

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 December 2025 at 7.30pm

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

01.12.25 Public participation

No members of the public attended to observe the meeting.

02.12.25 Apologies for absence

Cllr H Codling

03.12.25 Minutes of meetings held on 20th November 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

Considered under item 12.2. To remove 3.1 from the January agenda.

04.12.25 Declarations of interest

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

Cllr Cottingham declared an interest in agenda item 25/02640/HOUSE, The Stumps, Doctors Lane, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9TA. Proposed erection of a detached garage.

05.12.25 District Councillors Report and Information from West Berks Council

No report this month and no other information particularly noted.

06.12.25 Planning

6.1 New applications

Responses to applications were agreed as follows.

25/02640/HOUSE, The Stumps, Doctors Lane, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9TA. Proposed erection of a detached garage. No objection.

25/02698/HOUSE, 3 Blake Road, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9WN. Single storey link to existing garage, conversion of garage to habitable room, utility room and storage. HPC noted and agreed with public objections. The parallel application 25/02699 was also noted: retrospective application for a loft conversion to bedroom. This would make the property 4 beds with only 2 parking spaces in an area with insufficient parking. Objection.

25/02690/HOUSE, (adjacent Parish) Oare Farmhouse, Oare, Hermitage, Thatcham, RG18 9SD. Extensions, alterations and conversion of outbuildings to habitable use. No Objection.

6.2 Decision notices

25/02216/HOUSE, Long Barn, Yattendon Road, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9RQ. Proposed side dormers including velux windows and internal alterations. WBC approved.

25/02107/COND, 1 Longworthy, Newbury Road, Hermitage, Thatcham. Application for approval of details reserved by conditions 3 (Materials) 9 (CMS) 12 (Remediation) 17 (Air Source Heat Pump details) 18 (Dust) 20 (Soft and Hard Landscaping) of approved 24/01920/FUL. WBC approves in part and refuses in part.

6.3 Sign on the verge outside The Fox public house

Sign believed to contravene planning requirements: registered with the planning enforcement department prior to meeting date and Highways advised as the verge is believed to be owned by them.

Councillors were reminded that any issues should be reported personally using the WBC on-line service. The clerk should only be involved when agreed by council to reflect their views. Cllr Dick noted that he was happy to chase urgent matters.

07.12.25 Finance

Clerk and RFO report circulated and noted.

Financial position as of 30th November

Balance carried forward (Inc. S106 contributions)	£240,206.86
Receipts to 30 th November	£82,097.42
Authorised Payments to 30 th November	£58,112.68
Payment not processed by 30 th November	£0.00
Balance in hand (total)	£264,191.70

7.1 Payments for consideration

The following were noted/ approved.

Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd monthly charge	£331.56
Grass maintenance/Contractor	£820.25
Cost of administration	£1,160.17
HMRC, tax and NI	£188.19
Admin expenses 2026 diary, minute book, ink	£40.75
Tactical Management Ltd, dog bins (November)	£242.94
Autela Payroll, August to November, payroll and pension regulation	£147.36
Mr S Hunt – self locking gate latch for Furze Hill	£11.45
Barlow & Sons (Hermitage) Ltd – supplies for Furze Hill	£5.93
All approved and endorsed online on 19th December 2025	£2,948.60

Direct Debits previously approved

Noted.

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

7.2 Receipts November 2025

None.

7.3 Receipts and Payments to date

1. Detailed note of ring-fenced funds and free funds extract now in Clerk report monthly. No questions raised.

2. Approved retaining the £40,000 held in the Lloyds deposit account (maturity date 24th December) for a further 3 months. Clerk to arrange.

Clerk

7.4 Budget 2026-27

Budget has been updated with narrative amalgamated into one column. Cllr Cottingham to send final draft budget to clerk. Clerk to circulate together with November receipts and payments summary when ready.

Cllr Cottingham/Clerk

Cllr Goldsmith noted that HPC has consistently underspent, so suggested that the Precept should remain unchanged this year. FWP will meet before next meeting to prepare proposal.

8.12.25 Administrative matters

1. Revised Financial Regulations approved. Cllr Burgess to amend several sections of the IT policy and circulate. Clerk to place on January agenda for approval.

Cllr Burgess/Clerk

2. Some work has been done on review of Financial Risk Assessment and Schedule, clerk to respond to chairman's observations, not in a position to finalise at this meeting.

Clerk/ Cllr Goldsmith

3. After much discussion, Council agreed to use Parish Online to host a new gov.uk website largely on the basis that they had been selected by Chieveley and Compton so experience could be shared. Clerk to obtain updated quotation and proceed with them.

Clerk

Cllr Dye said he would assist clerk with the transition if required.

In response to a query about the number of webpages, Cllr Goldsmith noted that she had included a list and commentary in the spreadsheet comparing providers, but not received any comments. Councillors asked that this be resent.

Cllr Goldsmith to resend information/ views on current website pages

Cllr Goldsmith

4. Councillors volunteered to fill vacant roles. Clerk to update schedule and circulate.

Clerk

5. Feedback on Christmas Tree event 5th December has been good. A fantastic turnout and new people attending but noted that the tree is much less impressive than neighbouring villages. Agreed to consider having a much larger Christmas tree next year. The landlord is keen to support other activities.

09.12.25 **Burial ground**
Nothing to report.

10.12.25 **Highways**
1. Cllr Dick advised the Police Team has visited at school drop off and collection times and will continue this in January, issuing tickets for poor driving as appropriate. Highways is expecting to improve markings as in Cold Ash in January.
To update at future meetings **Cllr Dick**
2. The WBC Countryside Manager is in conversation with Highways regarding creation of a slightly wider path adjacent to the tree that partially blocks the pavement opposite the Post Office. It may not be possible. Clerk to continue to liaise with WBC. **Clerk**

11.12.25 **HPC properties**
11.1 Trees
Contractor completed the works week commencing 8th December.
To check with residents that works to their satisfaction **Clerk**

11.2 Playgrounds
1. Playground inspections have been done in Furze Hill and Hermitage Green. The following Councillors agreed to carry out in January: Hermitage Green (DB) Furze Hill (VB) Pinewood Park (AG) and continue with this for the time being.
2. The individual who had offered to manage Pinewood Park upgrade has said they cannot proceed now but will reach out if their situation changes.

11.3 Furze Hill & Recreation Ground
Vandalism has taken place at Furze Hill with motorbikes doing doughnuts outside VH and on Rec ground. Rumours are that offenders have been caught.
To ask VH whether bike riders have been caught. **Cllr Burgess**
A gate latch has been stolen and bolts partly unscrewed from hinge at Rec ground. A resident has kindly replaced the latch.
Child injured falling onto gate bolt on the MUGA. The same individual has offered to source and fit bolt covers: HPC asked that he be thanked and Chairman advised she already had.

11.4 Other open spaces
Deep ruts have been made in the grassed area at Charlotte Close. Cllr Cottingham to arrange filling with soil. **Cllr Cottingham**

11.5 Land off Pinewood Crescent
It was agreed that a consultation paper would be drafted and shared with residents: direct posting to those in adjacent properties and advertising to others. A questionnaire would be included to gain views in advance of a public meeting; Cllr Burgess said she would put into electronic format. Cllr Cottingham has started on this but requires input from other councillors.
To send questions and info prepared to date to councillors **Cllr Cottingham**
To provide feedback and assistance **All Councillors**

12.12.25 **Other matters**
12.1 Defibrillators
Checks done. Cllr Dye expressed an interest in doing the defibrillator maintenance and checks in future.

12.2 Action log review

The action log was reviewed and found not to be up to date. No additional items identified that needed discussion but noted that defibrillator training remained to be organised.
To update action log.

Clerk

13.12.25 Correspondence received

Councillors to advise if they want to see any items.

14.12.25 Reports on meetings of outside bodies

1. Cllr Brown reported that the showground has a busy events programme for 2026. Complaints were raised about noise late at night from some events. Cllr Foster confirmed that the show had made a small profit this year.
2. Cllr Cottingham noted that the Online Climate Change Forum had been interesting.

15.12.25 Any other business (information only)

None.

16.12.25 Date of the next meeting

Council agreed to put back the next meeting to give adequate preparation time after the Clerk's Xmas/NY holiday and that venue would be changed to Woodland Classroom if Trinity Tones was practicing that evening.

Thursday 22nd January 2026, at 7.30pm in the Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.33pm

Signed:

Dated: