

HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of Hermitage Parish Council held at
Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, Berkshire RG18 9ST
on Thursday 22nd January 2026 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr A Goldsmith (Chairman), Cllr D Brown (Vice Chairman), Cllr R Cottingham, Cllr P Dick (to item 12), Cllr H Codling (to item 12), Cllr V Burgess, Cllr M Powers, Ms N Pierce (clerk).

01.01.26 Public participation

Three members of the public were present: one attended as an observer and two provided their views on the proposed the 20mph speed limits.

02.01.26 Apologies for absence

Cllr M Foster, Cllr M Dye.

03.01.26 Minutes of meeting held on 18th December 2025

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

04.01.26 Declarations of interest

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

05.01.26 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council

No report this month and no other information particularly noted.

06.01.26 Planning

6.1 New applications

None.

6.2 Decision notices

25/02587/HOUSE, 9 Kiln Close, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9TQ. Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a new single-storey extension. WBC approved.

25/02699/CERTP, 3 Blake Road Hermitage Thatcham RG18 9WN. Insertion of roof lights to convert attic space. WBC refused.

25/02640/HOUSE, The Stumps, Doctors Lane, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9TA. Proposed erection of a detached garage. WBC approved.

07.01.26 Finance

Clerk and RFO report circulated and noted.

Financial position as of 31st December

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£240,206.86
Receipts to 30 th November	£82,292.69
Authorised Payments to 30 th November	£61,244.14
Payments not processed by 30 th November	£0.00
Balance in hand (total)	£261,255.41

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
Admin expenses ink and postage	£48.40
Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (November)	£186.08
Cripps Fencing Ltd, erection of 5 steel angle posts FH	£240.00
Willis & Ainsworth, salt bin for Wellhouse Lane and salt	£217.15

Barlow & Sons (Hermitage) Ltd – supplies for Furze Hill	£153.30
All approved and endorsed online on 23rd January 2026	£3,410.10

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionos (website) monthly payment for December	£8.40
NEST monthly payment for December	£169.81

7.2 Receipts November 2025

Pension refund £55.65, Lloyd's deposit account interest £139.62

7.3 Receipts and Payments to date

No questions raised.

7.4 Report from FWP

The finance working party report was reviewed. Final approval for the following will be on the February agenda: replacement surfaces at Pinewood Park and Hermitage Green, painting at Hermitage Green, and replacement of two spring seats.

Clerk

7.5 Budget 2026-27

Approved.

7.6 Precept 2026-27

The precept was agreed at £65,500. Clerk to notify WBC.

Clerk

7.7 Grants 2026-27

Since several organisations had missed the deadline, including the Downland Practice, and the budget would not have been spent, it was agreed to reopen the exercise until 13 Feb for agreement at next meeting. To advertise on Pathfinder, website and Facebook

Cllr Goldsmith/Clerk

Consideration was given to the 2026-7 exercise and agreed it should be carried out earlier to avoid Christmas holiday. Having an "open season" on a first-come basis was suggested, but nothing was agreed.

7.8 Internal Auditor

It was agreed to instruct Heelis & Lodge to carry out the 2025-26 internal audit.

Clerk

8.01.26

Administrative matters

1. Revised IT Policy: approved

2. Clerk has updated Business Risk assessment and this is now with Cllr Goldsmith to review

Cllr Goldsmith/Clerk

3. Policy and procedures schedule reviewed. Councillors agreed to review outstanding documents as follows: 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

Cllr Goldsmith/Cllr Burgess/Clerk

Cllr Cottingham has reviewed Memorial Bench Policy and recommended to retain as is.

Approved. Clerk to amend date/review date and post to website.

Clerk

To send policies in Word to Cllrs dealing with reviews.

Clerk

To liaise with NALC regarding log ins for Councillors to enable all to view site and download model policies.

Clerk

8.1 Website

1. Clerk advised that a response on progress with new website was awaited. Cllr Goldsmith asked if the Clerk had confirmed when the homepage header image had to be in place.

Clerk

2. It was agreed that a working party would make minor decisions outside of meetings comprising Clerk, Cllr Goldsmith, Cllr Burgess, Cllr Dye.

3. It was agreed to hold a photograph competition for homepage header image that would be decided by WP. Cllr Burgess to provide Clerk with the narrative to post to Facebook.

Cllr Burgess/Clerk

4. The prize amount for winning photograph was agreed as £30 Amazon voucher.

- 09.01.26 Burial ground**
To add review of burial ground fees and the building of new wooden templates to February agenda. **Clerk**
- 10.01.26 Highways**
1. Cllr Dick noted that remarking of lines etc, outside the school per Cold Ash is taking longer than anticipated as funding might not be secured this FY. Cllr Goldsmith suggested that HPC could consider contributing to costs if necessary to allow it to proceed faster.
To place on March agenda. **Clerk**
2. 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.
Clerk to request update. **Clerk**
3. The clerk advised that a new salt bin, fully stocked with salt, had been installed at the junction of Wellhouse Lane and Marlston Road at the request of residents. The Chairman noted that a resident had fallen at Lipscombe Rd and suggested that another should be placed there as it had been an ice sheet.
Cllr Cottingham suggested that this required approval from Highways. Clerk to check **Clerk**
10.1 Proposed 20 mph speed limit consultation.
The formal response to WBC was discussed and agreed. Cllr Goldsmith to update the document ready for submission. **Cllr Goldsmith/Clerk**
- 11.01.26 HPC properties**
11.1 Playgrounds
Inspections have been done in Furze Hill and Hermitage Green. No problems of specific note were identified.
11.2 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground
Cllr Cottingham provided a report. Some tasks not performed due to weather, will be done week commencing 26th January
11.3 Other open spaces
The road sign has been knocked over at Charlotte Close. Cllr Brown to report the problem on WBC website. **Cllr Brown**
11.4 Land off Pinewood Crescent
Cllr Cottingham had drafted a consultation paper to be sent directly to nearby residents, and advertised more widely. Cllr Goldsmith will finalise the document for approval. **Cllr Goldsmith**
To provide feedback and assistance **All Councillors**
- 12.01.26 Other matters**
12.1 Village Hall
Councillor Burgess attended the meeting, and said the trustees were very welcoming. She gave them an updated list of HPC Councillors and informed the trustees that councillors were pleased with AG's leadership.
12.2 Defibrillators
Checks done.
12.3 Action log review
The action log was reviewed. The following Actions not discussed elsewhere remain open:
12.4 To discuss options for financial support to Downland Practice.
To write to Downland Practice to inform them that they may submit a grant application by the revised deadline of 13th February. To request that their application includes the proportion of patients who reside in Hermitage. **Clerk**
It was suggested that there may be an opportunity to make a members' bid for additional funding.

13.01.26 Correspondence received

Cllr Cottingham requested that the Clerk routinely send her WBC residents bulletins. The Chairman pointed out that it would be easier to request these from WBC (<https://westberks.gov.uk/newsletters>).

14.01.26 Reports on meetings of outside bodies

None.

15.01.26 Any other business (information only)

None.

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

Deferred until February meeting.

17.01.26 Date of the next meeting

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

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.23pm.

Signed:

Dated: