



HELMDON PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING



Minutes of a Meeting of Helmdon Parish Council held in the Helmdon Reading Room, Church Street, Helmdon on **Wednesday 25th February 2026 at 7:30pm.**

Present: Cllrs Hart (Chair), Moody, Plunkett, Marchant, Fitzroy-Ezzy, Minshall, Sparrow, Fitton, Shepherd, and the Clerk.

Members of the public: 2 members of the public.

- 515. To receive and approve apologies for absence** – None as all are present. Apologies were also noted from Unitary Cllr Eastwood.
- 516. Declarations of Interest** – Cllr Moody declared that he is an employee of NCALC therefore will leave the room when item 529 is discussed as one of the Internal Audit options is to appoint NCALC.
- 517. Approval and signature of the minutes of January 28th, 2026** - It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved and duly signed.
- 518. Matters arising from the minutes**
- a. To receive an update on the actions agreed in relation to Play Area repairs** – No further update at the moment.
 - b. Update on communications with Land Registry regarding registration of the Station Road land** – Land Registry have now advised that an RX3 or RX form needs to be completed. The Clerk has taken advice on the matter and will gather some more information which should clarify which form is needed and what evidence is required, or whether a solicitor will need to deal with the issue. **Clerk to purchase title plan for one of the parcels of land to find out what the current status of the transfer is.**
 - c. Update re installation of reflective tape and wildflower seed around the bollards in the layby near the B4525 entrance to Helmdon** – The tape has been purchased and has been passed on to Cllr Minshall for installation. Cllr Minshall, and Cllr Hart will plant some flower seed which has been received free of charge.
 - d. Response received from resident regarding transferring ownership of memorial items to the Parish Council** – The resident has responded expressing their thanks to the Parish Council (PC) for suggesting this and that they would be very grateful if the PC would take on the ownership of the items as it will be a weight off their mind. It was **RESOLVED** to accept responsibility for these assets. **Clerk to update the Asset Register accordingly.** There is one other bench on the Station Road Green owned by a private individual. It was agreed that **Cllr Minshall should speak to the owner of the bench to ask if they wish to continue to own and maintain it or if they would like the PC to manage it.** It was also suggested that the PC may wish to adopt the tree on the Station Road Green that was planted by the WI as it is believed that organisation no longer exists within Helmdon. **Clerk to try to find out if the tree was planted by the WI and if they put in place any arrangements**

for it after the dissolution of the group. Clerk to put update on both items on the next agenda.

Cllr Shepherd reported that the kissing gate issue raised by residents at the last meeting is ongoing.

It was noted that the change to the new dog waste bin emptying contractor has now taken place. There was an issue with the maps initially provided to the contractor which meant they weren't aware of the Wappenham Road bin so it was not being emptied but this has now been corrected.

The Helmdon Jubilee Wall sign has been cleaned. Thanks were expressed to Les Finn for completing the works, and to Sue Lidgley for organising this. **Clerk to write to Les to thank him.**

519. Open Forum (15min max, 3 min per person)

- A resident suggested that the poppies should now be removed from the War Memorial. Cllr Moody noted that the Poppy wreaths were removed 3-4 weeks ago but the small garden is looked after by a resident. **Clerk to e-mail the resident to ask if he can remove them and whether he wishes to continue to look after the area going forward.**
- A resident gave feedback that some residents have expressed thanks for the additional clear information regarding HS2 on the parish website.

520. To note developer comments relating to the Priory Field development proposal – The developer has advised that 'the current iteration proposes 25 homes, offering a mix of tenures and including bungalows, to better reflect local needs and concerns expressed by the community.' The developers have picked up from the parish plan that one of the projects agreed is to assess for the viability of a community shop. The developers have asked the PC to discuss a possible site for a shop with them but the PC have responded advising that it is too early to have such discussions as at the moment the Working Group has only just been formed so has not had a chance to assess whether there is a sufficient need for a shop in the parish.

521. To receive the Tree Inspection Report and consider next steps – The Tree Warden has reviewed the report and suggested the PC obtain quotes for the work as advised, particularly given the majority of the work suggested is for years 1 and 1-2. **Clerk to obtain quotes for suggested work.**

522. To consider a response to the West Northants Council (WNC) Parish and Town Council Election Recharges Consultation – It was **RESOLVED** to submit a response to the consultation in favour of Option C which will be the cheapest option for Helmdon Parish Council. **Clerk to submit response.**

523. To respond to the WNC consultation on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy – The consultation was noted. The PC agreed there is more that can be done directly by the PC in the parish in relation to Biodiversity, and that an item should be placed on the next agenda to consider possible options. **Clerk to put item on next agenda.**

524. To receive quotes for the 3 year grass cutting contract and agree which contractor to appoint – Two quotes were received for the contract. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint R&G Grounds for the contract for the next three years at a cost of £3203.41 per year, with a slight change to the request in that the grass cutting should start in March rather than April, and if R&G find they are coming to the end of the number of approved cuts before the end of the season they should notify the Clerk who will seek approval for some additional cuts. **Clerk to instruct R&G.**

525. Highways Representative Reports

a. To note the continued closure of the Radstone Road – The official position from HS2 to date is that it will be opened before April although it has been noted that One Network is now showing a later date for the end of the closure. The HS2 Liaison has contacted HS2 to ask why there is the extension and they have provided the following response: 'At present, we are still aiming to complete the works by the end of March as planned. However, some additional remedial works on the VRS foundations are required, and there is a possibility that the works may overrun slightly that week by a few days. As a precaution, the team has requested the road booking in advance to avoid any potential clashes with other works. We will continue to provide updates to the parish as agreed and issue formal AWN updates if required.'

b. To discuss the condition of the B4525 Welsh Lane and to note and respond to residents' concerns – There is a lot of anger and concern within the village about the state of the B4525 in relation to potholes. Many feel it is dangerous to drive on that road at night. WNC have repaired some of the potholes but more start to appear. The only option to get action on these is for more people to report potholes on Fixmystreet. **Clerk, and Cllr Moody to put posts on the website and Facebook page advising residents how to report potholes.** It was noted some of the potholes recently repaired near Whistley Wood have already started to degrade.

A resident has asked when was the B4525 was last litter picked and when will it next be litter picked. Cllr Moody has contacted WNC to ask these questions and the response was that it was last litter picked in December 2025, and they do not currently have any litter picking scheduled however they do regularly litter pick in the grittings area. It was agreed that Cllr Moody should ask if they could schedule a litter pick in the grittings area, and also ask them if they can pick up all of the road signs that have been knocked over there. **Cllr Moody to report the road signs on Fixmystreet.**

c. Highway defects in the parish other than the B4525 Welsh Lane – Church Street, is being heavily affected by the increased traffic due to the Radstone Road closure. Cllr Moody has reported a number of potholes including some areas near Falcutt. There was also a large pothole near the school entrance which was reported and repaired within a couple of days. It was noted that the repairs WNC have done in the village have been pretty good and well within their specified timescales. A Cllr noted that some concerns have been raised about an abandoned car in the parish.

d. Update on the temporary safety barriers by Jeffs Bridge – The barriers were put in place after WNC trimmed the hedge and exposed a drop to the brook. WN Highways has been asked to confirm what plans they have to reinstate the fence.

526. Update from the Parish Plan Working Group – The Community Speedwatch equipment has arrived and the police now need to review the village to advise suitable locations from which to run Community Speedwatch sessions. Once these have been confirmed a request will go out for volunteers to join the Community Speedwatch group.

The Village Shop Working Group has held a meeting and agreed to contact residents who expressed an interest in volunteering via the parish plan survey. So far five people have volunteered to be part of the working group so the next step is to arrange a meeting and assess the viability of a village shop.

527. Priory Barn – Update re follow up with WNC – Clerk chased Mandy Lumb at WNC in mid February and chased again today but as yet there has not been any reply. Stephanie Gibrat's Personal Assistant has responded and advised that a response should be received from Mandy in the next few days.

528. HS2 Liaison Report – The report was noted.

Cllr Moody left the meeting at 8:37pm.

529. To appoint an Internal Auditor for the 2026-27 financial year – It was noted that some challenges have been raised in the past about whether it is acceptable for the PC to use NCALC for Internal Audit given that Cllr Moody is

employed by NCALC, and the Clerk completes Internal Audits as a contractor for some other councils in Northants which are arranged by NCALC. This has been considered by the Monitoring Officer, by the Finance Committee, and by the full council previously and it was found that there is no conflict of interest or any other reason why it would not be acceptable to use NCALC for Internal Audit and they offer a highly valued service which provides good quality Internal Audit to a large percentage of parish councils in Northamptonshire. The risk of appointing a provider who is a sole trader who then can't provide an alternative person to complete the audit should she become unable to complete the audit for any reason was considered, but it was felt that in that event NCALC would consider allowing the PC to return to their service and provide an auditor if they have one available, but obviously this is not guaranteed and the PC will need to try to find an alternative provider should this happen. Based on the fact that the alternative provider seems to be offering a similar service and at a lower price than NCALC, it was **RESOLVED** to appoint Lydia Cox as the Internal Auditor for the 2026-27 financial year. **Clerk to return the signed letter of engagement to Lydia.**

Cllr Moody returned to the meeting at 8:46pm.

530. To agree theme and arrangements for the Annual Village Meeting (AVM) to be held on Wednesday 22 April 2026 – It was **RESOLVED** that the AVM theme would be potholes and it was suggested that 'Mr Pothole' is invited to attend and provide a report. The Village Groups who received grants from the PC over the last year should be asked if any of them would be willing to speak at the meeting about what they have spent the money on and the impact it has had on their group and up to 2 of the groups should be given a slot on the agenda. It was also agreed to invite Unitary Cllr Eastwood. It was suggested that a group providing some information about the archaeological finds during the construction of HS2 could also be invited. It was agreed that this should only be considered if Mr Pothole cannot attend as there will not be enough time for more than one main speaker. **Cllr Marchant to provide details of the group to the Clerk. Clerk to invite the agreed people/groups.**

531. Finance:

- a. **To note the bank balances of £159.23 and £30,042.41 as at 18.02.2026** - Cllr Hart confirmed the balances stated are correct.
- b. To note and approve receipts and payments:

Payments made since the last meeting using delegated powers/Direct Debits:

Date	Pymt Type	Payee	Invoice No	Description	Amount
28.01.26	BACS	Staff Costs		January	£759.51
28.01.26	BACS	HMRC		Tax & NI Jan	£138.63
30.01.26	DD	NEST		Pension Jan	£63.14
31.01.26		Unity Bank		Account fee	£6.00
09.02.26	DD	Yu Energy	03482175	Electricity Jan 26	£60.19

Invoices to be paid:

Payee	Invoice No	Description	Amount
NCALC	INV-5110	AI Training - JP	£55.20
Kirsty Buttle	GB611RX1UAEUI	Reimbursement - CSW, stationery	£172.26
NCALC	INV-5151	Planning N&B Training - JP and BM	£84.00
Staff costs		February	£759.51
HMRC		Tax & NI Feb 26	£138.63
NEST		Pension Feb 26	£63.14

Receipts:

Date	Received from	Description	Amount
03.02.26	CCLA	Interest	£96.79

It was **RESOLVED** to approve all payments and note the receipts.

Meeting closed @ 9:02pm

Signed..... Date.....