

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 3rd March 2026. in Much Hadham Village Hall, at 7.30 pm.

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| * 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 Ian Devonshire EHDC & 3 members of the public

26/31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received, and approved, from Cllr J Liversage.

26/32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Cllr T Bond declared an interest in a payment to be approved (agenda item 26/42 (i)) and would therefore not be participating in or voting on the related motion.

26/33. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

26/34. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr P Taylor thanked residents who attend the meetings on a regular or ad-hoc basis. It is nice to hear from residents she hoped what they heard at the meetings was informative. Any observations are welcome and are encouraged to be shared wherever possible.

26/35. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 3rd February 2026 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and were signed by the Chair.

26/36. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

An updated version has been circulated. Cllr S Smith & Cllr T Bond will be organising the 2026 Village Annual Meeting, to be held on Tuesday 19th May.

The Clerk would investigate whether an application for the Allotments car park, to be registered as an Asset of Community Value, had been submitted by the previous Clerk.

26/37. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) COMMUNITY- RECREATION GROUND & VILLAGE HALL

Pavilion

Cllr T Bond reported that he and Cllr D McDonald continue to investigate matters relating to the proposed long-term hire of the pavilion and will keep the Council updated. In the meantime, electrical issues affecting the heating have been identified, with two heaters currently not working; contractors are assessing suitable long-term solutions. Guttering repairs and clearance have been completed, and fire and smoke alarms have been replaced

and tested. A repair to the soffit near the entrance is required, and a quotation has been requested. Cllr P Taylor thanked Cllr S Smith for monitoring the Automated External Defibrillators (AED) so they are adequate for use if ever needed.

Bowls Club

Cllr D McDonald reported that the Bowls Club insurers had agreed to undertake all the necessary works to the trees that caused the subsidence to the club house. Cllr S Smith further reported that consequently the contractor due to carry out works to adjacent trees would postpone their visit. Should it be necessary to revise that contract, a fresh quote would be obtained.

Cllr D McDonald reported that sadly part of the external pipe work of the Bowls Club's irrigation system has been damaged by vandals, rendering the system inoperable. Fortunately, the Club has members who have the requisite skills to repair the pipework but there is a concern that as some of the damaged parts are more than 40 years old sourcing them may not be easy.

Hopefully the incident is a "one off" but the Club is in the process of installing CCTV and is going to point a camera towards the irrigation water tank and pump housing in case the vandals return.

Village Hall

Cllr I Hunt reported that the village hall management committee has put out a call for volunteers with skills in design and interiors to help with a project to modernise the hall. Some areas are looking tired and dated and need to be made more welcoming and comfortable.

(ii) PLAYGROUND WORKING PARTY

Cllr B Bird reported that the first meeting of the Playground Working Party was held in the Pavilion on Friday 27th February. The group has nine members, including two Parish Councillors, all bringing a variety of interests and experience to the project. There was active discussion throughout the meeting, and a strong sense of enthusiasm was evident from the residents, who volunteered for various roles covering different aspects of the group's aims. The group agreed a set of specific aims, including reviewing the existing playground and equipment, assessing current equipment stock, exploring potential grant funding opportunities, and developing an action plan. As next steps, the group will meet at the playground on 8th March to review the equipment and layout, prepare a draft questionnaire for playground users to be shared via the Parish Council's social media, and Cllr T Bond agreed to assist with creating a QR code to support information gathering. Members generated several positive ideas. The next meeting is scheduled for 31st March and will report back next month. The Parish Council formally thanked Cllr J Westlake for initiating and driving this project forward.

(iii) ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY)

Cllr S Smith reported we are now into March and at last seeing the end of a very wet beginning to 2026. Footpaths and bridleways are drying out and with the warm Spring sunshine seasonal plants can be seen bringing a bit of colour back to the countryside.

- Footpath 2 (By the side of Ash Valley Golf Course) – Large fallen tree blocking the path has been cleared by the landowner.
- Footpath 6 (New Barns Lane to Cox's Lane) – A new metal sign and post have been

installed by HCC's contractors.

- Restricted Byway 48 – Fallen tree has been cleared by the landowner.

During this month HCC's contractors are asked where possible to complete all outstanding work before the start of the new financial year.

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

Cllr P Taylor reported on correspondence with HCC Highways regarding the cancelled road closure in February. She had been contacted directly by a member of the Highways Design & Maintenance dept requesting a meeting to explain all the problems that were found during the investigation last year, and how best to go about remedial works, with the least disruption to the village. This is much appreciated, and a date will be arranged shortly. Cllr S Smith had noted that pothole repair teams have cleared all dangerous areas between Danebridge Road and Bishop Stortford on the B1004.

Cllr P Taylor suggested that a fault report should be submitted in regard to Watery Lane.

Cllr D McDonald reported last month HCC was reviewing its Speed Management Strategy and wanted feedback from the public. Separately, a nationwide petition has been launched and will be presented to Ministers at the Department for Transport, calling on them to consider reducing the speed limit on rural single-track roads to a maximum of 30mph (this doesn't relate specifically to "20's Plenty" but it's relevant to the safety of our local roads). The link to sign up to the petition appears on the PC's Facebook site and will appear in the March edition of the Parish Magazine.

(v) MEDIA

Cllr T Bond reported images and posts were created for the Parish Council and Much Hadham Community pages to share key local information, including a reminder of the February Parish Council meeting and its venue, notice of the March Parish Council meeting, updates and information regarding the High Street road closure, details about the Watery Lane closure, and promotion of the single-track road speed limit petition. In addition, news articles and banners were added to the website to align with the social media posts, and work has begun on drawing up a proposed specification for a new Parish Council website, with further updates to be reported over the coming weeks.

Cllr T Bond also reported on investigating the installation of two signs from the main road at Tower Hill: one to signpost the Recreation Ground and sports facilities, and another to indicate the location of the publicly accessible AED at the Pavilion. A potential location has been identified using the existing footpath sign pole. As there is a £145 fee for Highways to review an application, Cllr T Bond is looking into likely production and installation costs, preparatory photographs, maps, and wording, before applying. A draft sign design has been completed and shared with the Sports Association, though no feedback has yet been received. There is nothing to report regarding Village Notice Boards currently.

(vi) SECURITY

There were no reported crimes in Much Hadham during January. The Neighbourhood Policing Team have hit the ground running since the Christmas break and have been engaged in regular pro-active operations including focused patrols to deter and detect rural-specific crime. NPT have undertaken patrols and stops of people and vehicles of interest. Seizures, recovery, and intel-gathering related to the illegal use of nuisance off-road bikes and related vehicles has also been undertaken. These operations have led to the disruption of fly-tippers, hare coursers, the arrests of drug drivers, drug

seizures, the recovery of stolen vehicles, and seizure and disposal of nuisance vehicles.

If you need to report a crime in progress, please call 999.

For all others, please use 101 or online reporting

<https://www.herts.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

(vii) STANSTED AIRPORT

Nothing to report.

(viii) OTHER

War Memorial

Cllr T Bond continues to chase nPower regarding the adjustment to the billing for the unmetered supply to the war memorial lighting. In the latest correspondence dated 16 February, they apologised for the delay in resolving the issue and stated that they were actively investigating. However, despite numerous further emails, no further update has been received. Considering this continued lack of progress, Cllr T Bond is considering raising a formal complaint with the Energy Ombudsman.

26/38. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire reported some findings following the newly implemented bin collections. The amount of non-recyclable waste has dropped by 5,883 tonnes compared with the same period last year. 2,717 tonnes of food waste have been processed into Biogas and fertiliser.

Cllr I Devonshire also reported on the Local Government Reorganisation consultation. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will be consulting on behalf of the Secretary of State on all the options submitted by Hertfordshire councils on 28 November. The options can be viewed here: <https://www.hertfordshire-lgr.co.uk/proposed-options>.

This consultation will run ~~for~~ until 26th March 2026. Residents are encouraged to view the proposals and respond accordingly. The Government's consultation can be viewed here: <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/hertfordshire/>

Finally, Cllr Devonshire suggested that it might be worth the Playground Working Party approaching HCC Cllr M Pope for a grant from his Locality Budget.

26/39. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

A resident reported ongoing difficulties with their Fibre Optic installation by Openreach, having been informed that the landowner of the small strip of land between the pavement and his path, has not responded; however, the resident is unsure who the landowner is and has not received a response from the relevant authorities.

Another resident raised a concern about a dangerous piece of timber protruding on the bridge on Footpath 23 near Two Bridges, which should be reported for repair.

26/40. PUBLIC BENCH AT THE BULL INN BUS STOP

Cllr T Taylor reported that the wooden bench has been deemed uneconomical to repair and needs replacing. Having consulted with the licensee of the Bull, they have no problem with the bench being replaced and continuing to be on their land (although the landowner is Punch Taverns). However, it seems sensible to wait until the development of the houses behind the Bull is completed, as the original car park may be re-surfaced. A discussion on whether the bench should be wooden or recycled plastic wood lookalike should be held, and possibly a request for a contribution from a resident who may like to put a memorial plaque on the bench, in due course.

26/41. RISK REGISTER

A copy of the Risk Register was circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr D McDonald asked for the wording on the financial records to be more user friendly. Cllr J Westlake suggested a more suitable name is found for the 'Drop-Dead Book.' Cllr I Hunt asked Cllr S Smith for the procedures of the OneDrive account to be documented.

RESOLVED To approve the Parish Council Risk Register for 2026/27.

26/42. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

Having declared interest in this item (agenda item 26/32) 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 – March 2026

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount (£)
SC	Lloyds Bank	Corporate Card Charge	3.00
OP457	Much Hadham Landscapes Ltd	Maintainance of Burial Ground - Perry Green (12 visits)	4104.00
OP458	Much Hadham Landscapes Ltd	Maintainance of Burial Ground - St Andrew's (8 visits)	2640.00
OP459	MHSA	Maintainance of Lawn Mower	208.65
OP460	Nicholas Electrical	Replacement of Smoke Alarms - Pavilion	150.00
OP461	HAPTC	Cemeteries Course for Cllr P Taylor (Chair)	65.00
OP462	Solve Ltd	Gutter Repairs - Pavilion	250.00
SC	Unity Bank	Service Charge - January 2026	6.00
SO	M Windmill	Litter Picking - February 2026	106.17
OP463	Clerk	Salary - February 2026	734.35
OP464	Clerk	Expenses (Dec - Feb 2026)	33.92
OP465	Cllr T Bond	Reimbursement for Toilet Seat for Pavilion	27.00
DD	HMRC	NI Contribution	47.60
OP466	MHSA	Insurance premium reimbursement	905.51
OP467	MHVH	Insurance premium reimbursement	1345.19
Total:			£10,626.39

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

RESOLVED To authorise standing order payment to litter picker of £110.50 per month for the 26/27 financial year.

(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 reported to the meeting that funds were being transferred from the savings account to the current account to ensure overdrafts would not arise. £5,000 was transferred on 10 February and a further £5,000 on 2 March. Each transfer is authorised by two councillors.

Whilst the general balance available to the PC was close to the minimum target of £30,000, the receipt of the April precept should ensure budgeted levels of expenditure in 2026/27 could be met without financial strain.

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 26 February 2026

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2025	55,308.40	23,948.58	79,256.98
Income	54,836.33	3,350.00	58,186.33
Expenditure	- 43,462.02	- 7,825.36	- 51,287.38
Closing balance	<u>66,682.71</u>	<u>19,473.22</u>	<u>86,155.93</u>

FUND BALANCES

Unity Trust Instant Saver			86,676.20
Unity Trust Current Account		10,103.12	
Add: Outstanding deposits		-	
Less: Unpresented items		<u>-10,623.39</u>	- 520.27
Total Fund Balances			<u>86,155.93</u>

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

Parish Council closing balance			66,682.71
<u>Less Earmarked Reserves:</u>			
Noticeboards	3,000		
Playground	15,000		
Open spaces	<u>17,500</u>		
Total			- 35,000.00
General balance available for Parish Council			<u>31,182.71</u>

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

26/43. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2026 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

Cllr I Hunt reported that approval had been granted for two garages to be added to the development at The Bull. He also advised that the committee meeting scheduled for 28 April would be held in the Green Room and not the Pavilion. This was to avoid disturbing the facilities used by the current hirer of the Pavilion.

26/44. BURIAL AUTHORITY

The minutes of the Burial Authority Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2026 were received.

26/45. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/46. CLERK'S INFORMATION

Cllr I Hunt asked for all invoices and expenses for approval at the April meeting to be submitted to the Clerk/RFO by 20th March to allow time for the financial year end procedures to be completed.

26/47. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 7th April 2026 at **Green Tye Mission Hall** for 7.30pm start, preceded by the Burial Authority Meeting at 6.45pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:43pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 26 February 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	2,122.00	
Grant	-	-	
Other	605.00	1,189.37	Bank interest
VAT reclaimed	7,705.00	6,524.96	
TOTAL INCOME	53,610.00	54,836.33	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	10,607.00	8,371.49	
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	3,638.41	
Legal costs	-	-	
Insurance	3,545.00	3,500.42	
Audit fees	820.00	815.00	
Election expenses	-	-	
Maintenance of open spaces	13,390.00	10,778.73	
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,055.00	1,060.89	
Pavilion	3,840.00	1,911.97	
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	2,663.01	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	56,209.10	43,462.02	