# MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 7th July 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 J Westlake |
| * Cllr D McDonald | * Cllr M Scarlett |

* Denotes present

In attendance: 4 Residents and Cllr I Devonshire (EDC)

26/101. VICE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr I Hunt reported that the Chair, Penny Taylor, had resigned from the Council due to a significant increase in her family commitments, so the first few items on the agenda would deal with the adjustments required to ensure business as usual is maintained.

He also introduced Cllr Marcus Scarlett to Green Tye and Perry Green residents, who was co-opted at the meeting on 2nd June following the resignation of Jan Liversage.

26/102. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

RESOLVED: Cllr I Hunt was duly elected as the Chair.

26/103. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR AND DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

RESOLVED: Cllr J Westlake was duly elected as the Vice-Chair.

26/104. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received and approved from Cllr T Bond.

26/105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

26/106. NOTIFICATIONS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/107. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair recorded the Council's thanks to Penny Taylor for her ten years' service as Chair, acknowledging her leadership in restoring stability and good governance to the Council. It was noted that she would continue to administer the Parish Council's burial authority.

The Chair advised that, following the expiry of the Notice of Vacancy on 6 July 2026, no election had been requested, and the resulting casual vacancy would therefore be filled by co-option, most likely at the meeting on 1 September 2026, with application details to be published on the Council's website.

Councillors were asked to note that future correspondence for the Chair should be sent to: chair@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk.
Finally, the Chair drew attention to the Parochial Church Council's fundraising appeal to raise £65,000 for improvements to the Mission Hall, including roof replacement and upgraded facilities, and encouraged residents to support the appeal.

26/108. PORTFOLIOS, COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair advised that, following Penny Taylor's resignation, it was necessary to reallocate several Councillor responsibilities. As these changes were being made between the Annual Parish Council meetings, the appointments would be designated as 'interim' appointments pending the annual review of appointments in May.

(i) RESOLVED to approve the interim changes to the allocation of Portfolios
(ii) RESOLVED to approve the interim changes to the membership of committees
(iii) RESOLVED to approve the appointment of Cllr I Devonshire as Parish Councillor-appointed Trustee to the Almshouse Charity

26/109. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 2nd June 2026 be accepted as a correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

26/110. REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

An updated version has been circulated. Cllr D McDonald reported that the lease agreement with The Hoops has now been completed and the PC have received the first payment of rent.

26/111. TO RECEIVE MEMBERS' REPORTS

(i) COMMUNITY

Recreation Ground

Cllr D McDonald previously reported that a resident close to the Bowls Club requested permission to connect to its electricity supply in order to install 'lights and a powered gate system'. Cllr D McDonald and Cllr T Bond had expressed concerns regarding ownership, regulatory, metering and billing implications. It was noted that any agreement would be a matter for the Sports Association to determine. Following further correspondence, the Bowls Club had drafted proposed terms for any agreement. He pointed out should the resident accept those terms, this could be a 'binding agreement'. Cllr D McDonald had provided a draft wording for the Bowls Club to use and requested that future correspondence on the matter be reviewed by him before being issued.

Sports Association

Cllr D McDonald also provided an update on the Bowls Club's subsidence insurance claim. Recent monitoring indicated that the building's movement was reducing and that tree management works had helped to stabilise the ground. Further monitoring was scheduled for August, after which, if stability was confirmed, insurers were expected to agree a timetable for remedial works. Cllr D McDonald had offered his assistance with any subsequent correspondence with the insurers if required.

Pavilion

The Chair reported on behalf of Cllr T Bond that a response was still awaited from East Herts Council regarding a pre-application meeting to discuss the potential change of use of the Pavilion.

Ongoing inconsistencies in the Pavilion's electricity billing were also noted, and it was agreed to review the July bill and associated direct debit payments before contacting the supplier if necessary.

Reports of possible rough sleeping at the recreation ground had been investigated, but no evidence of overnight camping had been found.

The Chair also reported on Cllr T Bond's behalf that roadside signage for the Recreation Ground and AED Defibrillator have been ordered. Pre-production artwork has now been approved, and an installation date of Monday 20th July is scheduled.

Village Hall

The next Management Committee meeting is to be held on 14th July. Cllr T Bond offered a filing cabinet for Parish Council use; however, it was noted that there is currently insufficient space in the VH to accommodate it.

(ii) PLAYGROUND WORKING PARTY

The latest meeting of the Playground Working Party was held on 15th May. The prospect of receiving Section 106 funding from the Hill House development has generated considerable interest. However, as this funding is unlikely to be available in the immediate future, the Working Party proposes to progress the following priority actions in the meantime.

- Renovate the playground safety surface. - as highlighted in the latest playground inspection report.
- Carry out maintenance and repairs to the existing play equipment, including repairs to the roof of the house/café play structure.
- Organise a community clean-up of the playground equipment and surrounding area. A date for the working party will be arranged.
- Replace the existing benches and purchase additional picnic tables.
- Investigate options for renovating the basketball court surface. One contractor has been contacted but advised that this type of work is outside their area of expertise.
- Continue to pursue suitable funding opportunities.
- The Playground contractors have been contacted, with site visits arranged for 28 July and 3 August. The next Working Party meeting will be arranged following the contractors' site visits and recommendations.

(iii) ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY)

Cllr S Smith reported that, despite further enquiries, no new contact had yet been appointed within the HCC Public Rights of Way team following the retirement of the previous officer. It was noted that the annual vegetation trimming programme had commenced across the county. A resident had reported hedge cuttings obstructing Footpath 26, which would be inspected and followed up as necessary.

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

Cllr B O'Neill reported that East Herts Council has launched the BetterPoints East Herts app. This is a new rewards-based programme to encourage healthier, greener travel choices while supporting local businesses and charities. Visit https://eastherts.betterpoints.uk/ for further information.

(v) MEDIA

The Chair reported on behalf of Cllr T Bond that the Council's social media pages and website were updated with a range of community notices, including Parish Council meeting reminders, advice and awareness campaigns, consultation information, and the councillor vacancy notice. Website content was also refreshed to reflect recent posts, and the Village History and Description section was updated with new material provided by Mrs Penny Taylor.

(vi) SECURITY

From the latest Crime Report the Chair highlighted that there were no reported crimes in Much Hadham in June 2026. The Neighbourhood Policing Team reported that it had increased patrols in Much Hadham in response to reports of anti-social parking.

**Vehicle crime has increased across the rural area, and residents are encouraged to ensure vehicles are secure and report suspicious activity. The Team continues to undertake targeted patrols and enforcement activity, including operations to address rural crime, anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, and parking issues. 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 reported at the previous meeting that, having attended the first meeting of the Stansted Airport Parish Council Forum, he had reservations surrounding the benefits of the meeting, unless PC representatives could form a coordinated approach and unite on common issues to raising shared concerns, including night-time flights and transport capacity. Cllr D McDonald will therefore be contacting participating parish councils to explore this approach.

(viii) OTHER

Cllr S Smith provided an update on the unauthorised use of the field opposite Danebridge Road. It was reported that, following the site's purchase in 2023, the land had been changed from agricultural use to a construction storage area without planning permission. As a resident, Cllr S Smith raised the matter with EHC's Planning Department, who subsequently took enforcement action including the issuing of an Enforcement Notice requiring the site to be restored to its former state. The owner appealed the Enforcement Notice, resulting in the matter being considered by the Planning Inspectorate. A Residents Group was formed to support the case and submitted representations in response to the appeal. The appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate on 24 June, with minor amendments made to the restoration timetable. The outcome was welcomed as setting a positive precedent for addressing similar instances of unauthorised land use in the future.

26/112. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Cllr I Devonshire (EHC) reported that BEAM Theatre had recorded a deficit of approximately £970,000 during its first full year of operation (2025/26). The Conservative Group would be seeking further information on the reasons for the loss and had requested regular progress updates.

He also reported that an updated planning application for the Jolly Waggoners site was expected, proposing the rebuilding of the public house together with six additional dwellings. He understood that the building was classified as a community asset, which had prevented its demolition. Cllr I Hunt reported that the former public house is also a Non-Designated Heritage Asset.

It was also reported by Cllr I Devonshire that pothole refilling and resurfacing were required on the steep section of Winding Hill, and that the matter would be raised with HCC Councillor, Mark Pope.

26/113. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

A resident raised concerns regarding the lack of public transport provision through the hamlets, noting that a vehicle service previously operated by St Elizabeth's had ceased due to various circumstances and had been unavailable for several months, impacting connectivity to Bishop's Stortford. Cllr B Bird suggested the HertsLynx service as an alternative; however, the resident highlighted that the online booking system could present difficulties and may be inaccessible for some residents.

A resident thanked the Chair for his comments regarding the Parochial Church Council's efforts to raise funds for essential works required within the Mission Hall, and clarified how bank transfers to the appeal could be made, with Gift Aid added too.

26/114. HCC SPEED MANAGEMENT STATEGY

Cllr D McDonald reported on the HCC Speed Management Strategy consultation, noting that it proposed a significant change in approach by prioritising road safety, active travel, lower speed limits where appropriate, and assessing roads according to their character rather than existing traffic speeds. He explained that this differed from the previous Speed Management Strategy, which relied heavily on recorded mean speeds and often required costly engineering measures before speed limits could be reduced.

Cllr D McDonald recommended that the Parish Council respond "Strongly Agree" to the consultation questions and advised that, following the consultation, the Council would pursue its proposal for a 20-mph speed limit in Much Hadham in line with the parish referendum. Councillors agreed he should proceed accordingly in responding to the consultation before the 27 July deadline.

26/115. EHC LOCAL PLAN

The Chair reported that EHC is preparing a new Local Plan to guide development through to 2044. Notification had been received of the first stage of public engagement, the Scoping Consultation, which would remain open for comments until 10 July 2026. The consultation sought views on additional themes to be included in the scope of the project, preferred methods of communication for future consultations, and aspects of the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA). The Chair advised that draft responses to the most relevant consultation questions had been circulated to councillors in advance of the meeting and invited any further comments.

Cllr M Scarlett commented that the consultation did not give sufficient consideration to the needs and characteristics of rural villages such as Much Hadham. Cllr I Devonshire noted that under the proposed unitary authority arrangement, the separate districts' plans would "dovetail" together so, as the Chair observed, different districts could potentially adopt different policies. It was agreed that the Chair would submit the Council's response incorporating the wording he had proposed.

26/116. CO-OPTION POLICY

The Chair reported that the policy for co-opting councillors to fill a casual vacancy was last reviewed in 2018. Since then, it has become apparent that, in practice, there are a couple of areas of ambiguity, so we have taken the opportunity to clarify the processes to be followed. Where there is more than one applicant for a vacancy, applicants will no longer need to be individually proposed and seconded prior to a vote being held. Instead, all valid applicants will be on the ballot. Through the amendments, the PC would have the power to specify any particular skills or attributes considered important by the PC e.g. to encourage under-represented segments of the community.

RESOLVED to approve the proposed changes to the Co-option Policy.

26/117. FINANCIAL

(i) Payment of Accounts

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

**Payment of Accounts – July 2026**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cllr T Bond | Reimbursement for Pavilion Supplies | 28.10 | |
| MHSA | Reimbursement fo Grass Cutting - Q2 | 882.00 | |
| Numerus | Payroll Services | 92.70 | |
| | | **Total:** | **£1,002.80** |

Payments to be authorised online following the meeting by Cllr B O'Neill and Cllr S Smith.
Payments authorised by Clerk/Chair and automated payments were noted.

It was noted that a suggestion had been put forward to review current energy suppliers to the Pavilion and consider alternative options.

(ii) Financial Statement

The financial statements for 2026/27 to date were received. The summary financial position was as below.

Cllr I Hunt confirmed that a bank reconciliation was included in the financial statements.

## 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 | 36,014.08 | -26,330.92 (-42%) | | | 0.00 (N/A) | -26,330.92 |
| 02 Administration | | | 0.00 (N/A) | 9,660.00 | 3,606.61 | 6,053.39 (62%) | 6,053.39 |
| 03 Burial Authority | 4,400.00 | 793.00 | -3,607.00 (-81%) | 6,602.00 | 280.66 | 6,321.34 (95%) | 2,714.34 |
| 04 Staff | | | 0.00 (N/A) | 14,191.00 | 3,425.96 | 10,765.04 (75%) | 10,765.04 |
| 05 Loan Repayments | | | 0.00 (N/A) | 8,122.00 | 4,061.05 | 4,060.95 (50%) | 4,060.95 |
| 06 Open Spaces and Buildings | | | 0.00 (N/A) | 51,033.00 | 8,177.50 | 42,855.50 (83%) | 42,855.50 |
| 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** | **36,807.08** | **-29,937.92 (-44%)** | **95,608.00** | **19,551.78** | **76,056.22 (79%)** | **46,118.30** |

| | Receipts | Payments |
|---|---|---|
| **Total for ALL Cost Centres** | 36,807.08 | 19,551.78 |
| **V.A.T.** | | 1,512.43 |
| **GROSS TOTAL** | **36,807.08** | **21,064.21** |

26/118. UNITY TRUST BANK:

Following Penny Taylor's resignation, some changes to the bank mandate were necessary. The opportunity to re-allocate some responsibilities would also be taken.

(i) Remove Penny Taylor as Internet Banking User
(ii) Designate Clerk and Cllr I Hunt as Service Administrators and remove Cllr I Hunt as Authoriser
(iii) Designate Cllr T Bond as Authoriser
(iv) Appoint Cllr M Scarlett as Internet Banking User & Authoriser
(v) Change Key Contacts Address

RESOLVED to approve changes to banking arrangements with Unity Bank

26/119. PLANNING

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2nd June 2026 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

26/120. BURIAL AUTHORITY

The minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held on 2nd June 2026 were received and the decisions taken were noted.

The Chair explained that amendments to the Burial Authority Terms of Reference were proposed to reflect the current administrative arrangements. It was noted that Penny Taylor had undertaken the role of Burial Authority Administrator for over a year following the departure of the previous Clerk. The role required specialist knowledge and the ability to deal professionally and sensitively with undertakers and bereaved families. The Council recorded its appreciation of her willingness to continue in this role.

RESOLVED to approve an amendment to the Terms of Reference: in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6, after "Clerk" add "and/or any other named person as approved by the Council"

RESOLVED to appoint Penny Taylor as a person approved to act on behalf of the burial authority in accordance with paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the Terms of Reference.

26/121. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

26/122. CLERK'S INFORMATION

The Clerk reported that the current Parish Council laptop was struggling for memory and is having power issues due to its age. She requested a budget for a new laptop which would be sourced with the help of Cllr T Bond.

RESOLVED to approve a budget of up to £1,000 for a replacement laptop for the Clerk.

26/123. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 1st September 2026, Much Hadham Village Hall at 7.30pm.

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There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.47pm.