

**Report to the Annual Electors' Meeting 2026**  
**Sutton Courtenay Parish Council Chairman's Report**

For the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

This report presents the highlights of the Parish Council's activities over the year.

**Planning and Consultations**

Responding to planning applications, for which the Parish Council is a statutory consultee, continues to form a huge part of the Parish Council's work. Its representations on a planning application can only be taken into account if they relate to material planning considerations. Where the Parish Council does object to a planning application, it requests the District Councillor or County Councillor (as applicable) to ensure that the application is determined in committee rather than delegated to an officer, as it gives the Parish Council an opportunity to speak to the application.

Planning applications for modifications to private dwellings were fewer in the year than previous years (approx. 15). However, the parish council's planning working party was kept extremely busy dealing with a variety of other planning applications as below:

**Housing Developments (minor)**

Land at the rear of Buckridges, High Street (outline approval for additional 3 self-build with altered access).

Land south of Churchmere Road, Sutton Courtenay (2 dwellings)

**Housing Developments (major)**

Hobbyhorse Lane North (proposed 175 houses) – outline with access planning approval granted on appeal in previous year. The parish council continues to keep an eye on the discharge of the 22 planning conditions and respond as appropriate (note: the Vale is not obliged to consult with parish councils on discharge of planning conditions). Detailed planning is expected in the forthcoming year.

Rye Gardens/Partridge Close – landscaping and drainage issues – planning conditions not discharged satisfactorily and developer's subsequent amendments to vary the conditions to discharge them in a less satisfactory but cheaper way.

Heritage Park/Orwell Park – After completion and sale of approximately 195 dwellings, an application by the developer to vary the s106 agreement with regards management of the public open spaces such that residents potentially have to pay a charge that had not been declared up front at the time of sale of the properties.

***Major Road Infrastructure Project*** – HIF1 – a project in four phases including a new river crossing

OCC Highways has appointed contractors and is in the process of discharging planning conditions. There are over 70 planning conditions. The parish council resolved that it would address those submissions which have a significant impact on Sutton Courtenay. In general the documents are technical with detailed engineering drawings.

Currently, the parish council is pursuing its strong objection to the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) as it has serious implications for traffic through Sutton Courtenay and Appleford as the road (B4016) between the two villages may be closed for a

significant period of time as well as increased traffic on the B4016 through the village (Drayton Road, Church Street and Appleford Road).

Recent development: MP Olly Glover is chairing a meeting of impacted parishes and OCC to find a way forward for liaising in a meaningful way during the construction period. Thanks to our District and County Councillor Peter Stevens for driving this forward.

### ***Other major developments and consultations in the year***

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) - an application to build a BESS on the FCC site.

Data Centres – planning application by Amazon Web Services to build a complex of four Data Centres in the Parish of Sutton Courtenay.

### The White Horse Reservoir (formerly known as SESRO)

The parish council has actively engaged in the consultations and also been in contact with other parishes and the group GARD (Group Against Reservoir Development). The parish council is challenging aspects of the design, particularly with reference to impact on Sutton Courtenay in fault conditions.

### Minerals and Waste s73 applications

As reported last year, the Parish Council's concerns regarding the frequent use, by the Mineral and Waste operators in our parish, of the s73 process to vary planning conditions; the lack of enforcement when the conditions are breached is a matter of great concern. In July 2025, the parish council presented an evidence-based case to Oxfordshire County Council's Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee to ask for an audit of the OCC Planning Department's process and procedures to see if efficiency could be improved to reduce the deleterious impact on the communities of Sutton Courtenay and Appleford.

This is still ongoing and the parish council will be making a representation to the OCC Scrutiny Committee next week.

Finally, to note that in all cases the Parish Council considers applications in line with both the Neighbourhood Plan and extant national and local planning policy.

### **Attendance at Liaison Committees**

The Parish Council appoints representatives to many local liaison committees – notable of which are:

- FCC - Appleford / Sutton Courtenay Liaison
- RWE nPower Liaison Committee
- Milton Park Liaison Committee
- Harwell Chilton Stakeholder Group
- Culham Stakeholder Group
- Millennium Common Committee

### **Community Activities and Recreational Amenities**

#### **Recreation Ground**

The parish council submitted an application for the installation of a two-lane cricket practice net in September last year. The discussion around this application are still ongoing.

## **Footpaths**

The Parish Council continues to support Simon Lazare, a local resident and previously a parish councillor, who has been leading on an initiative to hold Thames Water to account for the poor reinstatement of Hobbyhorse Lane following some work it did for FCC, in 2018. Progress has been made and Simon has managed to get all interested parties around the table to agree a potential way forward.

## **Art Trail**

A new project to replace the bollards along the Green with structures that have an equivalent function but are artistic and reflect the history of the village has been agreed by the parish council. Once an artist is appointed, full public consultation will take place through workshops etc. This will be funded by the Art s106 funds arising from new developments in the parish.

## **Litter Pick**

The Parish Council also organized a litter pick – it was wonderful to see families and many young people take part in the litter pick. It is also noted that there are many others who, as they walk around the village, also help in picking up litter.

## **Cemetery**

Our Clerk, Jennie, continues to ensure that the cemetery is kept in accordance with the agreed rules and it provides a tranquil space for visiting bereaved relatives.

## **Staffing**

The Parish Council appointed Liz Cruse as our Assistant Clerk in the reporting year. Liz comes with previous clerking experience and is a very welcome addition to the team. One of Liz's main responsibilities will be the management of the village hall which is now a CIO with the parish council as the sole corporate trustee.

With Jennie (25.5 hrs a week) and Liz (12 hrs a week), the parish council now has the equivalent of a full time clerk. Currently, there is no suitable office space in the village for Jennie and Liz to work together. Hence, the parish council resolved and is hiring an office space at Milton Park for an initial period of two years.

## **Acknowledgments**

We are very fortunate to have residents supporting the work of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council through its working groups. In particular, the planning working party could not have drafted the SCPC's responses to several ongoing major planning applications without the expertise of residents Robin Draper and David Hignell. Their historical knowledge of the evolution of FCC and Hanson operations has helped tremendously in the parish council being able to respond robustly to the many applications for variations of the conditions stipulated in the original planning permissions for the two operators.

Special mention must be made also of Russell Harman (member of planning working party) who has applied his technical expertise both on the Hobbyhorse and HIF planning applications.

A huge thank you to all fellow councillors – all have contributed in a meaningful way to the background research on matters that come before the parish council and require decisions. Some of the councillors have also introduced us to the power of AI when it comes to

addressing planning applications for sites which have a very long history of planning (e.g. Waste and Minerals).

There are of course many more who, quietly behind the scenes, do a lot of work for the community and deserve a special thanks.

Finally, and not least, a huge thank you to Jennie Currie, our Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer and Liz Cruse our Assistant Clerk for ensuring the parish council facilities are well maintained for residents as well as ensuring the parish council acts in accordance with the rules and regulations and with financial probity. I am always impressed at the accuracy with which the minutes are taken as they will be the lasting records of the parish council.

Rita Atkinson

Chairman, Sutton Courtenay Parish council

18<sup>th</sup> April 2026