



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 March 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 Dye, Cllr R Cottingham,
Ms N Pierce (clerk).

01.03.26 Public participation

A member of the public was present as an observer during the meeting.

02.03.26 Apologies for absence

Cllr Codling, Cllr Powers

03.03.26 Minutes of meeting held on 19th February 2026

The Chairman asked the clerk if she wished the summary of the Part 2 to be removed in the light of earlier concerns that it was not a complete record. The Chairman advised that she had sought comments from all present regarding the content, considering the need to not mention personnel details and has prepared a separate note for the record. After discussion, it was agreed that the wording in the draft should stand as it had been seen on notice boards. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

04.03.26 Declarations of interest

Cllr Burgess declared an interest in agenda item 12.5 Land off Pinewood Crescent.

05.03.26 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council

Circulated on 13th March. No questions raised.

06.03.26 Planning

6.1 New applications

26/00140/FULMAJ, Land at End Of, Charlotte Close, Hermitage, Thatcham. Erection of 16 dwellings and associated landscape and highway works. Section 73 application to vary condition 2 (approved plans) of Planning Permission 20/00912/FULEXT.

This concerned the change of several 3-bed properties to 4-bed. Council noted that the housing survey had identified the need for more small properties and that the change would result in an inappropriate mixture,

Objection.

Cllr Cottingham offered to produce a detailed response to send **Cllr Cottingham/ Clerk**

26/00380/HOUSE, 1 Briant's Piece, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9SX. Proposed conversion of existing single-storey bungalow into a chalet-style two-storey dwelling, including side and rear extensions, alterations to roof form, external re-elevation with render finish to replace existing brickwork and landscaping.

No objection.

6.2 Decision notices

25/02886/COND, Land at End Of, Charlotte Close, Hermitage, Thatcham. Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3 'External Materials' of approved application 20/00912/FULEXT: Erection of 16 dwellings and associated landscape and highway works.

WBC approved.

25/02837/CERTP, 37 Dines Way Hermitage Thatcham RG18 9TF. Placement of Solar Panels on house and garage roof.

WBC lawful.

26/00158/CERTP, Birchwood, Chapel Lane, Hermitage, Thatcham. Proposed conversion of garage and associated alterations.

WBC lawful.

26/00143/CERTP, The Willows, Newbury Road, Hermitage, Thatcham. Installation of an air source heat pump.

WBC lawful.

6.3 Pavement and Fence at Little Orchard, Hampstead Norreys Road

Noted that the address is incorrect and should read Doctor's Lane, which had confused the Chairman when writing to planning, as there is another property with a similar issue elsewhere. The planning team is investigating whether this complies with planning regulations and Highways considering the state of the pavement edge.

07.03.26

Finance

Clerk and RFO report circulated and noted.

Financial position as of 28th February 2026

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£240,206.86
Receipts to 28 th February	£82,538.57
Authorised Payments to 28 th February	£71,421.59
Payments not processed by 28 th February	£0.00
Balance in hand (total)	£251,323.84

7.1 Payments for consideration March 2026

The following were noted/ approved.

Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	£331.56
Grass maintenance/Contractor	£845.25
Cost of administration	£1,159.97
HMRC, tax and NI	£188.39
Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (February)	£242.94
Administrative expenses, defib pads, prize voucher, ink	£ 148.12
David Brown, ink	£78.99
All approved and endorsed online on 20th March 2026	£3,006.67

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionos (website) monthly payment for February	£8.40
NEST monthly payment for January & February	£227.88

7.2 Receipts (to note)

None.

7.3 Receipts and Payments to date

Overspend on maintenance was explained: Furze Hill Trees went over budget by £2,970 due to required safety works. Other open spaces exceeded budget because of required cantilever swing resurfacing from the annual playground inspection in the sum of £5,742.

HPC formally approved the >10% overspend, recognising that other line items were underspent so there was no overall overspend expected at EoY.

It was resolved to maintain the £40,000 in the deposit account upon its maturity on 24th March.

Clerk

7.4 Grants

The decision was made to amend the 2026-27 budget by increasing the grant line by £10,000 to support the Downland Practice grant application. Representatives will be invited to the APA, and an inquiry will be made regarding the status of the prescription drop-off point in Hermitage.

Clerk

08.03.26

Administrative matters

- Several amendments were agreed for the social media policies.
 - The revised CIL procedure was approved.
 - The CCTV policy was reviewed with no changes needed
- Clerk to update review dates and post agreed policies on the website.

Cllr Burgess

Clerk

8.1 Website

HPC will launch the website by 21 March to confirm all working by 1 April. Clerk to instruct PO and to cease direct debit to current provider.

Clerk

It was agreed that new email addresses would be set up the weekend of 20 March to ensure all would be working by 1 April. Clerk would send all relevant information to Councillors. Clerk Cllr Dye clarified what requires regular update with the clerk and agreed that no additional help was needed at this point.

8.2 Facebook

HPC agreed to remove the original Facebook site now the new site is operational.

8.3 PC Meeting Room

Cllr Burgess questioned whether the Adelaide Room would be big enough to accommodate meetings if we recruited more councillors. Noted that doors could be opened to enlarge.

Agreed this would be preferable to Woodland Room, where furniture is undersized.

Shortage of tables noted. To source more tables to similar design

Cllr Foster/ Clerk

09.03.26 Burial ground

There is a burial of ashes to grave plot E28 on 24th March.

Construction of new wooden templates, identical to the existing ones, is underway.

10.03.26 Highways

No further update on parking/ speeding by the school or news on 20mph proposals.

Highways confirmed that widening the pavement around the lime tree opposite the post office is not recommended. There have been no complaints about the tree, and Highways will not support its removal. Clerk to confirm to Highways that no further action required **Clerk**

The Chairman noted that since December Hermitage has had a resident who uses a mobility scooter. She had asked the lady to advise HPC if she encountered any difficulties.

11.03.26 HPC properties

11.1 Playgrounds

It was agreed to engage Wicksteed to conduct the annual playground inspection for all four sites, at a cost of £456 plus VAT, consistent with previous years. **Clerk**

The £1,820 quote for painting Hermitage Green was approved, to be scheduled by the painters as soon as the wood is dry. **Clerk**

Request up-to-date quotes for overlay and complete resurfacing at both Hermitage Green and Furze Hill playgrounds and ask for a discount if both projects are done simultaneously. Given value, 3 quotes are required: Clerk has been contacted by numerous companies **Clerk**

11.2 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground

Cllr Cottingham reported the Thursday team completion of fencing repairs and tree works; however, due to member losses, it is effectively disbanding and volunteers are needed to continue their work. HPC noted its sincere appreciation of the dedication and contributions of the volunteers throughout the years. The role of the team was outlined. To be raised at APA.

11.3 Other open spaces

The road sign at Charlotte Close has now been adequately restored to its proper position. Nothing else to note.

11.4 Land off Pinewood Crescent: item deferred to later

12.03.26 Other matters

12.1 Village Hall

Cllr Burgess attended the last meeting and spoke about the HPC meeting agenda. The Village Hall is doing a 'call my bluff' event in April. The next meeting is the annual meeting on 1st April.

12.4 APA 23rd April (Item brought forward)

Councillors reminded of need to be at Hall for 18:30 and bring tea-towels.

VB has engaged The Fox to provide refreshments, emphasising more variety and just finger food: to ask what time they will need access. Flier finalised and clerk to send to print room, Newbury College for printing. Cllrs Cottingham/Foster to arrange beverages

Cllrs Burgess/Foster/Cottingham/ Clerk

Councillors Burgess and Dick left the meeting at this point.

12.2 Defibrillator

1. Checks done.
2. The defibrillator at The White Horse has been returned, is up to date and fully functioning.
3. Clerk to arrange defibrillator training: 9 have expressed interest so far, to seek more at APA where community responder will be demonstrating. She has offered to provide training for free, but agreed to leave decision until numbers known as professional trainer would have more dummies for practice.

Clerk

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
- 8.5 Bank interest to be transferred to ring fenced funds pro rata, and VAT reclaim for Furze Hill similarly.

Clerk

Clerk

8.3 Polices for review: - Information and Data Protection, General Privacy Notice (AG) Equality & Diversity, Document retention, social media (VB).

It was agreed that the Action on the Chairman to introduce Cllr Powers to the Thursday team leader should be dropped in view of item 11.2.

12.5 Government Consultation on Local Government Reorganisation

It was agreed that Cllr Goldsmith would complete the questionnaire on behalf of HPC to support the 2-council proposal.

Cllr Goldsmith

11.4 Land off Pinewood Crescent (item deferred from earlier)

Cllr Goldsmith had circulated the updated consultation document. Discussion as to whether to present options or simply ask if HPC should carry out its original proposal; councillors should review and respond.

All/Cllr Goldsmith

Commented [AG1]: Not sure if this is actually the point we discussed it, just know it was after VB and PD left

13.03.26 Other Correspondence received

List circulated.

14.03.26 Reports on meetings of outside bodies

Cllr Mike Dye has attended training on CSW and will be meeting with the team Wednesday 25th March to progress.

15.03.26 Any other business (information only)

None

16.03.26 Date of the next meeting

Thursday 16th April 2026, 7.30pm Ordinary meeting in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church
Thursday 23rd April 2026, 7.30pm for 8pm **Annual Parish Assembly** at Hermitage Village Hall

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.20pm.

Signed:

Dated: