

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 7th April 2026, in Green Tye Mission 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 D McDonald | * Cllr J Westlake |

* *Denotes present*

In attendance: V Mazza, Clerk, Cllr Ian Devonshire EHDC & 2 members of the

public 26/48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received, and approved, from Cllr D McDonald & Cllr M Pope HCC.

26/49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

26/50. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/51. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reported that very sadly Cllr Jan Liversage had resigned due to ill health. The Chair expressed great thanks to Cllr Liversage for her 14 years' service, and wished her all the best for her treatment, and recovery. She had contributed enormously over the years on the Burial Authority and Staffing Committee, as well providing regular reports on security matters. The vacancy has been publicised, giving residents until 15th April to call for an election, should 10 electors wish to do so. If no election is called for, the vacancy will be advertised for 4 weeks to co-opt, hopefully at the June meeting.

The Chair confirmed the Annual Parish Village meeting will be on Tuesday 19th May. The format will be slightly different this year, inviting residents to discuss the exciting new developments at the Recreation Ground. The usual free bar and report on the PC's activities over the last year will remain the same, however.

26/52. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

26/53. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

An updated version has been circulated. No updates.

26/54. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) COMMUNITY- RECREATION GROUND & VILLAGE HALL

Broadmead Leisure Playground Report

The latest Playground Inspection Report was circulated to members of the Playground Working Party. The report highlighted that the Adventure Trail was assessed as high risk, with several issues identified. It was noted that Cllr B O'Neill has since undertaken work to cut back the brambles, which was acknowledged. Concerns were raised by Cllr J Westlake and Cllr B Bird regarding the value for money provided by the inspection report. Councillors discussed the current approach to playground maintenance, questioning whether the Council is primarily reactive rather than undertaking proactive, routine maintenance. Cllr T Bond suggested that maintenance considerations could be extended beyond the playground to include pathways, noting issues with mud surrounding the Pavilion. It was also highlighted that seating is an issue and will certainly be included in the playground upgrade.

Sports Association

Cllr T Bond reported that Cllr D McDonald had reminded the SA to hold an AGM. Date to be confirmed.

Pavilion

Cllr T Bond reported the Parish Council has received several proposals for long-term hire. Due to the range of proposed uses, it was agreed that clarification from the planning authority is required before further consideration. A pre-application enquiry has been submitted to the EHC Planning Team by Cllr I Hunt, and a response is awaited.

In preparation, Cllr T Bond & Cllr D McDonald are developing a detailed questionnaire for applicants, alongside a draft evaluation framework. This will consider financial sustainability, community benefit and access, and long-term viability.

Members noted ongoing work to repatriate football-related equipment held by the Council. A public appeal via social media and direct contact with previous users has so far received no claims. However, a local resident involved in a current Sunday children's football group has expressed interest and will be invited to review and make use of the equipment. Any remaining items will be offered to the school or local charities.

It was noted that works to repair the broken soffit have been commissioned.

Cllr T Bond lastly reported that he is awaiting feedback from the electrical contractor regarding the issues reported at the last meeting.

Cllr S Smith reported that a Bleed Control Kit had been installed in the Defibrillator cabinet at the pavilion and a sticker stating that fact had been attached to the outside of the cabinet.

Village Hall

Cllr I Hunt reported that the next committee meeting will be the AGM on 14th April.

(ii) PLAYGROUND WORKING PARTY

Councillors noted that a meeting of the Playground Working Party was held on 31st March at the Pavilion, with seven residents present. This followed an earlier site walkabout on the 8th March to review the playground and discuss potential improvements.

The on-line survey had received feedback from 70 residents and aligned with the group's initial views. Key priorities identified included additional seating, improved maintenance, enhanced surfacing, new equipment, and provision of a shaded area. Further suggestions included a toilet, greater use of the Pavilion, and a potential café facility. Progress on previous actions was noted, with some funding opportunities still pending. It was agreed that the project is likely to extend beyond a one-year timeframe.

Cllr J Westlake reported on a visit to Walkern Playground and shared examples of improvements achieved there.

The next meeting is scheduled for the 28th of April. The group remains positive, with good member participation.

(iii) ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY)

Bridleway 17 – Complaints about gate spring being too strong; the landowner has been asked to adjust.

Footpath 18 – Funding approved for new handrails on steep, hazardous section near River Ash.

Footpath 23 (Two Bridges) – Funding approved to repair broken bridge rail; landowner to be contacted as the fencing was deemed unsafe.

Bridleway 28 – Fallen tree cleared by contractors.

Footpath 39 – Large fallen tree cleared promptly by landowner.

Bridleway 7 – Way marker posts installed; one incorrectly positioned and to be corrected.

(iv) HIGHWAYS (INCLUDING “20’S PLENTY”)

Cllr S Smith and the Chair met with the HCC Project Manager regarding drainage issues along the High Street, with a full Schedule of Works to follow.

Two options are proposed: a full road closure for 6–8 weeks to completely replace the drainage system, or a phased approach of repairs and lining works involving shorter closures.

It was agreed that, once the inspection report is received, HCC will consult the Parish Council with recommendations and discuss how to manage the work. Residents may be consulted before making a decision. Repairs of potholes on Watery Lane were noted. Councillors acknowledged ongoing challenges with flooding and reiterated that road closures and signage are requested where necessary, while encouraging residents to report highway issues directly to HCC. Cllr S Smith reported that debris and stones remain on the roadside, having been pushed to the verge, and expressed concern that this may cause tyre damage to motorists. It was noted that the Parish Council has previously had to request to have this removed.

Cllr P Taylor expressed her thanks to Cllr M Pope for using his Highways Locality Budget for, amongst other things; yellow lines will hopefully be installed at the KGL junction next year, the works to Joyce's Corner are underway, and Cllr M Pope is investigating remedial works to the eroded bank at Snell's Corner.

Nothing to report on 20's plenty.

(v) MEDIA

Cllr T Bond reported that images and posts were created for the Parish Council and Much Hadham Community social media pages, covering meeting notices and reminders, a roofing scam alert, the Local Government Reorganisation consultation, road closures, the playground survey, pothole reporting, free meal planning support from East Herts Council, the councillor vacancy, and parking concerns opposite Kettle Green Lane. Corresponding news articles and banners were also added to the MHPC website to align with these communications.

(vi) SECURITY

In early March, both number plates were stolen from a car in Ferndale, with advice given to use anti-theft screws. Between 7th and 9th March, machinery was stolen from a building site in Perry Green after suspects gained entry by cutting fence panels, and on 29th March, a further attempted theft at a new build site in Perry Green saw suspects break a lock but be deterred by an alarm system.

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

Cllr D McDonald will attend the first Stansted Airport Parish Council Forum on 16th April, aimed at providing updates from the airport and introducing key departments, with future meetings shaped by parish interests. Residents are invited to submit any issues they wish to be raised at future meetings to Cllr D McDonald via email.

(viii) OTHER

War Memorial

Cllr T Bond reported that nPower has confirmed that the new lower rate was applied partway through the quarter, resulting in only a small saving on the January bill, but the recent bill showed a dramatic reduction. Cllrs B Bird and T Bond were thanked by the Chair for their efforts and the huge savings which will now be enjoyed.

26/55. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire reported that the EHDC 2026/27 budget was recently debated, with a positive boost of around £1 million from the strong performance of the Hertfordshire County Council Pension Fund. However, concerns were raised over planned allocations, including £170k for the United Reform Church Hall in Bishop's Stortford, which requires significant further investment; and £250k this year and next for unspecified spending, potentially including the Freman College (previously known as Ward Freman) swimming pool in Buntingford. Members expressed concern over value for money and requested that such expenditure be subject to Full Council scrutiny. It was also noted that the Hill House planning application will be considered by the Development Management Committee on 15 April. Cllr I Devonshire also offered to meet with Cllr B Bird to inspect the surface of the playground that was raised by the working playground party.

26/56. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

A resident reported whilst walking along Footpath 39, which runs parallel to Danebridge Road, a significant section of the banking to the stream between the road and the path had collapsed, likely due to recent heavy rainfall. Cllr Stewart Smith said he would visit the site and report the issue to the responsible owner.

26/57. CLERK'S MONITOR

RESOLVED to approve the purchase of a large monitor screen for the Clerk's home office.

26/58. ALLOTMENTS CAR PARK AS ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Cllr I Hunt reported that the Parish Council previously resolved to nominate certain properties as Assets of Community Value (ACV), including the allotments car park located between the fire station and Hodges garage. (June 2018, minute 18/95). Although modest in appearance, the car park is important to the community, providing access to allotments and supporting nearby facilities.

An application was drafted in 2018 with community support but was not submitted at the time. Councillors have now received an updated draft for consideration.

Key points noted:

ACV status would allow the community up to six months to raise funds to purchase the site if it were put up for sale, though the owner is not obliged to sell to them. The nomination applies only to the car park, not the allotments, which already have protection from development.

RESOLVED to consider making an application for the designation of the Allotments car park, as an Asset of Community Value.

26/59. GOVERNANCE

The Chair thanked Cllr T Bond for reviewing the current Social Media Policy and Cllr S Smith for drafting the new IT Policy in line with Assertion 10 of the 2026 AGAR.

RESOLVED to approve the draft IT Policy.

RESOLVED to approve the updated Social Media Policy.

26/60. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

Cllr I Hunt reported that certain payments have already been made and are presented with retrospective approval. It was further noted that, alongside the introduction of the Scribe accounting system in the new financial year, the process for approving procurement and settling invoices will be revised to improve efficiency and enhance service to suppliers, particularly local businesses. These changes will not affect the Council's Financial Regulations but will streamline decision-making and reduce the need for Parish Council involvement in minor approvals. A detailed paper outlining the revised process will be presented at the May Parish Council meeting.

Payment of Accounts – April 2026

Ref	Payable to	For	Amount (£)
SC	Unity Bank	Service Charge - retrospective approval	7.00
OP468	Nicholas Electrical	Work on Heater Circuit in Pavilion - retrospective approval	80.00
OP470	Wight Computers	Remote Support	135.00
OP471	MHSA	Reimbursement for Gutter repairs	191.20
OP472	Numerus	Payroll Services	90.66
OP473	MHSA	Invoice for Grass cutting	882.00
OP474	MHVH	Share of refuse collection costs	447.15
DD	Lloyds	Corporate Card Payment - retrospective approval	89.01
OP475	Clerk	Salary March 2026 - retrospective approval	953.48
Total payments			£2,875.50

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

Councillors received the full year financial report for 2025/26. Cllr I Hunt reported that income from the pavilion and bank interest exceeded budget by approximately £3,000, while overall expenditure remained in line with budget. The non-use of contingency budgets (circa £8,000) resulted in an actual surplus of just under £10,000 compared to a planned deficit of approximately £2,500. A deficit of nearly £4,000 was reported for the burial authority, reducing the overall increase in funds to approximately £6,000. Cllr I Hunt also noted that the general balance, after earmarked reserves, is slightly below the £30,000 target; however, forthcoming precept payments are expected to address this. It was further noted that the current bank reconciliation format will be the final use of this approach, in line with upcoming process changes.

Councillors were advised that £3,000 has been transferred from the savings account to the current account to meet approved and upcoming payments.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 March 2026

	Parish Council £	Burial Authority £	Total £
Opening balance - 1 April 2025	55,308.40	23,948.58	79,256.98
Income	55,786.34	4,075.00	59,861.34
Expenditure	- 46,289.90	- 7,825.36	- 54,115.26
Closing balance	<u>64,804.84</u>	<u>20,198.22</u>	<u>85,003.06</u>
FUND BALANCES			
Unity Trust Instant Saver			82,126.21
Unity Trust Current Account		4,622.84	
Add: Outstanding deposits		-	
Less: Unpresented items		<u>-1,745.99</u>	2,876.85
Total Fund Balances			<u><u>85,003.06</u></u>
Earmarked Reserves are excluded from the Parish Council balance to identify the general balance available for the Parish Council:			
Parish Council closing balance			64,804.84
<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><u>29,304.84</u></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) Bank Reconciliation

Cllr I Hunt reported that he had reviewed the March 2026 bank reconciliation prior to the meeting, as required by the Financial Regulations. Cllr P Taylor approved and signed the reconciliation.

26/61. PLANNING

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

26/62. STAFFING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting of 14th April 2025, 1st September 2025 and 13th March 2026 were received.

RESOLVED to approve the permanent employment of the Clerk.

26/63. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/64. CLERK'S INFORMATION

Clerk reported an increase in hours following probation meeting with Cllr P Taylor & Cllr J Westlake.

26/65. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5th May 2026 at Much Hadham Village Hall for 7.30pm start. This is the Annual Parish Council Meeting. (No Planning Committee, which will be held on 28th April instead).

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:48pm.

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

BUDGET TO ACTUAL COMPARISON AS AT 31 March 2026

(Parish Council only)

	FULL YEAR	YEAR TO	COMMENT
	2025/26 BUDGET	DATE 2025/26 ACTUAL	
	£	£	
INCOME			
Precept	45,000.00	45,000.00	
Pavilion income	300.00	2,622.00	Tutor hire
Other	605.00	1,639.38	Bank interest
VAT reclaimed	7,705.00	6,524.96	
TOTAL INCOME	53,610.00	55,786.34	
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs	10,607.00	9,402.94	1 month w/o a Clerk
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	3,766.91	
Insurance	3,545.00	3,500.42	
Audit fees	820.00	815.00	
Maintenance of open spaces	13,390.00	12,299.06	unused £1k contingency
War memorial (lighting and maintenance)	1,055.00	1,060.89	
Pavilion	3,840.00	2,021.96	unused £2k contingency
Grants and donations (Section 137 expenditure)	1,000.00	500.00	
Sport and recreation grants (Section 106 funded)	-	1,570.00	Playground maintenance
Replacement bench	-	530.00	At Ash Meadow
Revenue/Capital Projects (to be allocated)	5,000.00	-	No new projects undertaken
VAT	5,000.00	2,700.62	Budget was a placeholder
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	56,209.10	46,289.90	