

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday, 19th May 2026,
at 7.30 pm at Much Hadham Village Hall

PRESENT: Cllr B Bird
Cllr T Bond
Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chair)
Cllr D McDonald
Cllr B O'Neill
Cllr S Smith
Cllr P Taylor (Chair)
Cllr J Westlake

Plus: Cllr I Devonshire (EHC)
39 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 20 May 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 20 May 2025 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3. SHORT REPORT FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Chair thanked everyone for coming, and explained the new format of the evening, no longer trade-fair type tables, but 3 presentations on the workings of the Recreation Ground, following by Q&A and open discussion.

The Chair reported that sadly, Joe Pilliai resigned in August, finding his work and family commitments did not allow for the time he wished to give the PC. The PC welcomed Jackie Westlake in October, who is already making a mark on the Staffing Committee and the Playground Working Party. Her previous experience as a Town Clerk is proving invaluable. Very sadly, Cllr Jan Liversage had to take a back seat last year when she became ill and eventually resigned in April. The Chair thanked Jan for her 14 years' service, her commitment and enthusiasm particularly for her work on the Burial Authority, and the professionalism she brought to matters on the Staffing Committee. She has been greatly missed, and the PC wishes her all the very best with her treatment. Applications to fill the Casual Vacancy were closing the next day 20th May.

The Chair reported that Victoria Mazza had been recruited to the position of Clerk in September. She had undergone intensive training, especially concerning the Accounts, and

with the help of vice-chair Ian Hunt, had sailed through the audit of the PC's accounting processes for the last financial year. The PC are looking forward to working with her over the coming years, and she will be undertaking extensive training to become a qualified Clerk.

The Chair listed some of the PC activities, and continuing projects:

- The maintenance of the many trees the PC is responsible has continued, and trees to the left and right of the Recreation Ground driveway are nearly complete.
- The extension to the cemetery at Perry Green had been completed and there had now been 3 interments in the new area. The Chair explained that very few parish councils had the responsibility of a Cemetery, and quite a lot of work was involved for the Burial Authority.
- Support for the installation of 20mph speed limits continues, and since the change of political leadership, HCC was showing more interest. A few town areas were trialling 20mph currently, further advancement to more rural areas was awaited.
- Controlling our costs is important but the precept had been increased by a third this year as significant amounts are expected to be spent on completing the work on trees at the Recreation Ground to make them safer. A project to upgrade the playground is about to commence, as is a project to improve the provision of noticeboards around the parish.
- The Chair confirmed the PC was consulted by EHC on all planning applications and continues to support only sustainable development that preserves or enhances our conservation areas. The chair confirmed that Hill Group had received their planning permission for the development behind Hill House for 31 dwellings, 12 of which will be Affordable Housing. The development will mean the availability of significant s106 monies to improve village facilities and the parish council is ready to help local organisations in applying for those funds, although it may be a couple of years before the funds are made available.
- Tony Bond has really helped the Parish Council extend its social media presence, hopefully enabling residents to hear more about the PC and what it does. There are plans for improved signage to the Recreation Ground, and the Noticeboards around the parish. The PC website will be upgraded this year, as it is showing its age.
- HCC Highways have seen quite a change in personnel and the Chair expressed the PC's grateful thanks to Cllr Mark Pope for using his Locality Budget on the important improvements to Joyce's Corner, Green Tye. The railings opposite the village hall had also now been completed after many years. And the passing places in Kettle Green Lane had been tarmacked through the Moor Place s106 monies.
- An application for the designation of the Allotments car park, as an Asset of Community Value had been made. The Chair explained what an ACV is.
- Finally, the Chair announced that she would be resigning from the Parish Council in mid-June, when her expanding family needed more of her time and energy. She thanked all her fellow councillors for all their hard work and efforts and how much she had enjoyed working with them, particularly Ian Hunt, who had been invaluable as vice-chair for the last 10 years. She wishes the PC all the best for the future.

4. PRESENTATIONS

The Chair introduced presentations from the Sports Association and the Tennis Club, and from the Parish Council on the Pavilion, and the Playground.

5. Q&A AND RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

- A resident asked if the pavilion could be used as a café?
The chair responded this had been investigated a couple of times, but issues arose on possible requirements for planning “change of use”, the size of the car park, and the possible upgrades required internally
- A resident asked if graded rumble strips could not be introduced at the entrances to the village to help alleviate major problem of speeding traffic.
The chair explained these had been turned down due to Highways regulations and being a B road. The speeding on exiting is just as much a problem as on entering, as it is such a long village. The problems with speeding will be constantly brought up with HCC Highways. The south end flashing sign will be turned round to try and deter speeding on exit.
- EHC Cllr Ian Devonshire remarked that if planning permission was requested for a café in the Pavilion, he would support it.
- A resident suggested exploring a pop-up coffee stand/van on the Recreation Ground car park (similar to the existing fish and chips vans). A Cllr explained that if any micro businesses contacted the PC, they would be pushing against an open door.
- A resident suggested a total reimagine of the whole of the recreation ground including the pavilion and playground, since requirements and usage had changed over the years.
- A local resident declared a prior interest in hiring the pavilion and observed that a café and other improved facilities on the Recreation Ground would attract local small businesses and be advantageous for residents.
- A resident asked if there would be a playground on the Hill House development “open space” site? Cllr I Hunt responded that the plans appeared to include a very small one and the resident suggested it may be possible to negotiate a developer contribution to the refurbishment of the existing playground instead.
- Cllr I Hunt went on to say that of significant importance was the future use and management of the open space on the new development to maximise benefit for residents across the parish.
- In response to a question, Cllr Hunt explained that the pavilion loan still had £44k due, payable at £5,387pa (including interest).
- Cllr B O’Neill suggested a separate entrance and exit for the recreation car park, with a lay-by for school drop offs.
- The Chair asked for a show of hands regarding the suggestion that if the Pavilion was seen as a white elephant, it could be knocked down (and space possibly made for more car parking). The majority were in favour of keeping the pavilion and, on a further show of hands, were also in favour of expanding the car park on to the Rec grounds.
- A resident asked if any cricket and/or football team was likely to come back. The response was very unlikely as nationally local clubs cannot find enough players.
- A resident was assured that the playground was inspected for H&S purposes, 3 times a year, and any red flag items were dealt with immediately. However, generally the equipment is old and worn and needs replacing.
- A resident thanked the Chair for the way she had chaired PC meetings that he had attended over the years.

The chair declared the meeting ended at 8.45 pm, and thanked everyone for coming.