresses is on the website; a hard copy is available on request.

The next routine elections will take place in May 2027.

Staff & How to Contact Them

The Parish Council employs four members of staff, all part time, principally weekday mornings. They are best contacted by e-mail unless it's an emergency. The Parish Office is open to all from 09:30 to 11:30 on Mondays and Fridays; other times by appointment.

Role	Name	E-mail
Parish Clerk & RFO	Sarah Edmunds	clerk@goringparishcouncil.gov.uk
Deputy Clerk	Nick Mallen	deputyclerk@goringparishcouncil.gov.uk
Grounds & Facilities Manager	Kevin Sanders	facilities@goringparishcouncil.gov.uk
Grounds & Facilities Assistant	Jerry Merrill	assistantfacilities@goringparishcouncil.gov.uk

The Council also holds contracts for maintenance and services, e.g. bin emptying and grass cutting on its sites.

IT & Access Setup

New councillors sometimes find the practical side of getting set up trickier than expected – owing to the individual nature of this, you will be provided with details of how to set up your emails and assistance is available.

Committees & Working Groups

The Council meets monthly, apart from January and August, and delegates a few of its functions to Committees, Working Groups and the Parish Clerk. This means matters are usually discussed in detail by the relevant Committee first, which then recommends actions for approval by Full Council. Strategic decisions made by Full Council may, in turn, be delegated to a Committee, Working Group or the Clerk for implementation.

Standing Orders include a Scheme of Delegation – in short, a table setting out which decisions each Committee, Working Group or the Clerk can make without needing to come back to Full Council, and which powers and duties belong to each.

Membership of each Committee is reviewed at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, held every May, but new councillors are welcome to join any Committee or Working Group as soon as they wish, subject to the numbers allowed under its Terms of Reference.

The Clerk will supply you with the current list of Committee, Working Groups and Liaisons together with the up-to-date membership. Full Terms of Reference and details of previous meetings are on the website.

Acronyms You'll Hear

As a new councillor, plenty of acronyms come up in meetings and e-mails. Here are the most common ones, explained in plain English:

Acronym	Stands for	What it means
SODC	South Oxfordshire District Council	The second tier of local government; the local planning authority and provider of services like household bin collection.
OCC	Oxfordshire County Council	Responsible for highways, parking and public rights of way.
OALC	Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils	Membership body supporting town and parish councils across Oxfordshire, including training and advice.
NALC	National Association of Local Councils	The national body OALC is affiliated to.
RFO	Responsible Financial Officer	The person (usually the Clerk) legally responsible for the proper administration of the Council's finances.
EMR	Earmarked Reserve	Money set aside by the Council for a specific future project or purpose (see Finance, page 15).
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy	A payment from developers on qualifying new developments, which the Council can spend on local infrastructure (see Finance, page 15).
MOP	Member of Public	People who are not part of the Council e.g. residents
TOR	Terms of Reference	The document setting out a Committee or Working Group's purpose, powers and membership limits.
GPoC	General Power of Competence	A broad power allowing the Council to act in the interests of its area, subject to eligibility conditions (see page 6).
GNP	Goring Neighbourhood Plan	The Council's primary local development policy document (see Planning, page 15).
PAWG	Place & Assets Working Group	to monitor and to improve the Parish's assets, open spaces, and street scene.

2. Policies and Documents

The Council has a number of policies and documents, all available on the website. Hard copies of the main documents are available on request. Policies and documents are reviewed routinely, by the relevant Committee or Working Group and then by Full Council.

The three you will find most useful at first are:

Standing Orders

Standing Orders set the rules for how meetings run and decisions are made – covering things like how agendas are set, how votes are taken, and what the Scheme of Delegation allows each Committee, Working Group or the Clerk to decide without referring to Full Council. They're the Council's rule book and are worth returning to once meetings start to feel familiar, rather than reading cover to cover on day one.

Financial Regulations

Financial Regulations govern how the Council handles money and approves expenditure – covering budgeting, spending limits, procurement (how the Council buys goods and services) and financial controls more generally. Together with Standing Orders, they set out in detail how the Parish Council manages its affairs.

Communication & Media Policy

The Communication & Media Policy governs how councillors communicate with the public, the press, and on social media, so that the Council's messaging is consistent and appropriate. It's worth being familiar with this alongside the Code of Conduct (see Section 3, page 12), particularly since communications relating to council business – even from a personal account – can potentially be disclosed publicly (see Communications and Discoverability, page 12).

Full List of Policies available on [the Website Documents page](#) N.B. the date is when they were last approved:

Standing Orders (2026-05-22)
Code of Conduct (2026-05-22)
Scheme of Delegation (2026-05-22)
Financial Regulations (2026-05-22)

General Administration

Accessibility statement (2026-03-31)
Acquisition and Disposal of Land Policy (2023-06-12)
Certifying Documents Policy (2021-11-11)
Communication and Media Policy (2025-05-12)
Complaints Policy (2026-05-22)
Co-option-Policy (2024-11-11)
Co-option Expression of interest form
Environmental and Biodiversity Policy (2025-12-08)
Flag Policy (2022-09-12)
General Risk Management Scheme (2025-04-14)
Health & Safety Policy (2025-04-14)
Information Technology Policy (2026-03-16)
Playgrounds Inspection Policy (2025-02-10)
Posters and Signs Policy (2024-03-11)
Recordings of Meetings Policy (2025-09-08)

Safeguarding Policy (2022-01-10)

Unreasonably Persistent or Vexatious Complaints Policy (2026-06-11)

Data Protection related:

Data Protection Policy (2025-11-10)

Data Retention and Disposal Schedule (2025-11-10)

Requests for Information Policy (2025-11-10)

Subject Access Policy (2025-11-10)

Data Breach Response Plan (2025-11-10)

Privacy Notice (2025-11-10)

GPC's Publication Scheme (2021-11-08) based on the Information Commission Office's model publication scheme

Event Related

COVID Policy

Freedom of Goring (2020)

Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure (2020-01-11)

Section 101 Delegation Council (2021)

Section 101 Delegation Planning (2021)

Finance

Financial Regulations (2026-05-22)

Asset Register (2025-05-12)

Cash Receipts Policy (2026-06-222)

Expenses Policy (2025-05-12)

Financial Risk Assessment and Management Register (2026-05-22)

Grants Policy (2026-05-12) & Grant Application Form (Word)

Investment Policy & Strategy (2026-04-16)

Loan Agreement Form (2026-05-22)

Reserves Policy (2026-04-16)

Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit (2025-05-12)

Statement of Internal Controls (2026-04-16)

Staffing

Employee Handbook (2024-05-21)

Dignity at Work Policy (2024-03-01)

Lone Working Policy (2024-03-01)

Local Government Pension Scheme Employer's Pensions Discretions Policy (2024-03-01)

Equality Policy (2022-03-21)

Safeguarding Policy (2022-01-10)

3. Being a Councillor

This section covers the standards councillors are expected to uphold, how the Council operates as a body, and the guidance and training available.

Code of Conduct

Please read and become familiar with the Council's Code of Conduct, which explains the standards of behaviour expected of councillors and helps maintain public trust in local government. A hard copy is available on request.

Communications and Discoverability

Something that catches many new councillors by surprise: anything said or written in a councillor role can potentially be disclosed publicly, for example under a Freedom of Information request, or in response to a complaint. This includes e-mails, messages and documents relating to council business, even when sent from a personal e-mail account or a messaging app such as WhatsApp, rather than a council address. It's worth bearing this in mind from the outset and keeping council business on the council e-mail account where possible. The Communication & Media Policy (see page 10) sets out more detail on how councillors should communicate publicly and on social media.

Register of Interests

A copy of the Register of Interests form is included in the Appendix on page 17. You may find it helpful to complete this within the first couple of weeks of joining; it must, in any event, be returned within 28 days of election or co-option to the Council. An electronic version is also held on the SODC website.

The completed form should be returned to the Clerking team, who can also help with any questions.

Declarations of Interest

A declaration of interest is a formal statement disclosing any financial, personal or professional relationship that could influence a councillor's objectivity in a decision the Council is making.

There are two broad types of interest:

- Disclosable pecuniary interests – these involve a direct financial benefit to the councillor, or to their spouse or civil partner, such as owning a business that could win a council contract.
- Personal interests – connections that a reasonable member of the public might think could influence judgement, but which don't involve money, such as being a member or volunteer of a local club or organisation.

The key thing to know early on: the obligation is to declare an interest, not automatically to withdraw from the discussion or vote. Having a personal interest, for example volunteering for a local sports club, doesn't by itself stop a councillor taking part when the Council considers a matter affecting that club – it simply needs to be declared at the start of the meeting. A personal interest only becomes prejudicial, and requires leaving the room, where a reasonable person would think it's significant enough that judgement would be affected.

Example: a councillor who volunteers at a local sports club declares a personal interest when the Council considers a grant application from that club, explaining the connection to the meeting. Because this doesn't involve a direct financial benefit to the councillor personally, they can then continue to take part in the discussion and vote as normal, having been transparent about the connection.

An opportunity is provided at the start of every Council or Committee meeting to declare any interest in items on the agenda. This doesn't prevent a councillor declaring an interest at any other point in the meeting, if it becomes clear a conflict of interest may exist.

OALC and NALC run regular general and specific training sessions for councillors, which include coverage of the Code of Conduct.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)

All councillors are recommended to become familiar with these seven principles, which apply to anyone who works as a public officeholder:

- Selflessness: Acting solely in the public interest.
- Integrity: Avoiding conflicts of interest and improper gain.
- Objectivity: Making decisions on merit, based on evidence and without bias.
- Accountability: Submitting to scrutiny for actions and decisions.
- Openness: Being transparent, restricting information only for lawful reasons.
- Honesty: Being truthful.
- Leadership: Actively promoting and upholding these principles.

The Council as a Corporate Body

It's worth knowing early on that no individual councillor, including the Chair, can act, make commitments, or speak on behalf of the Council alone. Decisions belong to Full Council, or to a Committee or Working Group or the Clerk it has properly delegated authority to.

In practice, this is reassuring: it means responsibility for a decision is always shared, and no one councillor carries it alone. Where a councillor would like the Council to consider an idea or act on something, the route to do that is a Notice of Motion, raised through the Clerk for inclusion on a future agenda (see Meetings, page 14), rather than acting individually.

Guidance & Training

The Good Councillor's Guide, published by NALC, is a practical starting point for anyone involved in local councils, and helps councillors make a positive impact in the community from day one.

Viewing the guide (and other NALC resources) requires a free NALC account, linked to a council e-mail address. Any councillor can register for their own account directly with NALC – it doesn't need to be set up by the Clerk. Once logged in, the quickest way to find the guide and related publications is via:

www.nalc.gov.uk/resources.html?information_type=publications

As well as the general Good Councillor's Guide, NALC also publishes shorter guides on specific topics that are often useful once settled into the role, such as website accessibility, finance, employment and cyber security – worth browsing the same resources page for anything relevant to what you're working on.

The Council is a member of the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), a member-based organisation that promotes the rights and interests of town and parish councils across Oxfordshire. OALC provides professional support in all aspects of council work and can provide formal advice where needed. OALC is, in turn, affiliated to NALC.

OALC runs a comprehensive training programme for Town/Parish Clerks, Councillors and Chairs, suitable for both new and experienced councillors, including sessions from experts in planning, local government and finance.

Where to start

You may find it helpful to attend an introductory course as soon as you're able to. Training booked through the Clerking team is covered by the Parish Council, which has budget provision for this – just let the Clerking team know which course(s) you'd like to attend.

4. How Things Work

This section covers how meetings are run, how the Council's finances work, and its role in planning.

Meetings

The Parish Council holds ten scheduled Full Council meetings a year, taking a break in January and August.

Full Council usually meets at 6.30pm on the second Monday of the month, in the Reiss Room of the Community Centre. Each Committee and Working Group has its own meeting cycle, published on its dedicated webpage; contact the Clerking team if this is needed. Non-committee members are welcome to attend any Committee meeting, but do not have voting rights unless asked to substitute for an absent committee member. Minutes of Committee meetings are published on the website and circulated with the papers for the next Full Council meeting. N.B the minutes remain in draft format until approved at the next meeting

Agendas and how to get an item on one

Agendas are sent out by e-mail no later than three working days prior to the meeting, together with minutes of the previous Council and/or Committee meeting, and any appendices (papers) relating to the agenda items. You may receive papers titled "Confidential Items" these should only be discussed with other Councillors or the Clerking Team. Hard copies are not provided. The Clerking team can supply WiFi access details for meeting venues for anyone wanting to view papers their own device. To get an item on an agenda, speak to the clerk of the meeting no later than 10 days prior to the meeting and you may be asked to complete and submit a Notice of Motion form.

Extra Ordinary Meetings

An extraordinary meeting is typically called for a time-sensitive decision that can't wait for the next scheduled meeting, it is called the same way as Full Council meetings.

How meetings are run

All meetings are open to the public and begin with Public Question Time, when any member of the public can ask a question or raise an issue relating to anything on the agenda. This lasts a maximum of 10 minutes, although the Chair may extend it if a number of people wish to speak. This is the public's only opportunity to participate in the meeting, other than at the Chair's discretion.

Standing Orders Page 2 onwards contain the full details on the rules of how meetings are run. Some of the key points are that Motions on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the chair of the meeting, and unless permitted by the chair of the meeting, a councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion. A meeting may not exceed two hours unless the council resolves extra time.

If the Council needs to discuss a confidential matter, such as a competitive tender, this is dealt with at the end of the meeting under Confidential Items. A motion is passed to exclude the press and public, who must then leave for that part of the meeting.

Annual Meeting of Parish Council

The May Council meeting is termed the Annual Meeting of Parish Council. This is when councillors elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the year ahead and appoint members to Committees and outside bodies. The website includes a list of current Committee, Working Group and Liaison membership. Speak to the Clerk Team or the Chair of a Committee/Working Group if you wish to be considered for any role.

Annual Meeting of the Parish

Not to be confused with the above; An Annual Meeting of the Parish is also held between 1 March and 1 June each year, starting no earlier than 6pm, for the benefit of all residents. The Council Chair delivers an

address describing the Council's activities over the previous year and presents a summary of the accounts for the previous financial year. Village Clubs, Groups and Societies may be invited to present their activities to attendees.

Attendance

All Councillors are expected to attend every Full Council meeting. Where a councillor can't attend, apologies should be sent by e-mail in advance. A councillor who doesn't attend meetings for six months, without giving a reason accepted by the Council, ceases to be a Councillor.

Finance

The Council's financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March. Once the accounts are closed for the year, the Internal Audit is performed prior to early May, then the Intermediate Audit is conducted, and both sets of papers are included in the pack sent to the External Auditor by the end of June. A period of 30 working days including the first 10 days of July is announced for Inspection of the Accounts by the public (by appointment to the Clerk/RFO). The conclusion of Audit arrives in the Autumn and all papers are published on the website.

Where the money comes from

The Council's main source of income is the portion of Council Tax allocated to the Parish Council, known as the Precept. Full Council agrees how much precept to request for the coming financial year at its November/December meeting, based on a recommendation from the Finance Committee, which meets monthly.

The Finance Committee reviews budgets requested by other committees and considers other costs and income due to Full Council, to propose a precept. A copy of the Council's latest budget and precept request is provided to councillors and published by SODC. Financial information summarising the Council's income and expenditure for the previous financial year is available on the website.

The other significant source of income is the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). In plain English: CIL is a payment that SODC collects from developers on qualifying major new developments, not, for example, from a resident extending their own home, and a share of it is passed to the Parish Council. It can be spent on infrastructure that supports new development in the area, such as improvements to open spaces, playgrounds or community facilities. Previous CIL receipts have been spent on Speed Indicator Cameras, Upgrading the streetlights to LED and Pedestrian Safety Projects

Setting the budget

Each Committee submits a budget request to the Finance Committee ahead of the November/December precept-setting meeting. The Finance Committee reviews these, balances them against anticipated income, and recommends a precept and budget for Full Council to approve. The Finance Committee then reports to every Full Council meeting, with a quarterly review, to make sure spending stays within budget.

Earmarked Reserves (EMRs)

The Council holds Earmarked Reserves (EMRs) – money set aside for specific future projects, agreed as part of the annual budget-setting process described above.

Unplanned or unbudgeted spending

Not every need can be foreseen a year in advance. For example, a working group might want to buy new benches, or the Clerking team might need new equipment where the cost wasn't part of the original budget. A request should be put before the Finance Committee for budgetary recommendations then passed to Full Council for Approval.

Planning

SODC is the Planning Authority and decides all local planning applications. All documents submitted as part of a planning application are available on the SODC website's Planning Register. Applications can be searched by reference number if known, or by address.

Parish Council is consulted on all planning applications submitted to SODC for sites within the parish, and on some applications outside the parish that may affect it, for example in neighbouring parishes. The Planning Committee considers each application and uploads its response on the SODC website, where it's added to the application's comments. Minutes of any planning responses submitted to SODC are included in the papers for each Full Council meeting.

As explained under Finance (page 15), the Council also receives Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments from qualifying developments within the parish, which help fund village projects such as improving playgrounds and open spaces.

The Goring Neighbourhood Plan (GNP) is currently being updated. The Parish Council worked with local community representatives and organisations to draw up the plan, which SODC takes into account when deciding planning applications. Link to the existing GNP:

www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/10/2019-10-28-Goring-NP-made-version-compressed.pdf

The Goring-on-Thames Conservation Area Appraisal is similarly important, setting out guidelines that safeguard the village's specific architectural and historical heritage. It's worth a look alongside the Neighbourhood Plan when considering any application that touches the conservation area.

www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/sites/2/2026/01/Goring-WIP-adopted.pdf

The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 was adopted at a meeting of SODC on 10 December 2020 and now forms part of the development plan for the district.

Planning can seem daunting at first – it's a wide and complex field – but courses such as those run by OALC provide a good grounding, including sessions for those with no prior knowledge. Other councillors, including those involved in the Neighbourhood Plan Update, can also share their experience; a mentor councillor is a good starting point for guidance. It may help to remember that, as an individual councillor, no one is personally deciding the planning application, simply helping to recommend a response that is submitted by the Parish Council as a whole (see also The Council as a Corporate Body, page 13).

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government) has produced a Plain English Guide to the Planning System, first published in 2015. Although planning reform continues to be discussed, the guide still provides a useful summary of the overall system.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Clerking team or a mentor councillor with any questions or queries.

With very best wishes for your time at Parish Council.

Sarah Edmunds

CILCA Qualified Parish Clerk & RFO

Next Review Date: 2027

Appendix: Register of Interests Form

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE

General

Please:

- Write Clearly and in CAPITALS
- Do NOT include any abbreviations or acronyms other than N/A if you do not have a spouse, partner or are widowed
- Ensure that all fields are completed and that you enter “**None**” in any of the boxes under headings where there is nothing to be registered – no field should be left empty
- Ensure that you sign and date the notification
- Be aware that it is an offence to fail to register interests in accordance with the Act, i.e within 28 days of becoming a member. It is also a potential breach of the Code of Conduct to fail to notify the Monitoring Officer of any changes to your interests within 28 days

Whose interests must be included?

The Act provides that the Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which must be notified are those of a member or co-opted member of the authority, **or**

- those of a spouse or civil partner of the member or co-opted member
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as husband/wife
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as if they were civil partners

(in each case where the member or co-opted member is aware that the other person has the interest)

When should the monitoring officer be notified of disclosable pecuniary interests?

As a member or co-opted member you must, before the end of 28 days beginning with the day on which you became a member or co-opted member of the authority, notify the authority’s monitoring officer of any disclosable pecuniary interests which you or your spouse or civil partner or equivalent have at the time when the notification is given.

Under the Code adopted by the Council, you are also required to inform the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of any new interest or any changes to your registered interests (e.g. a change of job or address)

Following any disclosure of an interest not on the council’s register or the subject of a pending notification, you must notify the monitoring officer of the interest within 28 days beginning with the date of disclosure. (A pending notification is one where the Monitoring Officer has been notified of the interest but it has not yet been entered in the register).

Sensitive Information

If you have an interest, the nature of which is that you and the Monitoring Officer consider that disclosure of the details of the interest could lead to you, or a person connected with you, being subject to violence or intimidation, then details of that interest can be excluded from copies of the interests register which are available for inspection, as well as any published version of the register. Those versions may, however, state that you or your

spouse or civil partner or equivalent have an interest, the details of which are withheld because of this provision.

Please contact the Monitoring Officer if you wish to discuss this aspect.

Please read the following section notes before you complete each section of the form

Section 1: Employment etc.

You must include “*any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain*”.

Please ensure that

- you include a short description of the activity concerned: for example, "Computer Operator" or "Accountant"
- you give the name of any employer, e.g. the company which pays your salary or wages, or list yourself as self-employed if applicable
- The address of your place of work or office
- where an office is held, the name of the person or body who made the appointment is given

Please note that

- Following advice from a leading barrister, the Monitoring Officers of the Oxfordshire Authorities consider that receiving a basic or special responsibility from another council is a disclosable pecuniary interest which you are required to register as a DPI under employment
- there is no need to enter (as examples) “retired” or “retired doctor” – if there is nothing which applies to you or your spouse/partner under this section, please simply enter “None”

Section 2: Sponsorship

You must include any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council of which you are a member or co-opted member) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. (The “relevant period” being the period of twelve months ending with the day when you make a notification).

This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

Section 3: Contracts

You must include details of any contract between you, or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent, or a body in which either of you have a beneficial interest, and the council of which you are a member or co-opted member:

- under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; **and**
- which has not been fully discharged, i.e. is still in operation

(A body in which you or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent have a beneficial interest means a firm in which you/they are a partner, or a body corporate of which you/they are a director¹, or in the securities of which you/they have a beneficial interest).

¹ “Director” includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

Section 4: Land and Property

You must include details of any land **which is within the area of your council** in which you or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent have a beneficial interest.

“Land” excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for you or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income

Please ensure that:

- you give the address or a brief description to identify the land for both you and your spouse or partner
- if you live in the area of the council of which you are a member or co-opted member, you include your home under this heading as owner, lessee or tenant

Please remember that

- this provision is likely to include the address where you live

Section 5: Licences

You must include details of any land which is within the area of your council for which you or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent hold a licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy for a month or longer. This would include allotments from the parish council where you are a parish councillor for example.

Please ensure that you give the address or a brief description to identify the land.

Section 6: Corporate Tenancies

You must include details of any tenancy where (to your knowledge) (a) the landlord is the council of which you are a member or co-opted member; and (b) the tenant is a body in which you or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent have a beneficial interest.

(A body in which you or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent have a beneficial interest means a firm in which you/they are a partner, or a body corporate of which you/they are a director², or in the securities of which you/they have a beneficial interest).

Section 7: Securities

You must include details of any beneficial interest of you or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent in securities of a body where:

(a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council of which you are a member or co-opted member; **and**

(b) **either—**

(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth (1%) of the total issued share capital of that body; **or**

(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you or your spouse, civil partner or equivalent have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

Please note that:

- “Securities” means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society

² “Director” includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

- You do not have to show the extent of your interest, merely that you have an interest

Section 8: Other Registrable Interests

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) Any unpaid directorships
- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) Any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to a charitable purpose; or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Please be aware that anything included here will also be available for inspection and online.

Other Points

- If you are in doubt about the completion of this notification form, you may seek further guidance from the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer
- The register of interests will, in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act, be available for public inspection including via the website of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
- If you have completed this notification as a member of a Town or Parish Council, please be aware that the information will also be available via the website of the council in which district the town or parish council is situated.

REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

I, Councillor....

a member of Goring-on-Thames Parish Council, give notice that I have set out below the Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other registrable interests which are required to be notified to the Monitoring Officer further to the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 and the Code of Conduct.

IMPORTANT: Please

(i) read the [accompanying notes](#) before completing each section of the form;

(ii) remember that the interests to be notified include those of your spouse/partner (as detailed on [page 1](#) of the notes) if you do not have a spouse or partner or are widowed, you should enter N/A on all of those fields in the right column; and

(iii) ensure that you complete all fields and enter “None” where or if applicable

Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain (e.g. ‘Job title’, ‘Company name’, and ‘address of office’)

Member or co-opted Member	Spouse, civil partner or equivalent

Sponsorship (Including election funding)

Member or co-opted Member	Spouse, civil partner or equivalent

Contracts with your council which are still active

Member or co-opted Member	Spouse, civil partner or equivalent

Land and Property within the area of the council of which you are a member

Member or co-opted Member	Spouse, civil partner or equivalent

Licences with your council

Member or co-opted Member	Spouse, civil partner or equivalent

Corporate Tenancies with your council

Member or co-opted Member	Spouse, civil partner or equivalent

Securities (See guidance for shareholding limits)

Member or co-opted Member	Spouse, civil partner or equivalent

Other Registrable Interests – Councillor Only

Signed:

Councillor _____

Date:

RECEIVED:

Signed:

Monitoring Officer of
South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse
District Councils

Date:

Notes: