

## MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 6th January 2026.  
in Much Hadham Village Hall, at 7.30 pm.

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

\* Denotes present

In attendance: V Mazza Clerk, Cllr Mark Pope, Cllr Ian Devonshire & 1 member of the public

- 26/01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE  
Apologies received from Cllr P Taylor (Chair) and Cllr J Liversage. As a consequence, Cllr I Hunt chaired the meeting.
- 26/02. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION  
Cllr S Smith declared an interest in a payment to be approved agenda item 26/11 (i) and would therefore not be participating in or voting on the related motion.
- 26/03. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS  
None.
- 26/04. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS  
Nothing to report.
- 26/05. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING  
RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and were signed by the Chair.
- 26/06. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS  
None
- 26/07. MEMBERS' REPORTS  
(i) COMMUNITY

### Recreation Ground

Cllr D McDonald reported several updates. Firstly, in regard to the Bowls Club Pavilion – Subsidence Insurance Claim. Loss adjusters estimate repair costs at c. £80,000. Progress has been slow and a potential coverage issue has arisen following an arboriculture report commissioned by underwriters, which recommends tree removal or reduction. There is concern that insurers may not cover works relating to trees on land they regard as Parish Council-owned. Cllr D McDonald will report further at the February meeting.

Secondly, the Bowls Club requested a Parish Council contribution towards hedge cutting costs (£1,800). The PC advised that the hedge is for the Bowls Club's benefit and

maintenance should therefore be met by the Club. The Recreation Trust may, however, be willing to offer financial support.

Cllr D McDonald also reported that he and Cllr T Bond attended the Bowls Club AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. The following key points were noted:

- Membership fee to remain at £100 for 2026 to avoid loss of members.
- Two members were elected to the Sports Association Committee, supporting its proper functioning.
- The Club is seeking to increase income through events but faces challenges recruiting younger members. Suggestions were made regarding recruitment and potential commercial use of facilities; this will be followed up.
- The Club requested signage for the Pavilion at the Recreation Ground entrance.

Cllr T Bond reported concerns that visitors are often unclear where the Club is located within the Recreation Ground. He is investigating the options for improving all the signage at the Rec.

Cllr S Smith produced Defibrillator signs to also be erected. Cllr T Bond agreed to take this on.

#### Sports Association

An update was provided on discussions previously held with the Sports Association regarding closer integration of the Recreation Ground with the wider community. It had been agreed that a Recreation Trust trustee should be invited to take on a consultative, coordinating role. To date, this has not been progressed, and Cllr T Bond and Cllr D McDonald will follow up to encourage progress.

#### Pavilion

During the recent electrical inspection, a faulty RCD was identified and replaced. Arrangements are being finalised to transfer the Pavilion electricity account to the Parish Council to simplify billing. Existing hirers have extended their use, including Home School Tutoring (to the end of March) and the Friday crochet club, which has added an extra hour for a new class. Work continues to maximise Pavilion use and secure more stable income, including taking external advice from local business owners, whose initial suggestions are now under review. Quotations are also being obtained for gutter repairs, bench replacement, and commercial cleaning of the flooring and carpets.

Cllr B O'Neill remarked that the bench outside the Pavilion car park entrance is falling apart. All Cllrs agreed that it should be removed and not replaced.

Cllr I Hunt mentioned that the Playground Inspection Report has been received and reviewed. The Adventure Trail was deemed High Risk and following discussion, it was decided it should be taken up and not replaced at this time.

Cllr J Westlake will be seeking residents' engagement for a meeting regarding the Playground. Cllr T Bond will look to advertise this on social media.

#### War Memorial

Following the upgrade of three light fittings to LED by Cllr B Bird, a billing revision was requested from UKPN UMISO to reflect the reduced power consumption.

A new certificate has been issued and provided to supplier Npower who today issued us with new billing. Although this reflects lower usage, it is more than expected. Cllr T Bond has asked Npower for further clarification. It could be that a minimum charge is at play, due to the unmetered supply being on a half night pre-dawn cycle.

#### Village Hall

Cllr I Hunt reported that the next committee meeting is on 13<sup>th</sup> January.

#### (ii) ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY)

Cllr S Smith reported the following: Footpath 4 (New Barns Lane to Standon Road) HCC PRoW have inspected the condition of the footpath and have confirmed that there is no problem with the surface, so no action is required.

Bridleway 17 (Winding Hill to GHGC golf course) The gate to the field adjacent to the golf course is proving difficult to open for horse riders. The gate has been inspected and its condition reported to the owner of the field, and he has promised to rectify the situation. The temporary route of the bridleway further west towards Lordship Farm has also been inspected and HCC PRoW are happy with the situation.

#### (iii) HIGHWAYS (INCLUDING "20'S PLENTY")

Cllr I Hunt had reported to HCC the pavement blockage at the Jolly Waggoners caused by the collapse of the boundary fencing.

The main road from Kettle Green Lane to Winding Hill is scheduled to be closed 9.30 – 3.30 each day from 14 January for a week. The purpose is unclear but possibly linked to drainage and ground penetrating radar assessments.

Cllr B O'Neill reported that the hedge outside a nearby property is encroaching onto the footpath. Clerk to write to residents of the property requesting it be trimmed back.

#### (iv) MEDIA

Social media posts were issued via the Parish Council and Much Hadham Community Facebook pages covering meeting notices, public safety alerts, community information, and seasonal messaging. Corresponding news items and banners were added to the Parish Council website, and a new Lost and Found page was introduced to help return items left at the Pavilion or Recreation Ground.

#### (v) SECURITY

**Important Notice: Join 'Herts Connected': The 'Neighbourhood Alert' replaced OWL. Visit [www.herts.police.uk](http://www.herts.police.uk) and sign up under 'Campaigns'. Once signed up you can follow neighbourhood alerts, as before.**

From December's crime report: 1 theft in December in Much Hadham.

Remember to report all incidents and crime so that resources can be appropriately allocated. For all non-emergency matters please call 101 OR online reporting via <https://www.herts.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

#### (vi) STANSTED AIRPORT

Nothing to report.

(vii) OTHER

Cllr D McDonald reported on the lease of the footbridge at The Hoops. The PC's solicitors (Tees Law) have informed us that they expect the Land Registry finally to complete the discharge of the previous title and registration of the new one within the next week or two.

Cllr S Smith reported that the contractor has been contacted regarding completion of the approved works on the right-hand side of the Recreation Ground entrance. However, as the original approval had expired, a new application to EHDC was required, with works now expected to commence around 16–17 February. This date is provisional, subject to developments arising from the Bowls Club subsidence insurance claim and associated arboricultural recommendations.

In parallel, three new quotations have been obtained for tree maintenance works on the left-hand side near the Pavilion and play area and are currently under review, with recommendations to be made at the February meeting.

26/08. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr M Pope reaffirmed his previous spending commitments. If additional funding becomes available, a high priority will be the installation of yellow lines at the junction with Kettle Green Lane, as this has been recognised as a safety hazard.

Cllr I Devonshire briefly reported that the planning application for the redevelopment of Old River Lane in Bishop's Stortford has been received. The Development Management Committee will decide April/May time.

26/09. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

No Comments.

26/10. STAFFING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED To appoint Cllr J Westlake to the Staffing Committee.

26/11. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

Cllr S Smith did not participate in this item or vote due to his declared interest.

RESOLVED that the accounts, as shown below, be duly authorised for payment.

RESOLVED to approve retrospectively the payment of £107 to Nicholas Electrical.

## Payment of Accounts – January 2026

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount £
OP440	MHSA	Machinery & Maintenance work	621.55
OP441	Cllr S Smith	Reimbursement for printing of maps	14.40
OP442	MHSA	Pavilion Water	42.92
OP443	Gooch Carpentry	Bus Shelter Repairs	702.00
OP444	Robert Edwards	BA: Tree Surgery at St Andrew's	380.00
OP445	Nicholas Electrical	Pavilion: RCD Board installation	107.00
OP446	MHSA	Pavilion Electricity	207.15
SO	Mandy Windmill	Litter Picking (Dec)	106.17
DD	Castle Water	BA: Perry Green Burial Ground	74.24
DD	Castle Water	BA: St Andrew's Burial Ground	55.21
SC	Unity Bank	Service Charge (November)	6.00
OP447	MHSA	Reimbursement for Tractor parts	75.24
OP448	Clerk	Salary (December 2025)	946.40
OP449	Clerk	Mileage Expenses (Nov-Dec 2025)	25.92
		<b>Total payments</b>	<b>£3,363.65</b>

**DD = Direct Debit | SO = Standing Order | OP = Online Payment**

Payments to be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr I Hunt and Cllr B O'Neill.

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statement for 2025/26 to date was received. The summary financial position was as below and comparison to the annual budget is attached at Appendix A. The cash book and bank account had been reconciled and all agreed.

# MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

### SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 29 December 2025

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2025	55,308.40	23,948.58	79,256.98
Income	53,214.46	3,200.00	56,414.46
Expenditure	- 37,278.28	- 2,140.36	- 39,418.64
Closing balance	<u>71,244.58</u>	<u>25,008.22</u>	<u>96,252.80</u>

#### FUND BALANCES

Unity Trust Instant Saver			91,182.33
Unity Trust Current Account		8,197.67	
Add: Outstanding deposits		-	
Less: Unpresented items		<u>-3,127.20</u>	5,070.47
<b>Total Fund Balances</b>			<u><b>96,252.80</b></u>

Earmarked Reserves are excluded from the Parish Council balance to identify the general balance available for the Parish Council:

Parish Council closing balance	71,244.58
<u>Earmarked Reserves:</u> None	-
General balance available for Parish Council	<u><b>71,244.58</b></u>

Note: general balance not to fall below £30,000 unless due to cash flow, or in the case of unexpected events or emergencies.

#### (iii) BUDGET & PRECEPT 2026/27 AND FORWARD FINANCIAL PLAN

The proposed 2026/27 budget and the Forward Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2030/31, with a covering report highlighting the changes since the previous meeting, had been circulated with the agenda. Cllr I Hunt explained the proposal was to increase the precept to £60,000 from £45,000. There would still be a significant budgeted overspend of £35,000+ due to the tree work, and playground and noticeboard upgrades, to be funded from our reserves. He had previously advised that the parish council would fall below the targeted general reserve of £30,000 for 12 months or so and this continues to

be the case, with the budget for year end 2026/27 being ~£26,000. Any lesser increase in the precept would have to be made up from further use of the general reserve but there is financial risk attached to having reserves that are too low.

RESOLVED To approve the budget for 2026/27, including the anticipated movements in earmarked reserves in 2025/26

RESOLVED To determine the precept for 2026/27 at £60,000

RESOLVED To approve the Forward Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2030/31

The approved budget, forward financial plan and earmarked reserves are attached at Appendices B, C & D respectively.

26/12. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

26/13. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/14. CLERK'S INFORMATION

None.

26/15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026 at Much Hadham Village Hall for 7.30pm start. This will be preceded by the Burial Authority Meeting at 6.45pm.

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There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.31pm.

# MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

### BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 29 December 2025

(Parish Council only)	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO DATE	COMMENT
	2025/26 BUDGET £	2025/26 ACTUAL £	
<b>INCOME</b>			
Precept	45,000.00	45,000.00	
Pavilion income	300.00	994.00	
Grant	-	-	
Other	605.00	695.50	Bank interest
VAT reclaimed	7,705.00	6,524.96	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>53,610.00</b>	<b>53,214.46</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Staff costs	10,607.00	6,778.34	
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387.46	5,387.46	
PWLB loan repayment - Street lights	2,734.64	2,734.64	
Administration costs	3,830.00	3,518.49	
Legal costs	-	-	
Insurance	3,545.00	1,249.72	
Audit fees	820.00	815.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	13,390.00	10,307.19	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,055.00	963.02	
Pavilion	3,840.00	1,398.05	
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	500.00	
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	1,570.00	Playground
Replacement bench	-	530.00	For Ash Meadow
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	5,000.00	-	
VAT	5,000.00	1,526.37	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>56,209.10</b>	<b>37,278.28</b>	

# MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

APPENDIX B

## BUDGET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2027

	2026/27 BUDGET £	2025/26 EXPECTED £	2024/25 ACTUAL £
<b>RECEIPTS</b>			
Precept	60,000	45,000	44,000
Pavilion income	800	1,579	394
Grant	-	-	2,624
Burial fees (ring fenced to Burial Authority)	4,400	4,315	4,800
Other	1,545	1,884	529
VAT reclaimed	4,600	6,525	1,734
	<u>71,345</u>	<u>59,303</u>	<u>54,082</u>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>			
Payroll	14,191	10,292	10,390
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387	5,387	5,387
PWLB loan repayment - Street lights	2,735	2,735	2,735
Administration costs	5,300	3,850	2,746
Insurance	3,500	3,200	2,814
Audit fees	860	815	695
Election expenses	-	-	54
Maintenance of open spaces	47,000	13,000	24,431
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	833	927	1,056
Pavilion (running expenses and maintenance)	3,200	2,100	997
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000	500	3,423
Rec Footpath resurfacing	-	-	4,895
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	5,000	3,300	-
Burial ground (ring fenced to Burial Authority)	6,602	6,955	10,149
VAT	11,600	4,600	6,525
	<u>107,207</u>	<u>57,661</u>	<u>76,297</u>
<b>SURPLUS/DEFICIT</b>	<u>- 35,862</u>	<u>1,642</u>	<u>- 22,215</u>

<b>BALANCE BOUGHT FORWARD</b>	80,899	79,257	101,472
<b>Add SURPLUS/less DEFICIT</b>	- 35,862	1,642	- 22,215
<b>BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<u><b>45,037</b></u>	<u><b>80,899</b></u>	<u><b>79,257</b></u>
<b>BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD RELATES TO:</b>			
Parish Council	25,930	59,590	55,308
Burial Authority	19,107	21,309	23,949
	<u><b>45,037</b></u>	<u><b>80,899</b></u>	<u><b>79,257</b></u>
<u>Earmarked funds in relation to the Parish Council balance:</u>			
~ Section 106 monies		-	1,570
~ Noticeboards		3,000	
~ Playground		15,000	
~ Open spaces		17,500	-
<b>LEAVING GENERAL BALANCE AVAILABLE FOR PARISH COUNCIL</b>	<u><b>25,930</b></u>	<u><b>24,090</b></u>	<u><b>53,738</b></u>
<b>Tax base</b>	<b>1001.08</b>	<b>980.55</b>	<b>990.20</b>
<b>Band D equivalent</b>	<b>£59.94</b>	<b>£45.89</b>	<b>£44.44</b>

# MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

APPENDIX C

## FORWARD FINANCIAL PLAN 2026/27 TO 2030/31

ASSUMING PRECEPT INCREASES by £1,000 EACH YEAR 27/28 ONWARDS; INCOME - CAUTIOUS APPROACH.  
EXPENDITURE - PAST SPEND + KNOWN CHANGES + INFLATION AS APPROPRIATE

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
	ACTUAL	EXPECTED	BUDGET	PLAN	PLAN	PLAN	PLAN
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>RECEIPTS</b>							
Precept	44,000	45,000	60,000	61,000	62,000	63,000	64,000
Pavilion income	394	1,579	800	800	800	800	800
Grant	2,624	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burial fees (ring fenced to Burial Authority)	4,800	4,315	4,400	4,400	4,400	4,400	4,400
Other	529	1,884	1,545	1,115	1,134	1,155	1,176
VAT reclaimed	1,734	6,525	4,600	11,600	5,000	5,000	5,000
	<b>54,082</b>	<b>59,303</b>	<b>71,345</b>	<b>78,915</b>	<b>73,334</b>	<b>74,355</b>	<b>75,376</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>							
Payroll	10,390	10,292	14,191	14,859	15,559	16,292	17,059
PWLB loan repayment - Pavilion	5,387	5,387	5,387	5,387	5,387	5,387	5,387
PWLB loan repayment - Street lights	2,735	2,735	2,735	2,735	2,735	2,735	2,735
Administration costs	2,746	3,850	5,300	5,565	5,843	6,135	6,442
Insurance	2,814	3,200	3,500	3,675	3,859	4,052	4,254
Audit fees	695	815	860	903	948	996	1,045
Election expenses	54	-	-	-	-	-	-
Maintenance of open spaces	24,431	13,000	47,000	14,780	15,519	16,295	17,110
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,056	927	833	1,159	1,007	1,257	1,110
Pavilion (running expenses and maintenance)	997	2,100	3,200	3,360	3,528	3,704	3,890
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	3,423	500	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Rec footpath resurfacing	4,895	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	-	3,300	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Burial ground (ring fenced to Burial Authority)	10,149	6,955	6,602	12,625	6,930	7,255	7,585
VAT	6,525	4,600	11,600	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
	<b>76,297</b>	<b>57,661</b>	<b>107,207</b>	<b>76,048</b>	<b>72,315</b>	<b>75,108</b>	<b>77,617</b>
<b>SURPLUS/DEFICIT</b>	<b>- 22,215</b>	<b>1,642</b>	<b>- 35,862</b>	<b>2,867</b>	<b>1,020</b>	<b>- 753</b>	<b>- 2,241</b>

<b>BALANCE BOUGHT FORWARD</b>	101,472	79,257	80,899	45,037	47,903	48,923	48,170
<b>Add SURPLUS/less DEFICIT</b>	- 22,215	1,642 -	35,862	2,867	1,020 -	753 -	2,241
<b>BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>79,257</b>	<b>80,899</b>	<b>45,037</b>	<b>47,903</b>	<b>48,923</b>	<b>48,170</b>	<b>45,929</b>
<b>BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD RELATES TO:</b>							
Parish Council	55,308	59,590	25,929	37,021	40,570	42,673	43,617
Burial Authority	23,949	21,309	19,107	10,882	8,352	5,497	2,312
	<b>79,257</b>	<b>80,899</b>	<b>45,037</b>	<b>47,903</b>	<b>48,923</b>	<b>48,170</b>	<b>45,929</b>
<b><u>Remember earmarked from the Parish Council balance:</u></b>							
~ Section 106 monies	1,570						
~ Open spaces		3,000					
~ Playground		15,000					
~ Open spaces		17,500					
<b>LEAVING GENERAL BALANCE AVAILABLE FOR PARISH COUNCIL</b>	<b>53,738</b>	<b>24,090</b>	<b>25,930</b>	<b>37,021</b>	<b>40,570</b>	<b>42,673</b>	<b>43,617</b>
<b>Tax base</b>	<b>990.20</b>	<b>980.55</b>	<b>1001.08</b>	<b>1001.08</b>	<b>1001.08</b>	<b>1001.08</b>	<b>1001.08</b>
<b>Band D equivalent</b>	<b>£44.44</b>	<b>£45.45</b>	<b>£61.19</b>	<b>£60.93</b>	<b>£61.93</b>	<b>£62.93</b>	<b>£63.93</b>

# MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

APPENDIX D

## EARMARKED RESERVES

Earmarked reserve	Comments including purpose	Balance b/f 1 Apr 25 £	Sum set aside during 2025/26 £	Being used during 2025/26 £	Released back to the General Fund £	Balance carried forward to 2026/27 £
Section 106 monies for sport or recreation	Funds available to use for sport or recreation purposes. In the past sums have been used to support local sports clubs.	1,570.00	-	- 1,570.00	-	-
Noticeboards	Upgrade/replacement/new noticeboards	-	3,000.00	-	-	3,000.00
Playground	Upgrade equipment		15,000.00			15,000.00
Open spaces	Funds to cover tree maintenance work at the Rec. (ex-VAT)		15,000.00			15,000.00
	Recreation ground equipment replacement e.g. tractor. Annual provision from unspent budget	-	2,500.00	-	-	2,500.00
<b>Subtotal</b>		-	17,500.00	-	-	17,500.00
<b>Earmarked reserves total</b>		1,570.00	35,500.00	- 1,570.00	-	35,500.00

DRAFT