



HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of Hermitage Parish Council held at
Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, Berkshire RG18 9ST
on Thursday 21st May 2026 at 7.30pm

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

Chairman suspended standing orders to allow Public Participation to be heard at commencement of the meeting as two councillors had not yet arrived.

01.05.26 Public participation

Four residents raised concerns about agenda item 26/00858/HOUSE, 3 Blake Road, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9WN. Loft conversion and insertion of rooflights. It was felt the application is overdevelopment and is not in keeping with the street scene. There is current insufficient parking let alone with the proposed new requirement.

Chairman reinstated standing orders

01.05.26 Election of Chairman for forthcoming year

Cllr Dick was nominated. No further nominations.
Unanimous. Cllr Dick was elected
The elected Chairman signed a new Declaration of Acceptance of Office form.

02.05.26 Election of Vice Chairman for forthcoming year

Cllr Foster was nominated. No further nominations.
Unanimous. Cllr Foster was elected
The elected Vice Chair signed a new Declaration of Acceptance of Office form.

03.05.26 Acceptance of Standing Orders

The Standing Orders were accepted.

04.05.26 Acceptance of Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations were accepted.

05.05.26 Councillors' roles

The councillors' roles have been circulated. SO only require confirmation of representation at outside bodies to be considered at the annual meeting.
Cllr Brown agreed to continue with Patient Representation Group.
Cllr Burgess agreed to continue with Village Hall trustees' meetings.

Ordinary Meeting

02.05.26 Apologies for absence

Cllr Mike Dye, Cllr Heather Codling.
Councillor Codling has stepped down from her Cllr role. The Council sincerely thanks her for the considerable support she offered since joining last year, which played a key part in helping the Council continue its activities. Heather's dedication remains highly appreciated. We hope to see Councillor Codling at upcoming meetings in her official capacity.

03.05.26 Minutes of meeting held on 16th April 2026

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

04.05.26 Declarations of interest

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

05.05.26 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council

Monthly and annual reports were circulated on 8 May. Councillor Goldsmith mentioned an additional consultation on adult and social care. Cllr Dick indicated a decision on a unitary council is expected in July.

06.05.26 Planning**6.1 New applications**

26/00858/HOUSE, 3 Blake Road, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9WN. Loft conversion and insertion of rooflights. Objection.

26/00850/HOUSE, Home Park, Slanting Hill, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9QG. Extend existing balcony with new glass pergola over balcony. New external staircase up to balcony. No objection.

6.2 Decision notices

25/02515/HOUSE, 35 Lipscomb Close, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9SZ. Rear Extension on existing patio. WBC approved.

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. WBC approved.

6.3 Fence at Doctors Lane

Refer minute reference Highways 10. 2.

07.05.26 Finance

Clerk and RFO report circulated and noted.

Financial position as of 30th April 2026

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£249,249.92
Receipts to 30 th April	£33,017.46
Authorised Payments to 30 th April	£28,504.04
Payments not processed by 30 th April	£0.00
Balance in hand (total)	£253,763.34

7.1 Payments for consideration May 2026

The following were noted/ approved.

Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	331.56
Grass maintenance/Contractor	872.50
Cost of administration	1,160.17
HMRC, Tax and NI	188.19
Administrative expenses, paper	66.06
Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (April)	254.39
Halc annual subscription	490.11
The Fox, refreshments for the APA	500.00
All endorsed on line 17th April 2026	3,862.98

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionos (website) monthly payment for March	£26.40
NEST monthly payment for March	£113.94
Lloyds Bank charges	£4.25

7.2 Receipts (to note)

WBC precept £32,750, CCLA interest £267.46.

7.3 Receipts and Payments to date

Cllr Cottingham asked the clerk to replace the zero narrative at the foot of the commuted sum column to read 'Furze Hill'. **Clerk**

7.4 Tax and NI

Clerk to forward papers to Cllr Foster. **Clerk**

7.5 Internal Audit

Year End documentation completed and sent to IA on 15th May.

7.6 FWP Report

The finance working party met on Tuesday 12th May, report circulated and accepted. Clerk to obtain year end statements from all suppliers for the year end 2027. Clerk to obtain the Castle Water current statement and circulate to FWP. Cllr Cottingham to ask about current pay scales for clerks. **Clerk/RC**

08.05.26 Administrative matters

8.1 Policies

1. The Equality and Diversity Policy is in progress. Clerk to obtain a NALC log in for Cllr Slevin. **BS/Clerk**
2. The policy schedule was reviewed and allocated as follows:

Disaster Recovery Plan (MP)

Information & Data Protection (AG)

General Privacy Notice (AG)

Document Retention (VB)

MP/AG/VB

The clerk will forward the policies to the designated councillor for review. Initial comments should be submitted to the clerk in time for inclusion in the first papers email on 12th June, facilitating circulation and feedback from councillors ahead of the June meeting for approval.

Clerk

8.1 Website

1. The new website is live but lacks recent agenda, minutes, updated policies and any forthcoming meetings. Cllr Dye has not fed back to the Clerk progress on the matter. The Clerk had not been able to locate the website on google to ascertain what work had been done. However, the website was located on 21st May. Clerk to do the work required by the next meeting 24th June to bring up to date. **Clerk**

8.2 PC Meeting Room

Cllr Foster is progressing the purchase of two more tables for the Adelaide Room which should arrive by 5th June. **MF**

09.05.26 Burial ground

The additional inscription for plot E28 was approved.

Mr Andrew Mclarty and Mr Mike Sharp are thanked for their work in making the new burial ground templates. Cllr Cottingham to provide clerk with email addresses. **RC/Clerk**

Cllr Cottingham to identify a way of keeping the templates away from the ground to prevent rotting. **RC**

To take items not required to the tip Cllr Burgess offered to do this. **VB**

10.05.26 Highways

1. No further update on parking/ speeding by the school or news on 20mph proposals.
2. Highways advised they will issue a stage 1 Nuisance and Obstruction notice to the property with the newly installed fence. Clerk to contact Highways to ask about the progressing the holes in the pavement and subsidence. **Clerk**

11.05.26 HPC properties

11.1 Playgrounds

Furze Hill has a lot of dog waste which is along the fencing and around the gym equipment. Hermitage Green is fine. Pinewood Park has metal posts though the wooden area which need dealing with.

Two further quotes for overlay and complete resurfacing at both Hermitage Green and Furze Hill playgrounds are still required. Clerk meeting with contactor on 28th for further quote. **Clerk**

11.2 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground

Cllr Cottingham provided a written report (attached). Deep holes in the woods pose a safety hazard and are affecting wildflowers. Cllr Foster will ask Roger Axton about communicating this issue. **RC/MF**

Cllr Cottingham suggested that the area east of the entrance gate would be left for BMX use, and this was agreed.

Cllr Goldsmith suggested we should consult a safety expert about warning signs to satisfy insurers but that was rejected. We do need to consider putting up signs as suggested by Cllr Cottingham, but they should be 'friendly advice signs' rather than 'do not' signs. To add to June agenda. **Clerk**

Cllr Dick to make connection with the new traveller site to build relationship and to also ask about the broken fence. **PD**

1. The Ruskin's Consultancy quotation for Tree Health and Safety inspection in the sum of £1,400 was approved.

2. Repair quotes for the exclusion zone fence are pending.

11.3 Other open spaces

Nothing to note.

11.4 Land off Pinewood Crescent

Cllr Goldsmith had distributed the document with comments only received from Cllr Cottingham.

It was agreed that the means of consultation would be individual letters to residents adjacent to the property, with Facebook and website to advise others.

Cllr Goldsmith to forward the questions to councillors for comments. **AG/All**

12.05.26 Other matters

12.1 Village Hall

Cllr Burgess attended the monthly Meeting; the proposed fun run was discussed the Village Hall are supportive of the event but did not want to do the refreshments and noted the first date mentioned in June already had an event at the Village Hall at 11am. The trustees advised chairs had been purchased from the grant money awarded. **Clerk**

12.2 Defibrillator

1. Checks done.

2. The Hermitage community first aid responder will conduct defibrillator training, and clerk to arrange a session at Woodland Lodge, Hermitage Primary School. The training date will 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:

8.3 To research PC accounting packages available **Clerk**

8.3 Polices for review: - Information and Data Protection, General Privacy Notice **AG**

Document retention **VB**

8.3 Policies to be placed on website **Clerk**

12.3 To complete DSE assessment **Clerk**

12.3 To provide Cllr Foster with details for historical tax and NI issue **Clerk**

12.4 APA 23rd April

The 2027 APA to include receipts and payments summary, agenda and minutes from 2026 on all chairs. A change in the refreshments supplier and to include gluten free options. CIL policy to be on the agenda. Room layout to be revised if overhead projector is used so as to project on back wall.

12.5 Community Speed Watch

To contact Cllr Dye for an update.

Clerk

Cllr Dick noted problems with SID on Yattendon Road and we advised it wasn't ours as far as we know. To confirm with WBC that it's theirs and to report a problem.

Clerk

12.6 Tactical Management dog and litter bin emptying charges

A 35% increase was reluctantly approved. Clerk to advise contractor and to confirm HPC will not accept any future increases above inflation. Clerk to establish who other councils use and what the rate per bin is.

Clerk

12.7 Fun Run event

A family fun run is proposed for the last Sunday of June, July, and August along Eling Way from Hermitage to Hampstead Norreys. The Village Hall was consulted, and the organiser should be contacted to confirm approval. The Church will provide refreshments.

Clerk

12.8 Resident request for dog bin

Approval was granted for a new dog bin near Yattendon Road and Chapel Lane. The clerk will inform Highways and arrange for the new bin to be ordered. Larger bins are to be purchased for Pinewood Park and the Furze Hill entrance. One of the smaller bins being replaced will be used to substitute the corroded bin at Marlston Road, located at the start of Eling Way.

Clerk

13.05.26 Other Correspondence received

List circulated.

14.05.26 Reports on meetings of outside bodies

Cllrs Burgess and Slevin attended the District Parish Conference on 29 April and provided a brief update.

15.05.26 Any other business (information only)

Cllr Heather Codling resigned from the Parish Council. Clerk to send a letter of thanks for the valuable support received from Cllr Codling.

16.05.26 Date of the next meeting

Wednesday 24th June 2026, 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.30pm.

Signed:

Dated: