

HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting of Hermitage Parish Council held at
Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Hermitage, Berkshire RG18 9ST
on Thursday 20th November 2025 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr A Goldsmith (Chairman), Cllr R Cottingham, Cllr D Brown, Cllr P Dick, Ms N Pierce (clerk) Cllr V Burgess, Cllr M Foster, Cllr M Powers and Cllr M Dye from item 05.11.25.

01.11.25 Public participation

No members of the public attended to observe the meeting.

02.11.25 Apologies for absence

Cllr H Codling

03.11.25 Minutes of meetings held on 27th October 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

None discussed

04.11.25 Declarations of interest

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

05.11.25 Councillor Co-option and Election of Vice Chairman

1. Proposal for co-option of Mike Dye was seconded and carried unanimously.

The nominee provided signed declaration of acceptance of office and register of interest forms and was duly accepted onto council and joined the meeting at this point.

2. Proposal for election of Vice Chairman Cllr David Brown was seconded and carried unanimously. A signed declaration of acceptance of office has since been received.

06.11.25 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council

Report distributed 14th November. Cllr Paul Dick updated all on progress regarding formation of the Ridgeway unitary council.

07.11.25 Planning

7.1 New Applications

The following responses were agreed with response to include text regarding the lack of reference to policies in the development plan.

25/02515/HOUSE, 35 Lipscomb Close, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9SZ. Rear Extension on existing patio. No objection.

25/02587/HOUSE, 9 Kiln Close, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9TQ. Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a new single-storey extension. No objection.

7.2 Decision notices

25/02069/HOUSE, The Corner House, Yattendon Road, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9RW. Two-storey infill rear extension and addition of rooflights to attic space. WBC approved.

Report following Grundon meeting 11th November

Cllr Goldsmith explained that Grundon is proposing to extract sand from a site by the service area with access directly off the furthest mini-roundabout.

They had made a presentation to Chieveley council who had subsequently put a TPO on an oak in the middle of the site. Cllr Dick noted that extraction from this site was part of the WBC strategy, such that there was a presumption that permission would be granted.

The presentation did not, in the Chairman's view, provide sufficient detail of the access arrangements to enable any further analysis at this point. Since the proposal would not directly affect Hermitage residents It was agreed to leave further action until a formal application was made.

08.11.25 Finance

Clerk and RFO report circulated and noted.

Financial position as of 31st October

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£240,206.86
Receipts to 31 st October	£82,097.42
Authorised Payments to 31 st October	£53,233.96
Payment not processed by 31 st October	£0.00
Balance in hand (total)	£269,070.32

8.1 Payments for consideration

The following were noted/ approved.

Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	£331.56
Grass maintenance/Contractor	£909.25
Cost of administration	£1,582.11
HMRC, tax and NI	£455.39
Admin expenses, ink and laptop	£45.38
Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (October)	£242.94
Royal British Legion, poppy wreath donation	£70.00
Yattendon Estates, Christmas Tree for The Fox	£200.00
Sevenside Defibrillator training Ltd, 2 sets of pads (White Horse and School)	£150.00
Tactical Management Ltd, speed gate replacement at Yattendon Road	£709.63
All approved and endorsed online on 21st November 2025	£4,696.26

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

1&1 Ionos (website) monthly payment for October	£44.40
NEST monthly payment for September	£113.94

8.2 Receipts October 2025

CCLA interest £244.31, Newbury Building Society annual interest £2,320.00.

8.3 Receipts and Payments to date

Cllr Dick said he had not seen a receipt and payments summary. The clerk advised this is attached to the first papers email distributed every month, which some councillors had apparently ignored on the assumption it is replaced by papers in the second email. It was agreed the first papers email will in future only contain draft agenda and minutes; the second email will contain all other papers including receipts and payments summary.

To include a briefing note in the Clerk and RFO report to detail ringfenced funds, available funds and monies held in each bank account.

Clerk

Cllr Cottingham advised we had spent 35% of the budget with 46% of the year to go, but this includes some one-off spend.

8.4 Budget 2026-27

1. The Chairman has sourced budget prices for options to repair/ replace rubber surfaces at Hermitage Green and Furze Hill playgrounds where they have shrunk and to add a new item (sprung animal): provided separately. All councillors to visit affected playgrounds and consider options for playground surfaces to enable decision at next meeting- either overlay the current surface or take complete surface up and replace (Hermitage Green).

All

It was noted that the last annual inspection had not identified these as a significant safety hazard but they had since deteriorated and a recent WBC inspection of HG had raised the risk slightly. HPC was therefore taking a cautious approach.

To contact Redlynch asking a) if applying as overlay would reduce expected lifetime b) to obtain estimate for overlaying surface at Furze Hill.

Clerk

2. Budget was not complete in time to review. Clerk to circulate when ready.

Clerk

It was later agreed that the Redlynch quote for maintenance of cantilever swing and zip wire trolley would be included.

8.5 FWP report

Bank statements for May and June 2025 had been reconciled and receipts and payments checked against minutes. All OK. Council agreed with recommendations that interest is transferred to ring fenced funds pro rata, and that VAT reclaim for Furze Hill invoices should be returned to ring fenced funds, this being the only fund where it would be significant. **Clerk**

9.11.25 Administrative matters

1. Financial Regulations and policies

Some work has been done on FR, not in a position to finalise at this meeting. **Cllr Cottingham**

2. Progress update on review of Financial Risk Assessment and Schedule.

Some work has been done, not in a position to finalise at this meeting. **Clerk**

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

Clerk has written to 8 helpers for a move to gov.uk platform and gov.uk emails and received 3 specifications/quotations. To consolidate details and send to all. **Cllr Goldsmith**

The Clerk advised that time is important as the providers have advised both limited availability and up to 10 weeks for the work to be carried out. The deadline for transfer to be implemented is the end of March 2026.

4. Councillor Roles

Cllrs M Foster and V Burgess agreed to join the Finance Working Party (FWP). To set up viewing rights only on the bank account for Cllr Foster; Cllr Burgess's would have authorisation rights as before. **Clerk**

Cllr Goldsmith noted that, although J Rigby had agreed to continue as Speedwatch co-ordinator when he left the council, he now had new work responsibilities so was unable to continue in the role. Cllr Dye offered to find out more about the role with a view to taking it on. Clerk to forward Mr Rigby's contact details.

5. Training

Clerk is now booked on course on new digital security requirements.

Clerk has discussed new Councillor training with NALC. Two provisional dates in February 2026 have been set. To follow through and send training links to Cllr Dye. **Clerk**

Digital Data and Compliance training is also available in February 2026. To send links to all Councillors. **Clerk**

9.1 Christmas Tree event 5th December

Co-op has not agreed to provide mince pies. Cllr Dye offered that his company, New Health Project, would make up shortfall. Cllr Burgess to amend the poster to show correct sponsors. **Cllr Burgess**

Cllr Cottingham has booked the choir. Clerk has ordered the Christmas Tree to be delivered week commencing 1st December. The Fox will provide mulled wine.

10.11.25 Burial ground

Nothing to report.

11.11.25 Highways

The tree on the pavement opposite the post office was noted as an obstruction to the pathway. To send a photograph of the tree to the clerk to forward to Cllr Dick to take up with Highways to see what might be done. **Cllr Dye/Clerk/Cllr Dick**

1. The Eling Way extension is nearly complete. Replacement hedge planting inside the new fence on the east side near Yattendon Road should finish by 21 November. WBC is waiting for the contractor to confirm the line marking date. Embankment landowners cooperated with the subcontractor, enabling tree trimming and machinery access via the rough track. To write letter to the owner at The Gable House thanking them for allowing use of their land. **Clerk**

2. To receive/discuss update on road safety/parking near Hermitage School

Cllr Dick advised the Police Team will visit at school drop off and collection times and issue tickets as appropriate. To update at future meetings **Cllr Dick**

3. Roll-out of 20mph limits to Hermitage

Meeting held with WBC contractor who is working up proposals to set up 20mph areas in villages following successful trial at Theale. Proposals will be finalised and put out for consultation.

4. To agree response to resident request for lights in Colyer Close.

To advise resident that Hermitage is a dark village so street lights only at crossings etc as specified by Highways.

Clerk

5. Update on Speed reduction gate on Yattendon Road.

Repaired offsite and reinstalled on 14th November. Chairman had checked so included in payments.

12.11.25 HPC properties

12.1 Trees

Contractor has been chased to provide a date for works to be done. It was decided to source an arborist to do the work at a resident's premises at Furze Hill if no response was received. To liaise with residents as necessary

Clerk/Cllr Cottingham

Wrt Eling estate and HPC trees fallen onto fence. Eling has advised that field has been ploughed by new farmer, so the work will have to be carried out next year. Action put on hold.

12.2 Playgrounds

1. Playground inspections have been done. The following Councillors agreed to carry out in November: Hermitage Green (DB) Furze Hill (VB) Pinewood Park (RC).

Future inspections to be included in discussion of councillor roles next month.

Clerk/ Chairman

2. To discuss approach to Community led Pinewood Park offer

Individual did not reply to the invitation to attend the November meeting. To follow this through to see if available for the December meeting.

Clerk

12.3 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground

Caloo Ltd quotation for Furze Hill zip wire and body twist approved.

The Thursday team have filled the rabbit holes on the pitch.

12.4 Other open spaces

Nothing to report. It was agreed to retain WBC cutting areas with WBC.

12.5 Land off Pinewood Crescent

The paper to support consultation with residents has been put together but not finalised. **Cllr Cottingham**

13.11.25 Other matters

13.1 Village Hall

Cllr Goldsmith wrote to the village hall with regard to Dr Lawler's concern re minuting of matters relating to use of car park, in which she asked Trustees if they would like to have a HPC representative at meetings

No response received to date, so council did not nominate a representative.

13.2 Defibrillators

1. Checks done and new pads ordered for defibrillators at both the Primary School and White Horse pub.

2. Training to take place but not a priority; only low numbers expressed an interest.

Clerk

13.3 Eling Estate

Chairman has had an informal meeting with the Eling estate ranger at which she had advised that, if monies were needed for notice boards to mark the new, improved routes this year, an estimate would be required for the budget. None forthcoming to date.

13.4 Action log review

Eling estate was developing a mountain bike circuit, so pump track may not be required.

Agreed to drop Action.

Councillors noted that items on the residents' survey were generally either Highways' responsibility, or only from 1-2 residents. It was therefore agreed to remove this from the action log.

The Chairman noted the exception, which was improvements to a bad muddy patch on the footpath opposite Dines Way. WBC was aware of the problem as a ranger had put in new steps and done some works last winter. This to become a separate item. Cllr Cottingham suggested asking the landowner if he would be willing to work with HPC to improve.

Cllr Cottingham/ Clerk

Part Two

In regard to a personal matter, Council agreed to support Cllr Goldsmith, whatever she decided.

14.11.25 Correspondence received

Councillors to advise if they want to see any items. List had been missed this month: Clerk to prepare a communications list for monthly meetings as previously.

Due to meeting over-running, the meeting was curtailed at this point: 21.52pm.

Remaining items to be discussed at December meeting as appropriate.

17.11.25 Date of the next meeting

Thursday 18th December at 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church.

Signed:

Dated: