MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 5th May 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 D McDonald	* Cllr J Westlake

* *Denotes present*

In attendance: V Mazza Clerk, 2 members of the public

26/66. CHAIR'S ANNOUCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed those present to the Annual Parish Council Meeting, marking the first meeting of the new council year. She explained the first item of business will be the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for the forthcoming year, and the agenda also included the council's annual review of Financial Internal Controls and the approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

26/67. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Cllr P Taylor be duly elected to the office of Chair of the Parish Council for ensuing civic year. She duly signed her declaration of office.

26/68. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR AND DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED that Cllr I Hunt be duly elected to the office of Vice-Chair of the Parish Council for ensuing civic year. He duly signed his declaration of office.

26/69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

26/70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

26/71. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/72. FURTHER CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the new Parish Council year and thanked fellow councillors for their continued support and confidence. Appreciation was extended to councillors for their hard work over the past year, particularly during the illness and recent resignation of former councillor Jan Liversage, whose contribution to

the council was greatly valued. The Chair reported the Casual Vacancy was being advertised, with the aim of co-opting a new councillor at the next meeting. The Chair also recognised the significant support provided by Vice-Chair Cllr I Hunt during the recruitment of the new Clerk, praising his financial expertise, dedication, and continued assistance to the council. Thanks were also given to the new Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, Victoria Mazza, for her hard work and enthusiasm in settling into the role and for successfully preparing her first audited accounts on time and in excellent order.

The chair reminded the meeting of the Annual Parish/Village Meeting on Tuesday 19th May - This will have a slightly different format this year, focusing on presentations and discussion regarding future projects at the Recreation Ground, including the playground and pavilion, with residents encouraged to attend and contribute.

Finally, the Chair congratulated local businesses and publicans on their recent successes, including The Bull being named Best Food Pub of the Year at the Punch Publican of the Year Awards, and welcomed the continued success of all three village pubs Congratulations were also given to the Team at The Hoops at Perry Green after they had successfully reopened, and to The Prince of Wales for an enjoyable beer festival.

26/73. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 7th April 2026 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

26/74. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Chair reported that an updated version had been circulated. It was noted that the outsourcing of accounts and payroll and maintenance of trees at the Recreation Ground had been completed.

26/75. PORTFOLIOS, COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair reported that the Portfolios outline the areas of responsibility held by councillors, which are referenced under Agenda Item 26/76, and confirmed that these had been reviewed. Two amendments were proposed: the removal of the reference to the Facebook Policy, as this had now been completed, and the removal of Cllr B O'Neill from the Highways portfolio as he wishes to step down from this role.

RESOLVED to approve the allocation of portfolios, detailed in Appendix A

The Chair reported that some changes were made earlier in the year considering Cllr J Liversage's resignation. The proposed membership of Committees was to remain unchanged. The proposed membership of committees, including designation of Committee Chair, is as follows:

- Planning Committee: Cllr I Hunt (Chair), Cllrs D McDonald, B O'Neill, B Bird and S Smith
- Burial Authority: Cllr P Taylor (Chair), Cllrs B Bird, B O'Neill and J Westlake
- Staffing Committee: Cllr P Taylor (Chair), Cllrs J Westlake & S Smith with Cllr D McDonald as a replacement if needed.

RESOLVED to approve the above membership of Committees.

The Chair outlined the proposed Parish Council representatives on the other bodies as follows;

- Much Hadham Sports Association: Cllrs D McDonald & T Bond.
- Much Hadham Village Hall: Cllr B O'Neill & Cllr I Hunt serving as Trustees.

RESOLVED to approve the above representation of the Parish Council on other bodies.

26/76. MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) COMMUNITY- RECREATION GROUND & VILLAGE HALL

Recreational Ground

Cllr D McDonald reported that the issue of car parking at the Recreation Ground is expected to worsen following approval of the Hill House development and may also affect the viability of securing a commercial user for the pavilion. Initial discussions have therefore begun to explore the potential for extending the car park, including whether planning permission and pre-application advice from EHDC may be required. Further updates will be provided as discussions progress.

Cllr D McDonald also reported that work on the tree felling and cutting back around the Bowls Club pavilion has been progressing. No date has been fixed for the repair work to the Bowls clubhouse to start as underwriters will wish to monitor whether the situation has stabilised after the tree work has been completed.

Cllr S Smith reported that the trees on the left of the Pavilion have been trimmed by the contractor, as instructed. The trees behind the Bowls Club have been felled and trimmed as required by the insurers. Any remaining work there that was originally in scope of maintenance will be re-assessed by the contractor and a fresh quote obtained.

Cllr T Bond reported that he is waiting for quotes in regards signage for the Rec Ground.

Sports Association

Cllr D McDonald reported that the Sports Association AGM was held on 22 April, which he and Cllr T Bond attended as representatives of the Parish Council.

The following points were raised:

- A draft of a new Constitution had been prepared by the SA Chair. It was agreed that further work was required, and the draft would be progressed further.
- The SA President again asked whether the Parish Council would consider varying its payment policy so that grass-cutting costs could be pre-approved, rather than invoiced retrospectively by the SA.
- The SA's finances remain secure at present, although reserves are gradually declining. At the current rate, additional funding from the Parish Council may be required within

approximately three years.

- An update was provided on the Parish Council's plans to commercially let the main pavilion. SA representatives reiterated concerns regarding the additional pressure this may place on the already limited car parking facilities.
  The SA needs to appoint two representatives to serve as trustees on the Charities Commission. One representative has already been identified. It was agreed that other Parish Council members would be asked whether they would be willing to undertake the role.
- It was noted that, should the Picnic in the Park event proceed this year, it is expected to take place on 30 August.
- Assistance was offered to the SA in establishing a basic website page to provide information on the SA's responsibilities, contact details, and relevant links.
- The Moor Place landowner wished to have lights and a powered gate system installed at the main entrance, and he had approached the Bowls Club about connecting to their electricity supply. Details regarding implementation and regulatory approvals remain unclear and will require further investigation. Concerns were raised regarding ownership, regulatory compliance, metering, and billing arrangements, although the Bowls Club is willing to explore the proposal further.

Pavilion

Cllr T Bond reported that they were awaiting confirmation from EHDC Planning regarding a pre-application meeting to discuss potential change of use of the pavilion.
Questionnaires have been issued to interested commercial users.
Repairs to the damaged soffit and grassed area affected by the leaking gutter have been completed. The electrical contractor confirmed that the non-functioning floodlights are not connected to a power supply and could be removed if required.
Minor repairs to the away changing room toilet will be carried out following a request for girls' football training use on Tuesday evenings. A key will be issued to the coach, subject to the facility being left clean, tidy, and secured after use.

Village Hall

Cllr I Hunt reported that the AGM was held on 14th April. The Chair reported on the improvements made to facilities in the last 12 months and the plans for the next period. Bookings are continuing to hold up, and the Village Hall's social media profile has been raised.

The Treasurer presented the draft 2025 figures showing income before grants steady at £24k and total funds remaining at ~£30k.

All officers and trustees were re-elected, but the Chair is keen to see new members join the committee and take over some of the management responsibilities given the age of the present incumbents.

(ii) PLAYGROUND WORKING PARTY

Cllr B Bird reported that due to a lack of availability of members, the meeting was pushed back to 15th May when they will discuss the presentation at the Annual Village meeting. Cllr J Westlake reported that she had met with the Clerk of

Walkern Parish Council and found the feedback regarding their playground and use of Section 106 funding to be helpful and informative. Cllr B Bird has met with Cllr I Devonshire to obtain information on likely ground works.

(iii) ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY)

April was notably warm and dry, resulting in favourable conditions for use of local footpaths and bridleways, although limited rainfall was noted as a concern for gardeners.

- **Footpath 23 (Two Bridges):** The bridge has been repaired and confirmed safe following an inspection by the HCC PRoW team.
- **Footpath 39:** The reported subsidence has been inspected by the HCC PRoW team and raised with relevant HCC departments as a serious issue requiring attention. The existing fence continues to provide protection to the public from the affected edge.
- **Bridleway 7:** Contractors have reinstated the way marker post in the correct location.

Due to budget reductions, only one cycle of undergrowth trimming for footpaths and bridleways will take place this year, although urgent issues will continue to be addressed as required.
It was reported that the Head of the HCC PRoW department will retire later this month. Appreciation was expressed for his longstanding support and assistance to the parish over many years. Concerns were also noted regarding potential staffing reductions within the department due to budgetary constraints.

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

Nothing to report other than the Chair offered a huge thank you to Cllr M Pope for the longed for works to Joyce's Corner. There have not been any more suggested solutions for the bank erosion at Snells Corner, nor has there been any further information regarding the mains water drainage works to the High Street & Tower Hill.

(v) MEDIA

Cllr T Bond reported Images and posts were created for the Parish Council and MH community pages covering meeting notices, councillor co-option, bleed control kit installation, and the Hill House planning meeting.

(vi) SECURITY

The chair reported the next zoom Rural Priority Setting Forum meeting for EH Rural area with the Neighbourhood Policing Team will be held on Friday 15th May at 6:30pm – 7:00pm and the chair will report on this next month.
A vehicle was stolen from Victoria Terrace, Hadham Cross on the night of 28th April. No further information provided. There has been a spate of keyless car thefts across Hertfordshire. In many cases, offenders are using devices to capture keyless car signals to fool the vehicles into thinking they have the key, enabling thieves to enter and start

the vehicle. If anyone has a keyless entry vehicle, please consider purchasing and using a "Faraday" box or pouch for both regular keys and any spare keys, to block any signal transmissions when the vehicle is not being used.
There was also a theft from a house, and a business was burgled during April.
Also reports of several police operations across the Rural areas of Buckland, Chipping and The Pelhams for Hare coursing and poaching, and several operations with regards to anti-social vehicle use across areas including Broxbourne Woods, Thundridge and High Cross.

It is very important to report incidents and crimes so that resources can be appropriately allocated. Please remember that for all non-emergency matters please call 101

Non-urgent crime can also be reported online at:
https://www.herts.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/

(vii) STANSTED AIRPORT

Cllr D McDonald attended the new SAPC Forum when airport managers spoke about their work, and the expansion of the airport. The next meeting will be "themed around areas of interest identified by Parish Councils". He asked councillors to suggest topics for him to raise, e.g. Transport links, breaches of night flying regulations. He feels the creation of the Forum is a PR exercise more than taking seriously the concerns of local parish councils.

(viii) OTHER – LAND TO THE REAR OF HILL HOUSE

Cllr I Hunt reported that, as expected, EHC councillors approved the planning application to develop the land behind Hill House, with a new access road from Tower Hill.

Planning officers concluded that the proposal was not contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan and, given the housing land supply shortfall, considered that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages. The approved scheme includes 31 homes, 12 of which will be affordable, together with an outdoor education facility for the school and publicly accessible open space with new footpaths.
There will be reasonably significant s106 funding for investment in village facilities such as the sports clubs, village hall, allotments etc, although this is unlikely to be available until late-2027 at the soonest.

For the PC, responsibilities now include helping local organisations to identify projects to take advantage of the s106 funding.

One aspect that needs careful review is the future of the open space. The developer's plans are for it (and the new access road) to be privately owned, managed and funded by a residents' company.

It was suggested that the Parish Council could potentially take over management of the facility in the interests of residents, funded through the precept. As this would represent a significant decision, it was proposed that a working group of interested residents be formed to explore the available options before any commitment is made.

Cllr J Westlake asked if there had been any updates on other significant outstanding planning applications. Cllr I Hunt responded that no decisions have been made yet.

Cllr D McDonald reported that the tenant for the Hoops has paid the backdated rent of £1,226 for years 1 & 2 and have authorised the PC's solicitors to go ahead and complete.

Cllr O'Neill reported that he has objected to the closure of the performing arts library service.

26/77. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

None. Apologies were received from Cllr M Pope & Cllr I Devonshire.

26/78. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

A Resident asked about the impact of Local Government restructuring and could it cause an increase in workload. Cllr I Hunt reported that national government would choose a structure from the alternatives proposed by the district and county councils. However, there had been no indication that the responsibilities of parish councils would change. The resident responded that with fewer councils, there might be a greater need for PCs to ensure local issues were not overlooked by the new councils.

26/79. INTERNAL CONTROLS

(i) Review of effectiveness of Internal Controls

Cllr I Hunt reported that for each of the internal control elements required of parish councils in the Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices, the review provides the evidence that practices and procedures are in place to satisfy the requirement. Each year the review is updated with any changes in practices and procedures that have taken place in the reporting year. This year, for example, a further element, assertion 10, relating to digital and data compliance, was added.

RESOLVED to approve the review of effectiveness of internal controls for 2025/26.

(ii) Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Cllr I Hunt remarked that this report is an examination of whether the controls we identify in the review were operational and effective. The internal auditor's report for 2025-26 had been circulated. Very pleasingly, the auditor concluded that we had continued to maintain "more than adequate and effective internal control arrangements" and that "there are no issues arising this year warranting formal comment or recommendation." The internal auditor had therefore signed page 3 of the AGAR return.

26/80. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) AND ACCOUNTS

(i) Annual Governance Statement

Cllr I Hunt highlighted that the Annual Governance Statement reflects that the Parish Council has a system of internal control in place, as reflected by the review of effectiveness approved under the item 26/79 (i).

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 for Section 1 of the AGAR.

(ii) Accounting Statements and year on year Comparison

Cllr I Hunt highlighted that there are two versions of the annual accounts. A very summarised version is documented in the AGAR Section 2, which is supported by the detailed Financial Accounts.

In addition, year-on-year comparison reports for both formats of the accounts were provided to support understanding of the financial information and explain significant variances. The version relating to the AGAR will be submitted to the external auditor.

RESOLVED to approve the Accounting Statements for 2025/26, Section 2 in the AGAR and the detailed Financial Accounts for 2025/26.

(iii) Period for the exercise of public rights

Cllr I Hunt explained the Period for the exercise of public rights would be Wednesday 3rd June to Tuesday 14th July. During this time, local electors can inspect the supporting accounting records and ask questions as well as raise an objection with the external auditor – PKF Littlejohn. Full details of the rights of local electors are available on the website.

26/81. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

Payment of Accounts – May 2026

Payable to	For	Amount £
Maskells	Tree work Pavilion	5832.00
Clerk	Expenses - April 2026	27.22
HAPTC	Affiliation to NALC Membership	932.61
ICCM	Membership	110.00
	Total:	**£6,901.83**

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

Summary Guide to Placing Orders and Approving Payments

Cllr I Hunt reported that a summary of the relevant financial regulations was copied to Cllrs to aid understanding of the requirements. Cllr D McDonald asked what approach should be taken if fixed-price quotations cannot be obtained. In response, Cllr I Hunt advised that best practice would be to negotiate the best possible value and terms available.

Schedule of Direct Debits and Standing Orders

The Clerk circulated a schedule for 2026/27 financial year.

RESOLVED to authorise the Schedule of Direct Debits and Standing Orders.

Payments authorised by Clerk/Chair and automated payments

As per Financial Regulations 6.6(iii), payments approved by Clerk and the Chair in April were presented to Cllrs prior to the meeting and noted.

(ii) Financial Statement

Changes to bookkeeping procedures

Cllr I Hunt reported that the use of Scribe accounting software commenced with effect from 1 April, superseding the spreadsheet system used for the last 10 years. This means that some procedures and reporting will change, becoming more compliant with standard accounting practices for public bodies.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 29 April 2026 - YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2027

Much Hadham Parish Council
Summary of Receipts and Payments
Summary - Cost Centres Only

Cost Centre	Receipts			Payments			Net Position
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
01 Income	62,345.00	600.00	-61,745.00 (-99%)			0.00 (N/A)	-61,745.00
02 Administration			0.00 (N/A)	9,660.00	1,755.39	7,904.61 (81%)	7,904.61
03 Burial Authority	4,400.00	345.00	-4,055.00 (-92%)	6,602.00		6,602.00 (100%)	2,547.00
04 Staff			0.00 (N/A)	14,191.00	1,425.21	12,765.79 (89%)	12,765.79
05 Loan Repayments			0.00 (N/A)	8,122.00	1,367.32	6,754.68 (83%)	6,754.68
06 Open Spaces and Buildings			0.00 (N/A)	51,033.00	1,063.62	49,969.38 (97%)	49,969.38
07 Grants Given			0.00 (N/A)	6,000.00		6,000.00 (100%)	6,000.00
08 Other Items			0.00 (N/A)			0.00 (N/A)	0.00
NET TOTAL	**66,745.00**	**945.00**	**-65,800.00 (-98%)**	**95,608.00**	**5,611.54**	**89,996.46 (94%)**	**24,196.46**

Total for ALL Cost Centres	945.00	5,611.54
V.A.T.		107.00
GROSS TOTAL	**945.00**	**5,718.54**

(iii) Bank Reconciliation

The Clerk completed and circulated the Bank Reconciliation prior to the meeting. Cllr I Hunt approved and signed the reconciliation.

26/82. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 7th April 2026 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

26/83. BURIAL AUTHORITY

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 7th April 2026 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

26/84. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/85. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported that the VAT Reclaim for the previous financial year will be submitted in May. The 1st payment for the Precept for this financial year had been received.
Cllr I Hunt reported to the meeting that funds will be transferred from the current Account to the Savings account and be authorised by two Cllrs.

26/86. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 2nd June 2026 at Much Hadham Village Hall for 7.30pm start. Much Hadham Village Hall

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There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:53pm.

APPENDIX A

PORTFOLIO & Areas of responsibility	Committees	Cllrs
GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE Insurances, legal issues, training, ensuring that Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct are adhered to, co-options, agenda management, risk management, finance oversight, complaints handling. Liaison with PG&GT, Recreation Trust, EHC, HCC, HAPTC **Priorities:** Policy reviews / updates		Ian Hunt Penny Taylor
STAFFING Management of employee (Clerk) and HR issues **Priorities:** Performance management	Staffing Committee Staffing Sub-Committee Chair: Cllr P Taylor	Stewart Smith Penny Taylor Jackie Westlake Replacement if needed: Duncan McDonald
BURIAL AUTHORITY Burial grounds maintenance and expansion, church liaison **Priorities:** Finding replacement "clerk" to manage the cemeteries.	Burial Authority Chair: Cllr P Taylor	Bill Bird Bill O'Neill Penny Taylor Jackie Westlake
COMMUNITY FACILITIES Community groups liaison (Sports Association (SA), Pavilion management, Village Hall (VH) management), war memorial, bus stops, telephone boxes, millennium sign, playground **Priorities:** Work with SA on re-organising management of Recreation Ground. Improve Rec signage, and noticeboards in general	VH and SA reps	SA reps: Duncan McDonald Tony Bond VH reps: Bill O'Neill Ian Hunt Playground: Bill Bird Jackie Westlake
ENVIRONMENT including PRoW Parish paths, PC-owned land maintenance, tree surgery, litter and dog bins, conservation area, river and stream quality, flood plan (culverts & ditches), Stansted **Priorities:** River Ash, improve bridleway / footpath networks		Stewart Smith + others when required for specific issues
HIGHWAYS Maintenance reporting (potholes, drains, pavements, street lighting etc), traffic calming, parking etc. **Priorities:** Traffic management, 20's Plenty, parking		Stewart Smith Penny Taylor "20s plenty": Duncan McDonald
MEDIA Facebook, Website, publicity in general **Priorities:** Update website		Tony Bond
PLANNING Planning applications **Priorities:** Agree s106 contributions from development behind Hill House	Planning Committee Chair: Cllr I Hunt	Bill Bird Ian Hunt Duncan McDonald Bill O'Neill Stewart Smith
SECURITY Police liaison, Fire and rescue liaison, Neighbourhood Watch liaison, Rural Watch liaison		Penny Taylor