

HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of Hermitage Parish Council held at
Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, Berkshire RG18 9ST
on Thursday 17th July 2025 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr A Goldsmith (Chairman), Cllr R Cottingham, Cllr I Govier, Cllr D Brown, Cllr J Willey, Cllr V Burgess, Ms N Pierce (clerk).

01.07.25 Public participation
None.

02.07.25 Apologies for absence
Dist Cllr H Codling, Dist Cllr P Dick, Cllr J Rigby, Cllr A Williams.

03.07.25 Minutes of meeting held on 26th June 2025
The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
3.1 Actions and matters arising from minutes not referred to elsewhere.
Pump track – no progress to report (Action IG) August agenda.
Receive progress update on Financial Regulations (Action RC/VB/Clerk) – August agenda.
Action plan from resident's survey April 2025 (Action JR) – August agenda.

04.07.25 Declarations of interest
As a neighbouring resident, Cllr Burgess declared an interest in agenda item 12.4 To consider inspection of/ works to Leylandii trees and consultation with local community.

05.07.25 Chairman's introduction
Cllr Goldsmith welcomed our new Councillor and asked all to introduce themselves.

06.07.25 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council
Report distributed on 23rd June.
The Chairman asked if the proposal to merge councils and date of consultations taking place in WB had been distributed to all. Clerk to confirm. **Clerk**

07.07.25 Planning
The Chairman has been corresponding with a resident regarding the new site RSA22 in the local plan, which currently shows access off Station Road and has offered to arrange a meeting with WBC if there is sufficient demand. Cllr Govier suggested we should make people aware in the village generally to see if of any interest. Cllr Goldsmith stated that no changes are possible until a planning application is made, when we would hold a meeting.
Regarding proposed extension to Chieveley Quarry: Grundon have requested a meeting with HPC/CPC. Clerk has written to Chieveley Parish Council to request their view on holding a joint meeting.

7.1 New Applications
None.

7.2 Decision notices
25/00934, **Pine Lodge**, Deacons Lane, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9RJ. Single storey side and rear extension including first floor side extension to form bedroom. **WBC approved.**
HPC previous response was no objection.

Planning Inspectorate APP/W0340/W/24/3356688: **Land south of Sandhill, RG18 9XU. Appeal allowed together with a proportion of the costs.**

HPC was disappointed, noting concerns that conditions would not be observed. Cllr Govier said he had spoken with the owners and believed they intended to comply with requirements and wanted to integrate into village life.

08.07.25 Finance

RFO's Report circulated and noted.

Financial position as of 31st June 2025

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£240,206.86
Receipts to 31 st June	£47,388.23
Authorised Payments to 31 st June	£25,997.57
Payment not processed by 31 st June	£594.06
Balance in hand (total)	£262,191.58

8.1 Payments for consideration July 2025

The following were approved.

9.2.1	Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	£331.56
9.2.2	Grass maintenance/Contractor	£841.25
9.2.3	Cost of administration	£1,159.97
9.2.4	HMRC, tax and NI	£188.39
9.2.6	Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (April)	£242.94
Total	All approved, and endorsed online	£2,764.11

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionos (website) monthly payment	£92.40
NEST monthly payment	£113.94

8.2 Receipts June 2025

Dignity Funerals £358.00, HMRC vat reclaim £4,217.96.

8.3 Receipts and Payments to date

1. Receipts and Payments to date reviewed.

8.4 Internal Audit

The internal audit action report has been reviewed and actioned per previous minutes. The risk assessment is being updated, to place on August agenda for consideration. **Clerk**

09.07.25 Administrative matters

1. To accept revised Standing orders (SO).

Cllr Cottingham proposed an amendment such that the paragraphs related to the reporting of complaints against the council were not removed per model SO. Amendment carried.

With this amendment, the motion was carried.

To produce revised version and arrange Signature and posting on website **Cllr Goldsmith/ Clerk**

2. Outstanding reviews of policies and procedures summary were considered. Cllr Cottingham agreed to review Disaster Recovery Plan, CIL procedure, Memorial Bench and Document Retention.

Cllr Willey to review Information and Data Protection policy and Cllr Goldsmith Health & Safety and Equality and Diversity policies. **Cllr Cottingham/Cllr Willey/ Cllr Goldsmith**

3. The Chairman had circulated information from NALC concerning their advice for council to transfer to a gov. uk website, noting that this would allow us to have gov.uk emails; however, she could not get indicative costs without HPC permission to pursue. She had noted that the current site might not be fully compliant and would like to have the site revamped before/ regardless of any transfer. It seemed sensible to try to find out any specific requirements for gov.uk sites to consider in that update. It was agreed that she should pursue the issue of requirements and indicative costs **Cllr Goldsmith**

To approach Newbury College to see if they had any students who might like to update the website **Clerk**

Cllr Burgess suggested that HPC should use SharePoint to store files. The Chairman agreed in principle but pointed out that the same effect could be achieved by having a shared drive with appropriate controls without having to pay for councillor software and training.

To provide advice on options for sharing files **Cllr Rigby**

4. To discuss optimisation to better achieve aim of improving life in Hermitage – August agenda.

10.07.25 Burial ground

Nothing to report.

11.07.25 Highways

Noted that signposting works done on Eling Way. Residents had questioned the apparent lack of a sign on the Marlston road pointing down the route. To investigate and contact WBC to remind them to raise the bollards **Clerk**

Eling estate have offered to update the footpaths leaflet. It was agreed that this was a good reason to break the 3-month rule as now allowed under SO. Chairman to liaise **Cllr Goldsmith**
The chairman advised that the white speed gate on Yattendon Road had broken over a year ago. WBC had said they would put it on their to do list but had recently confirmed it was unlikely to be repaired in the foreseeable future. Whilst they had advised an indicative cost of £4.5/£5K, it appeared that a simple repair could be affected by use of Metposts or similar; however, as work on the Highway, this would incur significant administrative costs. It was agreed that HPC would consider arranging repair depending on cost.

To obtain budget price for repairs to Yattendon Rd speed gate

Clerk

12.07.25 HPC properties

13.1 Playgrounds

Cllr Cottingham noted that Thursday Team had been through Wicksteed reports and identified what work they could do. Clerk to circulate. **Clerk**

Cllr Willey provided latest inspection reports. It was noted specifically that the seat on the xxx at Hermitage Green had broken since the TT visit and would need to be replaced.

Site visit with contractor on 17th July to review the surface under the cantilever swing. He had advised either wet pour or grass matting and would provide estimates for both.

Hermitage Green play equipment was supplied by Lappset. Clerk has downloaded the Maintenance guide and arranged for a contractor to visit site to estimate costs of repainting on 19th July.

12.2 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground

Note: Cold Ash Football may wish to use the recreation ground some Sunday mornings from September. To advise them to speak with Village Hall directly to discuss parking **Clerk**

12.3 Other open spaces

Nothing to report.

12.4 Transfer of land off Pinewood Crescent

Fence is now installed but leaves “no-man’s land” between gas regulator and back gardens. It is not clear if this could be given to adjoining residents to extend gardens as it cannot be used for housing. Option of transfer to residents to be pursued (action ongoing) **Cllr Cottingham**

Cllr Burgess noted that residents had, in the past, hoped to get vehicle access to their back gardens to avoid parking on the main road. Cllr Goldsmith noted that we had yet to decide how to consult with local residents and this might be better discussed when Cllrs Rigby and Williams were present as they are also local to the site (August agenda).

13.07.25 Other matters

13.1 Village Hall

It was decided too late to write to J Lawler about the non-event.

It was noted that M Yam was regularly using the MUGA for her exercise classes and asked if she had booked this, to which the answer was no. Apparently, she is also advising other Hall users that they can similarly use the facility.

Whilst HPC cannot force organisations to make the voluntary contributions, it does need to know who is using its facility and when and confirm that they have appropriate third party insurance in case of loss or injury to the public.

To write to VH reminding them to advise to provide any of their commercial hirers planning to use the MUGA with a copy of the Open Spaces Policy **Clerk**

13.2 Defibrillators

1. Checks done.

2. It was agreed that HPC would provide defibrillator training for Hermitage residents. Clerk to gauge interest through Facebook **Clerk**

14.07.25 Reports on Meetings of Outside bodies

Cllr Brown attended the Patient Participation Group meeting and advised that more members are required; he has placed a notice at the Village shop.

Cllr Govier attended the Village Hall meeting and advised that a new tree has been planted at the front of the Hall. Cllr Goldsmith advised the new slabs had been broken there by cars and one was wobbly; the contractor had advised VH they could not be driven on. Cllr Govier advised the Village Hall trustees are moving forward on extending the car park.

Cllr Govier attended The Downs Community Forum on 15th July and provided a report.

15.07.25 Any other business (information only)

Cllr Burgess noted that she had tendered her resignation and was thanked by the chair and all for her time and contribution to the Council.

16.07.25 Date of the next meeting

Thursday 21st August 2025 at 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.37pm.

Signed _____ Dated _____