



HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of Hermitage Parish Council held at
Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, Berkshire RG18 9ST
on Thursday 19th February 2026 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr A Goldsmith (Chairman), Cllr D Brown (Vice Chairman), Cllr V Burgess, Cllr P Dick OBE, Cllr M Powers, Cllr M Foster. Ms N Pierce (clerk).

01.02.26 Public participation
None.

02.02.26 Apologies for absence
Cllr Codling, Cllr Cottingham, Cllr Dye.

03.02.26 Minutes of meeting held on 22nd January 2026
The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

04.02.26 Declarations of interest
Cllr Foster declared an interest in agenda item 7.4 Grants: Holy Trinity Church.
Cllr Burgess declared an interest in agenda item 12.5 Land off Pinewood Crescent.

05.02.26 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council
Circulated on 13th February. No questions raised.

06.02.26 Planning

6.1 New applications

26/00129/HOUSE, 22 Blake Road, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9WN. Single storey rear extension and single storey side utility extension. No objection.

25/02069/HOUSE, The Corner House, Yattendon Road, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9RW. Two-storey infill rear extension. Conversion of the existing roof space to habitable accommodation with the addition of rooflights. Section 73 application to vary Condition (2) Approved Plans of planning permission. No objection.

6.2 Decision notices

25/02698/HOUSE, 3 Blake Road, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9WN. Single storey link to existing garage, conversion of garage to habitable room, utility room and storage. WBC approved.

07.02.26 Finance
Clerk and RFO report circulated and noted.

Financial position as of 31st January 2026

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£240,206.86
Receipts to 31 st January	£82,538.57
Authorised Payments to 31 st January	£64,669.89
Payments not processed by 31 st January	£0.00
Balance in hand (total)	£258,075.54

7.1 Payments for consideration

The following were noted/ approved.

Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	£331.56
Grass maintenance/Contractor	£885.25
Cost of administration	£1,159.97
HMRC, tax and NI	£188.19

Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (December)	£242.94
Caloo Ltd, Furze Hill zip wire trolley, outdoor gym bearings	£1,026.00
RG Consultancy Ltd, Tree works	£2,970.00
All approved and endorsed online on 20th February 2026	£6,754.11

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionos (website) monthly payment for January	£8.40
NEST monthly payment for January	£0.00

7.2 Receipts January 2026

CCLA interest £245.88

7.3 Receipts and Payments to date

To reallocate the Christmas tree cost from village events to Christmas tree. To adjust ring fenced funds as detailed in the finance working party report 5th November 2025. Cllr Goldsmith asked for clarification of 'other income': clerk to circulate.

Clerk

7.4 Grants 2026-27

Grants reviewed and approach agreed per Appendix 1. Village Hall would not receive 100% as requested because spend had by law to be in proportion to use by residents. HPC was concerned that, although PALS may be a worthy cause, there was no evidence that it was used by residents.

Agreed that a contribution should be made to the Downland Practice's prescription dispenser as this would benefit many residents, ideally pro-rata to the proportion of clients; however, there was insufficient money in the budget for grants, so need to investigate and propose options for transferring funds from other parts of the budget.

Cllr Goldsmith

Clerk to inform requesters of decision and remind of need to present at APA.

Clerk

8.02.26 Administrative matters

Business Risk Assessment and Schedule had been reviewed in the summer and needed significant change; hence delay to actual issue. Approved with changes to the sign off arrangements for the schedule. Clerk to update and circulate.

Clerk

Cllr Goldsmith noted that Information and Data Protection, General Privacy Notice were partly covered by new policies provided by website provider, so extended review needed to include these. Action ongoing.

Equality & Diversity, Document retention, social media: review by Cllr Burgess ongoing.

CCTV policy remained with scouts for review.

CIL Procedure had been updated by clerk and Cllr Goldsmith but not yet distributed for approval. Clerk to distribute for approval at next meeting.

Clerk

8.1 Website

Parish Online had produced gov.uk website without any contact. Consequently, there were problems with what had been provided, e.g. including out of date information.

It was agreed that PO should be asked to make the changes rather than rely on the busy clerk.

Cllr Goldsmith to advise Clerk on exactly what needs simple changes on the new website.

Clerk to request an update to the website from PO for a week before next meeting.

Cllr Goldsmith/Clerk

The winning photograph was selected to go on the website, though the paucity of entries was noted. To advise the winning applicant and purchase £30 Amazon voucher

Cllr Burgess/Clerk

09.02.26 Burial ground

Agreed 10% increase to be applied to all charges, rounded to £5. Clerk to update price list

Clerk

Building of new wooden templates deferred to March agenda.

10.02.26 Highways

Cllr Dick noted that remarking of lines etc, outside the school per Cold Ash is taking longer than anticipated due to constraints on WBC. No further update.

The WBC Countryside Manager had advised on 6th January that a site visit would be made to consider if the pavement could be widened around the lime tree opposite the post office. No update. It was agreed to wait and see.

Agreed to purchase Salt bin for Lipscomb Close from Willis & Ainsworth: installation approved by WBC at specified location. Retrospectively approved for Wellhouse Lane Junction.

Tactical Management Ltd emptying of bins has improved in consistency but will be monitored. They have issued refunds for weeks when no service provided.

It was noted that Pinewood Park and Furze Hill/ Eling Way dog waste bins get full within the week and agreed to replace with larger version. Approved within a budget of £350 per bin plus VAT.

11.02.26 HPC properties

11.1 Playgrounds

Inspections have been done in Pinewood Park and Hermitage Green with no change to previous observations. Some damage has since been done to the ground surface in Pinewood Park. The zip wire and bearings in the body twist have been mended.

11.2 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground

Cllr Goldsmith reported that much of Thursday team's work had been postponed because of the weather and will connect Cllr Powers with the team lead

Cllr Goldsmith

11.3 Other open spaces

The road sign at Charlotte Close was displaced and has not been adequately restored to its proper position. Cllr Brown to report the problem on WBC website.

Cllr Brown

Nothing else to note.

11.4 Land off Pinewood Crescent

Cllr Goldsmith had updated the consultation document but was awaiting clarification on the costings provided by RG consultancy, e.g. copy of original report. Cllr Brown recalled a report from WBC that would provide useful input. Clerk to find report referred to.

Clerk/Cllr Goldsmith

12.02.26 Other matters

12.1 Village Hall

Cllr Burgess attended the last meeting and presented an update regarding the 20mph consultation paper submitted to WBC. The village hall has several upcoming events planned. Efforts will be made to coordinate the distribution of flyers for both the village hall AGM and Parish Council APA. The Clerk will provide Councillor Burgess with the street listings HPC uses and she will liaise at next meeting or before if approached.

Clerk/Cllr Burgess

12.2 Defibrillators

The defibrillator at The White Horse was used on 13th February and, as of 19th February, had not been returned. The clerk will post on Facebook that the defibrillator is unavailable; anyone needing one should use the school's defibrillator.

12.3 Action log review

The action log was reviewed, and the following actions remain open that had not been covered:

8.3 To research PC accounting packages available - ask NALC

8.5 Council agreed with recommendations that interest is transferred to ring fenced funds pro rata, and that VAT reclaim for Furze Hill invoices should be returned to ring fenced funds, this being the only fund where it would be significant.

12.5 Land off Pinewood Park. The paper to support consultation with residents has been put together Cllr Goldsmith to finalise. Cllrs to provide feedback and assistance.

13.2 Defibrillator training to take place but not a priority; only low numbers expressed an interest.

8.3 Polices for review: - Information and Data Protection, General Privacy Notice (AG) Equality & Diversity, Document retention, social media (VB) CIL Procedure (Clerk). Clerk to send CCTV to Scouts as it is they who review the footage from HPC cameras.

12.4 APA 23rd April

It was agreed that, given the number of grants to be made, it was not necessary to have an outside speaker. District Councillors and Cllr Burgess will also speak, the latter to encourage more to become councillors.

It was agreed to use the Fox for refreshments again but try to get more variety and just finger food Cllr Burgess will liaise and Clerk to draft flier for review. **Cllr Burgess/ Clerk**

13.02.26 Correspondence received

List circulated.

14.02.26 Reports on meetings of outside bodies

Cllr Mark Foster had attended training on Digital & Data compliance and Knowledge & Core skills. He said it was very useful to understand how differently councils operate from businesses. The Chairman suggested that all should read the overheads as a reminder/ interim measure.

15.02.26 Any other business (information only)

None.

16.02.26 Part 2: Consideration of Clerk's annual appraisal and workload management

The clerk left the meeting at this point.

The Clerk's performance was discussed and associated pay increase agreed. It was noted that the first step in the annual appraisal was for the clerk to complete the form. This is to be done. It was noted that the CiLCA training would be of significant benefit, and attempts should be made to encourage the clerk to take it: this would normally be a requirement for the role but had been omitted from the current contract.

It was agreed that the Chairman should act as if a line manager in terms of day-to-day organisation of work. A better understanding of the clerk's workload was required before agreeing any increase in hours, so a timesheet was agreed appropriate.

It was however agreed in principle to fund overtime required to update web pages.

17.02.26 Date of the next meeting

Thursday 19th March 2026, at 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.44pm.

Signed:

Dated: