



HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of Hermitage Parish Council held at
Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, Berkshire RG18 9ST
on Wednesday 24th June 2026 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr P Dick OBE (Chairman), Cllr V Burgess, Cllr M Powers, Cllr R Cottingham, Cllr D Brown, Ms N Pierce (clerk).

Ordinary Meeting

01.06.26 Public participation

A representative from Deanfield Homes attended the meeting to provide an update regarding the proposed development on the land adjacent to Charlotte Close. The representative outlined a specific requirement for the project: the five planned three-bedroom properties are now proposed to be changed to four-bedroom properties. Importantly, it was emphasised that this alteration would not entail any increase in the overall building footprint. It was agreed that this matter will be added to the agenda for the July meeting, where it will be discussed in further detail.

02.06.26 Apologies for absence

Cllr M Foster, Cllr Brenda Slevin, Cllr A Goldsmith, Cllr Mike Dye.

03.06.26 Minutes of meeting held on 21st May 2026

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

04.06.26 Declarations of interest

Cllr Burgess declared an interest in agenda item 11.4 Land off Pinewood Crescent.

05.06.26 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council

Monthly report circulated on 22nd June.

06.06.26 Planning

6.1 New applications

None.

6.2 Decision notices

None.

07.06.26 Finance

Clerk and RFO report circulated and noted.

Financial position as of 31st May 2026

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£249,249.92
Receipts to 31 st May	£33,082.46
Authorised Payments to 31 st May	£32,462.65
Payments not processed by 31 st May	£0.00
Balance in hand (total)	£249,869.73

7.1 Payments for consideration June 2026

The following were noted/ approved.

Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	331.56
Grass maintenance/Contractor	892.50
Cost of administration	1,159.97
HMRC, Tax and NI	188.39

Administrative expenses, paper	148.15
Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (May)	254.39
Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (January)	186.88
Heelis & Lodge internal audit 2025-26	289.33
All endorsed on line 17th April 2026	3,451.17

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionos (website) monthly payment for May	£8.40
NEST monthly payment for May	£113.94
Lloyds Bank charges	£4.25
Information Commissioner annual subscription	47.00

7.2 Receipts (to note)

AB Walker funeral directors £65.

7.3 Receipts and Payments to date

1. The clerk was requested by Councillor Cottingham to implement a series of changes across the document. These modifications have now been completed in full. At the time of the meeting, Councillor Cottingham had not yet reviewed the amended document and therefore had not provided any additional feedback to the clerk. **RC**

2. To approve the rollover of £40,000 to deposit account for a further 3 months (maturity date 25th June: approved. Clerk to contact Lloyds trader to confirm. **Clerk**

Cllr Cottingham suggested confirming funds are available for upcoming payments. The clerk assured HPC has enough funds and can access the deposit account if needed.

7.4 Tax and NI - HMRC and Payroll Liaison

The clerk has held a meeting with Councillor Foster to discuss matters relating to HMRC and Autela Payroll. During this meeting, the clerk provided the necessary paperwork, thereby facilitating contact by Cllr Foster with HMRC and Autela Payroll on behalf of HPC. **MF**

Cllr Cottingham advised that she had contacted Autela Payroll and it had been confirmed new paycales for this year had not been decided.

7.5 Internal Audit 2025-26

The Internal Audit report was formally accepted by the council. Members expressed their appreciation to the clerk for a pleasing report. Following the acceptance, the clerk suggested HPC record the recommendations outlined in the audit and to prepare an action plan addressing these points, this was agreed. **Clerk**

7.6 Annual Return 2025-26

1. To approve and sign the Annual Governance Statement: approved and signed by Cllr Dick

2. To approve the Annual Return 2025-26 Accounting Statement: approved and signed by Cllr Dick.

3. To note that the RFO has prepared the notice of Public Rights and publication of the unaudited AGAR.

08.06.26 Administrative matters

8.1 Policies

Update on Equality and Diversity Policy (BS): move to July agenda.

Disaster Recovery Plan (MP): to change to IT Recovery Plan. Further work to do, to draft policy and circulate to all. **MP**

Information & Data Protection (AG): move to July agenda.

General Privacy Notice (AG): move to July agenda.

Document Retention (VB): approved.

Finance Policy (MF): move to July agenda.

8.1 Website

The new website is currently up to date, with all agendas, minutes, and information about forthcoming meetings available for public access. It was noted, however, that a resident had submitted a complaint after viewing the old website, mistakenly believing that the Parish Council had not updated its online presence. In response to this issue, the Clerk has been tasked with removing the old website from the google search to ensure that all visitors receive accurate and current information, and to prevent any further confusion among residents.

8.3 PC Meeting Room

Cllr Foster arranged two new tables for the Adelaide Room, now installed. HPC thanks him for his contribution.

09.06.26 Burial ground

1. Thanks to John Barlow for volunteering to fix the burial ground gate. Cllr Brown to communicate HPC response to John Barlow.
 2. Three plot reservations for future interment of ashes, plots x x x have been made.
- All items not required at the burial ground site have been taken to the tip by Cllr Burgess.

