

HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of Hermitage Parish Council held at
Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, Berkshire RG18 9ST
on Thursday 18th September 2025 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr A Goldsmith (Chairman), Cllr R Cottingham, Cllr D Brown, Cllr H Codling, Cllr P Dick, Ms N Pierce (clerk).

01.09.25 Public participation

8 members of the public attended to observe the meeting.

02.09.25 Apologies for absence

None

03.09.25 Minutes of meetings held on 17th July and 21st August 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 and residents survey – Councillors leading on these have resigned. So, these will be removed from the agenda and reinstated if a new councillor wishes to take them on.

04.09.25 Declarations of interest

Cllr Dick advised that, if there was any conflict, his contribution to the meeting would be in the interest of HPC and not WBC and spoke on behalf of Cllr Codling who agreed.

05.09.25 Chairmans introduction

Cllr Goldsmith welcomed Cllrs Dick and Codling to the Council and congratulated Cllr Codling on her new role as Deputy Leader of WBC.

She advised the next steps in recruiting further councillors: posters would be put on notice boards, website and fb advising each of the 8 vacancies and the requirements for requesting an election. A separate request would be required for each of the 8 posts.

Cllr Cottingham noted that there was nothing in the budget for an election, should this be required.

06.09.25 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council

Reports distributed on 15th July and 8th September. No questions raised. Cllr Cottingham noted the free-soil collection and caddy liners available from WBC.

07.09.25 Planning

7.1 New Applications

Adjacent Parish - 25/00985/FUL, Land South of Dunedin, Long Lane, Cold Ash.

Retrospective continued use of land for a kiln dried log business; including retention of various moveable structures such as log kiln, storage units and caravan (non-residential); widening/altering the existing access. Cllr Dick advised that the applicant had previously used the Rookery Farm access but had now reopened a direct access to the B4009. He had visited the site, and saw nothing of concern, except for access where visibility was an issue, as identified by Highways and Chieveley Council. HPC agreed with CPC's response. **Objection.**

7.2 Decision notices

None.

7.3 New Grondon Quarry

Councillors said they would like to visit the site, potentially with Chieveley Parish Council. **Clerk**

08.09.25 Finance

No RFOs Report had been produced: nothing additional to what was on the agenda.

Financial position as of 31st August

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£240,206.86
Receipts to 31 st August	£47,631.38
Authorised Payments to 31 st August	£28,972.77
Payment not processed by 31 st August	£594.06
Balance in hand (total)	£259,459.53

8.1 Payments for consideration**August 2025**

The following were approved.

9.2.1	Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	£331.56
9.2.2	Grass maintenance/Contractor	£803.25
9.2.3	Cost of administration	£1,159.97
9.2.4	HMRC, tax and NI	£188.39
9.2.5	Admin expenses, ink and plastic wallets	£57.59
9.2.6	Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (July)	£242.94
9.2.7	David Brown, ink	£52.03
9.2.8	Autela Payroll, April – July 2025	£130.50
9.2.9	West Berkshire Countryside Society, 5 th August	£100.00
Total	All approved and endorsed online on 16th September 2025	£3,066.23

Payments for consideration September 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	£1,160.17
9.2.4	HMRC, tax and NI	£188.19
9.2.5	Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (August)	£242.94
9.2.6	Crescent Signs, Hermitage Green new signs x 2	£322.80
9.2.7	Severnside Defibs & Training Ltd, replacement battery for White Horse	£279.60
Total	All approved, and endorsed online on 22nd September 2025	£3,366.51

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionos (website) monthly payment for July	£20.40
NEST monthly payment for July	£113.94
1 & 1 Ionos (website) monthly payment August	8.40
NEST monthly payment for August	Not paid

8.2 Receipts July 2025 & August 2025

CCLA interest £243.15.

August – None.

8.3 Receipts and Payments to date

1. Receipts and Payments to date reviewed. Cllr Codling wanted to understand why HPC holds such a large amount not ringfenced. Cllr's Goldsmith and Cottingham noted that HPC had not been good at ringfencing money for future maintenance and replacement of assets. This should be discussed further when new councillors had joined.

Cllr Codling asked what software HPC used to prepare its accounts and suggested it might be better to use a software package specifically designed for PC accounts. Clerk to contact NALC to ascertain what's available.

Clerk

2. It was agreed to retain the £40,000 held in deposit for a further 3 months.

Clerk

09.09.25 Administrative matters

1. Furze Hill & Open Spaces policy. Approved.

2. Financial Regulations

Cllr Cottingham is halfway through the review; Cllr Goldsmith has supplied her an edited version of model regs for consideration. Cllr Cottingham to complete and distribute to all prior to next meeting. **Cllr Cottingham**

3. Review schedules for policies and procedures and risk assessments

Where current councillors had already agreed to reviews, these should be pursued.

To place on agenda for two months' time, when it is hoped, new councillors can become involved with the reviews. **Clerk**

4. Website. Update on potential upgrade and transfer to gov.uk domain

Govt wants all councils to move to gov.uk websites. Clerks will need to have gov.uk emails or similar to sign off 2026 AGAR. No councillor should be using personal email for PC business.

Cllr Goldsmith has contacted one organisation that had prepared Thatcham TC's, and they quoted ~£200 per annum to cover cost of transferring, i.e. upgrading, and maintenance. She advised that she didn't like the format of these as much as WBCs. Cllr Dick said he thought WBC did theirs in-house but would ask and see if other councils who had transferred could provide feedback. **Cllr Dick**

To see what feedback she can elicit from contacts **Clerk**

10.09.25 **Burial ground**

1. The memorial headstone for grave plot 4 was approved.
2. The memorial headstone for grave plot E7 was approved.

11.09.25 **Highways**

Cllr Dick provided an update re suggested changes to parking restrictions outside the school. He had contacted Highways who noted that signage and parking restrictions had previously been changed by agreement and were concerned the Head Teacher would not agree with resident's proposal. This was not the case, and Highways to meet with the head teacher to discuss options. Cllr Goldsmith noted that parents were now able to park at the VH and kiss-and-drop, so would expect fewer objections.

12.09.25 **HPC properties**

12.1 Tree works

Estimate obtained for removal of leylandii at Pinewood Crescent, removal of dead branch at Dines Way and removal of dead ash trees and sycamores.

Council approved a budget of £500 for Dines Way, £2,320 for Furze Hill (to come from commuted sum) so the work could be placed promptly once alternative quotes sought.

To seek alternative quotes for tree works

Clerk/ Cllr Cottingham

The price for leylandii would feed into decision as to what to do with the land.

Cllr Cottingham to ask for estimated cost of maintaining leylandii, should they remain in place.

Cllr Cottingham

12.2 Playgrounds

1. Playground inspections have not been done. The following Councillors agreed to carry out in September: Hermitage Green (DB), Furze Hill (RC), Pinewood Park (AG).

2. Hermitage Green surface

Hermitage Green and Furze Hill surface areas have gaps opening up around the edge of the playgrounds and at Hermitage Green the surface is bubbling. Expert advice should be sought (e.g. from contractor replacing surface below cantilever swing) as to whether to repair or replace in entirety; to appear in the 2026-27 budget. **Clerk**

3. Painting at Hermitage Green playground

An initial quotation has been received in the sum of £1,700. Advice is that the wood is now too wet, and it should wait until next year.

To place figure in the 2026-27 budget. **Clerk**

4. Quotations for replacement surface beneath cantilever swing at Pinewood Park.
Redlynch Quotation for replacement surface in the sum of £5,285: Approved as the cheapest, and Redlynch are suppliers of the swing and equipment and Hermitage Green.
To ask Redlynch if they can carry out maintenance of the swing at the same time **Clerk**
5. Hermitage Green playground sign: To approve 2 signs total of £269 plus vat. Approved.

12.3 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground

1. WBCS tasks for 21st October visit approved.
Cllr Cottingham to speak to Eling Estate regarding trees (theirs and ours) currently fallen over fencing at FH with a view to them arranging works and splitting costs. **Cllr Cottingham**
2. Quotations for replacement of broken fence posts: S Cripps £200 plus vat, Barlow's £150 plus vat: Approved.

12.4 Other open spaces

The seat in Charlotte Close needs to be cleaned. To speak with contractor. **Clerk**
Nothing to report on other areas, except Dines Way tree already discussed,

12.5 Land off Pinewood Crescent

Land behind gas governor has been completely fenced off. Planning permission does not allow use for housing, so not clear if this would allow it to be part of a garden.
To confirm if this area has been sold to the adjacent householder **Cllr Cottingham**

13.09.25 Other matters

13.1 Village Hall

Vandalism has started again. Will decide which councillors will attend monthly Village Hall meetings (held first Wednesday in each month) when new ones have joined.

13.2 Defibrillators

1. Checks done and new battery ordered.
2. It was previously agreed that HPC would provide defibrillator training for Hermitage residents. Clerk advised that so far 8 residents had expressed an interest.
To select date to suit the 8 and venue etc, then to gauge further interest through Facebook. **Clerk**

14.09.25 Correspondence received

Councillors to advise if they want to see any items listed separately.

15.09.25 Reports on Meetings of Outside bodies

Cllr Brown attended the patient participation group meeting.
Cllrs Brown and Cottingham attended the meeting at West Berkshire Council on 11th September where nomination of Cllrs Dick and Colding had been agreed.

16.09.25 Any other business (information only)

17.09.25 Date of the next meeting

Revised date set: Monday 27th October 2025 at 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church.

Potential alternative venues were discussed: VH rooms are either too large or too small.

To ask school about potential use of Woodland Classroom **Clerk**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.10pm.

Signed:

Dated:

