

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 3rd February 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, & 3 members of the public

- 26/16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies received from Cllr B Bird, Cllr D McDonald and Cllr J Liversage.
- 26/17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION
Cllr P Taylor and Cllr T Bond declared an interest in a payment to be approved (agenda item 26/25 (i) and would therefore not be participating in or voting on the related motion.
- 26/18. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS
None.
- 26/19. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
The Chair apologised for any confusion caused by an error in the parish magazine listing this meeting's venue as the Mission Hall, Green Tye.

The Chair thanked Cllr I Hunt for chairing January's meeting in her absence.
- 26/20. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING
RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 6th January 2026 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and were signed by the Chair.
- 26/21. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS
Cllr P Taylor advised that this report was being refreshed and she hoped it would be available for the next meeting.
- 26/22. MEMBERS' REPORTS
(i) COMMUNITY
Cllr J Westlake reported that eight residents have volunteered to join the working party for the Village playground. They are hoping to hold their first meeting by the end of February.

Recreation Ground

Cllr P Taylor commented on behalf of Cllr D McDonald. The Bowls Club has clarified that insurance underwriters will cover the required work to all of the relevant trees. We are now awaiting confirmation of when work will begin on the other trees in that section of

the Recreation Ground woodland. Cllr S Smith is considering how best to coordinate the underwriters' tree work with the routine tree maintenance programme for the Recreation Ground that he is organising.

The Bowls Club has recruited a local resident and Club member to take on social media, an important step in modernising the Club. They were also keen to hear from anyone with recruitment and/or advertising experience who could offer advice on attracting younger members.

Cllr T Bond reported that it was also discussed at the meeting that a co-ordination between the clubs and the School was suggested to help manage the occasional clash of events which can cause an overflow of residents using the car park.

Cllr B O'Neill also reported that he placed a box of salt for residents' use if the path from the Rec car park becomes slippery in icy conditions.

Pavilion

Cllr T Bond reported work to repair and clear the guttering is scheduled for mid-February, and fire alarm maintenance is also due to take place within the next couple of weeks. The broken bench at the side of the pavilion has now been removed, and a new catch has been fitted to the main side door so it can be held open when required. In addition, work is underway to fully investigate all options for the future use of the pavilion, and Cllr McDonald and he will keep the Council updated as matters progress.

War Memorial

Cllr T Bond reported, that following the upgrade of the light fittings at the war memorial, he is actively pursuing NPower to adjust the billing accordingly.

Village Hall

Cllr I Hunt reported that a Village Hall Committee Meeting was held on 13th January. The finances were sound with a small surplus expected for 2025. They have compiled a substantial programme of infrastructure projects, including refurbishment of the ladies' toilets, bar area and roofing and will be approaching Biffa for a grant.

(ii) ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY)

Cllr S Smith reported continuous heavy rainfall has left many footpaths and bridleways very wet and muddy.

- Footpath 2; alongside Ash Valley Golf Course, a large fallen tree is blocking the route. HCC Public Rights of Way (HCC PRoW) will investigate and arrange clearance in the next few days.
- Bridleway 7 at Cox's Lane; a fallen waymarker post has been reported and HCC PRoW will likewise investigate and arrange repair or replacement shortly.
- Byway 48; a fallen tree has been reported and the landowner has been informed.

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

Several deep pot holes have emerged in Watery Lane as a result of recent heavy rains and flooding in the area. Very dangerous while the lane remains flooded as they are difficult to spot and avoid.

Cllr P Taylor reported on Cllr D McDonald's behalf that HCC is reviewing its Speed Management Strategy and wants feedback from the public. The link is available on the PC's website under the heading: "20 MPH in Much Hadham? Have Your Say!" and is also appearing in the February edition of the Parish Magazine. This is an opportunity for residents of the Parish to express their opinions and influence policy. The cut-off date for responses is 16th February.

Cllr P Taylor reported she had contacted HCC about concerns over the highways drainage works being carried out and how this impacts local bus routes and the school. It was noted that the preference was for the back roads not to be used as a diversion route. It was also noted that Oudle Lane was due to be closed at the same time.

Cllrs also reported concerns in regard to the large amount of litter and fly-tipping on the way to Bishop's Stortford.

Cllr B O'Neill mentioned that the fallen fencing by the Jolly Waggoners obstructing the pavement has been cleared by him, and pavement potholes repaired.

(iv) MEDIA

Cllr T Bond reported posters for the Playground Working Group have been created and displayed. He is also progressing the parish noticeboards project and will bring a proposal to the Council for consideration as soon as possible. In addition, he is investigating new road signage along the main road at Tower Hill to signpost the Recreation Ground, sports facilities, and the defibrillator, with a proposal to be brought to the Council in due course. He has also offered guidance to the Bowls Club on improving their facility signage and is awaiting their feedback.

He also expressed concerns about the resilience of the website and its capacity to handle greater complexity.

(v) SECURITY

A January Crime Report had not yet been received from the Neighbourhood Team.

Cllr P Taylor attended a Zoom meeting on 21st January in place of Cllr J Liversage, with the East Herts Rural & Buntingford Neighbourhood Policing Team. The team currently consists of seven police officers (reducing to five in summer) and four PCSOs. Their main priorities over the past four months have been hare coursing and fly tipping, working closely with the Environment Agency, NFU and HMRC on rural crime. Hare coursing remains sporadic and hard to prosecute, mainly affecting the Pelhams, Buckland, Throcking and Wareside, with landowners encouraged to block field entrances using gates, hedges or logs.

Fly-tipping enforcement includes vehicle seizure and crushing when offenders are caught. Deer are an increasing concern for farmers, landowners and drivers, and it was noted that collision statistics need to be gathered locally. Road traffic incidents can be reported directly to Hertfordshire Police online, as detailed in the February issue of the parish magazine.

(vi) STANSTED AIRPORT

Nothing to report.

(vii) OTHER

Cllr P Taylor reported on behalf of Cllr D McDonald. The registration of the lease for the footbridge at The Hoops by the Land Registry was not yet complete, despite solicitors pursuing the matter with them.

26/23. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None

26/24. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

A resident asked if earlier comments to the now amended planning application for the Land to the rear of Hill House are still valid. Cllr I Hunt confirmed they are. The resident also stated that a local estate agent appeared to have been promoting Nimney House as an example of developable land.

A resident expressed concerns about traffic diversions along the back roads and road closures when highway work is being carried out and a resident commented that the B1004 surface is over stressed and will need repairing. The resident also advised that in relation to agenda item 26/25, councillors should ensure quotes received were like for like.

26/25. TREE WORK AT THE RECREATION GROUND

Cllr Smith outlined the background to the proposed tree maintenance works on the left-hand side of the recreation ground when approaching from the High Street. As the Council required comparable quotes, a clear and identical specification—based on numbered trees already documented, was issued to three additional local arborists.

The responses varied. Contractor A submitted a high-level quote listing all 46 trees, raising concerns about whether a site visit had taken place. Contractor B provided a detailed assessment, noting that recent work meant only 26 trees now required attention, and priced accordingly. Contractor C likewise independently confirmed that some work had already been completed within the last 24 months and submitted a comparative quote on the remaining trees.

Contractor D was working from an earlier quote and confirmed he had carried out and been paid for work in the area since then. He subsequently revisited the site and submitted a revised estimate based on the updated tree list. In conclusion, as all arborists were working to the same remit, a fair comparison was possible and, although not the cheapest, Cllr Smith proposed accepting Contractor D's revised quote due to the consistently high quality of his previous work.

RESOLVED to approve the quote from Contractor D to carry out works to trees behind and beyond the Pavilion for £5,832. Contractor D is Maskells Tree Surgery.

26/26. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

Having declared their respective interest in this item (agenda item 26/17) Cllr P Taylor and Cllr T Bond left the room and did not participate in the discussion or vote.

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

Payment of Accounts – February 2026

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount (£)
OP450	Broadmead Leisure Ltd	Playground Inspection (Dec)	60.00
OP451	MH Sports Association	Pavilion Electricity	73.30
OP452	Cllr B Bird	Reimbursement for spot lights at War Memorial	44.97
OP453	Cllr P Taylor	Reimbursement for Clerk's smarty mobile phone bill	24.00
OP454	Much Hadham Village Hall	Council meeting hire	44.00
OP455	Cllr T Bond	Reimbursement for Pavilion Maintenance	13.62
DD	Npower	War memorial lighting	55.54
OP456	Clerk	Salary Jan 2026	811.20
SO	M Windmill	Litter Picking (Jan)	106.17
SC	Unity Bank	Service Charge (Dec)	6.00
DD	Lloyds Bank	Corporate Card	3.00
			Total: £1,240.80

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

Payments to be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr I Hunt and Cllr S Smith.

(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. Cllr I Hunt explained that insurance costs were below budget but insurances for the village hall and the pavilion were due to be approved at the next meeting.

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 January 2026

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2025	55,308.40	23,948.58	79,256.98
Income	54,261.33	3,350.00	57,611.33
Expenditure	- 38,520.63	- 2,140.36	- 40,660.99
Closing balance	<u>71,049.10</u>	<u>25,158.22</u>	<u>96,207.32</u>
FUND BALANCES			
Unity Trust Instant Saver			91,676.20
Unity Trust Current Account		5,714.38	
Add: Outstanding deposits		-	
Less: Unpresented items		<u>-1,183.26</u>	4,531.12
Total Fund Balances			<u>96,207.32</u>
Earmarked Reserves are excluded from the Parish Council balance to identify the general balance available for the Parish Council:			
Parish Council closing balance			71,049.10
<u>Earmarked Reserves:</u>			
Noticeboards	3,000		
Playground	15,000		
Open spaces	17,500		
Total	35,500		
General balance available for Parish Council			<u>35,549.10</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) Purchase and installation of Scribe accounting software in accordance with supplier quote.

The Chair proposed an amendment to this agenda item to allow payroll functions to be outsourced as well, and this was approved.

CLlr I Hunt explained the risks associated with continuing to use the current spreadsheet-based financial systems. Scribe accounting software had been reviewed by the Clerk and himself and was popular with other parish councils and clerks. It would eliminate many of the risks inherent in the current system, was more efficient, and would be more accessible for councillors and auditors.

CLlr P Taylor explained that running a PAYE Payroll even for one employee was very complicated and it made sense to outsource payroll to professionals, as this would also ensure smooth continuity in the future.

RESOLVED: To approve the purchase and installation of Scribe accounting software and the outsourcing of payroll functions in accordance with supplier quotes.

- (iv) Setting up of Direct Debit payments to HMRC

RESOLVED to retrospectively approve the setting up of variable direct debit payments to HM Revenue and Customs for settlement of payroll-related liabilities.

26/27. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 6th January 2026 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

26/28. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/29. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported that the Service Charge from Unity Trust Bank will be increasing on 28th February 2026 from £6 per month to £7 per month.

26/30. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 3rd March 2026 at Much Hadham Village Hall for 7.30pm start.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:58pm

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 29 January 2026

(Parish Council only)

	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO DATE	
	2025/26	2025/26	
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	
	£	£	COMMENT
INCOME			
Precept	45,000.00	45,000.00	
Pavilion income	300.00	1,547.00	
Grant	-	-	
Other	605.00	1,189.37	Bank interest
VAT reclaimed	7,705.00	6,524.96	
TOTAL INCOME	53,610.00	54,261.33	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	10,607.00	7,589.54	
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	3,595.49	
Legal costs	-	-	
Insurance	3,545.00	1,249.72	
Audit fees	820.00	815.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	13,390.00	10,463.91	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,055.00	1,060.89	
Pavilion	3,840.00	1,484.97	
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	1,539.01	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	56,209.10	38,520.63	