10.06.26 Highways

1. No further update on parking/ speeding by the school or news on 20mph proposals. **PD**
2. Highways advised they will be doing the remedial work to the pavement adjacent to the new fence at Doctors Lane. To follow this through with WBC. **Clerk**
3. Clerk to liaise with the school to understand their thoughts on 20mph outside school. **Clerk**

11.06.26 HPC properties

11.1 Playgrounds

Furze Hill has a lot of dog waste which is along the fencing and around the gym equipment. Good to see children playing on the zip wire. The grass is a little long at the perimeter clerk to advise SCS. Hermitage Green is fine. Pinewood Park has no update. **Clerk**

11.1.2 Playground Resurfacing Quotes

Two additional quotations are still required for overlay and complete resurfacing works at both Hermitage Green and Furze Hill playgrounds. The Clerk met with a contractor on the 28th of May, and is awaiting their quotation, which is expected to be received by the end of June. Efforts have been made to contact a third contractor, as they previously suggested attending a site visit, but despite several follow-ups, they have not yet attended. The Clerk will continue to chase this contractor and may consider sourcing an alternative provider to obtain the third required quotation. **Clerk**

11.1.3 Repair of broken seat at Hermitage Green

The seat has been covered as it is split, so is now safe pending installation of new seat.

11.2 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground

1. Cllr Cottingham provided a written report (attached). It was agreed for Cllr Cottingham to obtain costs for July meeting, for the purchase of yellow rattle plug plants for the top of the recreation ground banks. Coppicing is required and as TPO's to do application for works. **RC**
2. Repair quotes for the exclusion zone fence are pending. Clerk to chase for the quotes. **Clerk**
3. Furze Hill Signage

Councillors Cottingham and Slevin have been developing ideas for signs to be placed at Furze Hill. During the discussion, Cllr Burgess expressed the view that signage featuring visual representations of trees would be preferable to signs containing only written narrative. The rationale behind this suggestion is that such signs would be more engaging and accessible for children. It was agreed that Cllr Burgess would collaborate with Cllr Slevin to progress this approach, ensuring the signage is both informative and child friendly. **VB/BS**

11.4 Land off Pinewood Crescent

Questions have been finalised and the completed questionnaire circulated prior to the meeting. **AG**

Cllr Goldsmith did not attend the meeting and therefore to discuss and finalise, when done Cllr Burgess to provide a link on Facebook to enable residents to complete. **VB**
 Cllr Cottingham to apply for grant through Viola and send copy of the questionnaire when complete, also need to find planting work done by Charles Gilchrist **RC**

12.06.26 Other matters

12.1 Village Hall

Cllr Burgess attended the monthly Meeting, a good meeting.

12.2 Defibrillator

1. Checks done.
2. Defibrillator training offered to the first 10 residents on the list, 9th July at Woodland Lodge, Hermitage Primary School. A second training session to be announced on Facebook. **Clerk**

12.3 Action log review

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

- 18.9 8.3 To research PC accounting packages available **Clerk**
- 21.5 8.3 Policies for review: -
 - Information and Data Protection, General Privacy Notice **AG**
 - IT Disaster Recovery Plan **MP**
 - Equality & Diversity **BS**
 - Finance Policy **MF**
- 21.5 8.3 Policies to be placed on website **Clerk**
- 19.03 12.3 To complete DSE assessment **Clerk**
- 19.03 8.3 To finalise final sign off sheet for Business Risk Assessment **Clerk**
- 16.04 8.1 To arrange for Org.uk platform to be deleted from search engine **Clerk**
- 16.04 8.1 To arrange for the forwarding of email **Clerk**

12.4 Community Speed Watch

To contact Cllr Dye for an update. **Clerk**

12.5 Fun Run event

No further information or contact received from organiser.

12.6 Resident request for dog bin

Clerk has chased supplier twice for the order to be fulfilled. **Clerk**

12.7 Blister pack collection at Chieveley Surgery

Cllr Brown to liaise with the surgery. **DB**

Part Two: Clerk appraisal and pay award

We reviewed the appraisal of the clerk. Given the absence of discussions mid-year about potential weaknesses, and the generally clean bill of health in the recent statutory documents, it was agreed that the cost of living increase and the increment should be paid to the clerk from the appropriate date. Further such increases in future would reflect performance, in terms of general standards of work, with specific reference to the following targets:

1. Minutes should be accurate, capturing all decisions and wishes of the PC
2. Bank access [for MC] should be actioned and password safety and security organised as per custom and practice [sealed envelope with passwords held by chair etc]
3. Continuing development of the presentation, content and power of the website.
4. Quicker sourcing of quotes for works/purchases agreed by PC

It was also noted that the clerk was working well in many ways, despite some [gone!] turbulent times.

13.06.26 Other Correspondence received

List not circulated. To ensure done for July. **Clerk**

14.06.26 Reports on meetings of outside bodies

Cllrs Cottingham is attending a memorial bench day on 5th July arranged by the Village Hall to commemorate two great people in the village. Cllr Dick would also like to attend if an invitation is forthcoming.

15.06.26 Any other business (information only)

Clerk to write to The Downland Practice to ensure the HPC grant monies awarded are solely used for the Chieveley surgery project.

Clerk

To advise church secretary of the change in the July meeting date.

Clerk

16.06.26 Date of the next meeting

Wednesday 22nd July 2026, 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.02pm.

Signed:

Dated: