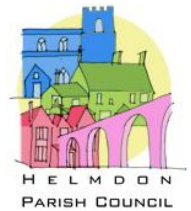




HELMDON PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING



Minutes of a Meeting of Helmdon Parish Council held in the Helmdon Reading Room, Church Street, Helmdon on **Wednesday 25th March 2026 at 7:30pm**. Due to a delay getting into the venue the meeting started at 7:34pm.

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

Members of the public: 5 members of the public, Unitary Councillor Eastwood.

- 532. To receive and approve apologies for absence** – Apologies were received from Cllr Fitzroy-Ezzy. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the absence.
- 533. Declarations of Interest** – None.
- 534. Approval and signature of the minutes of February 25th, 2026-** It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved and duly signed.
- 535. Matters arising from the minutes**
 - a. To receive an update on the actions agreed in relation to Play Area repairs** – The contractor who has been asked to complete a report on possible repair options for the items raised had some concerns about liability, and has been impossible to contact since that discussion despite the Clerk sending over the information they requested. **Cllr Hart will speak to one of her contacts to see if they could provide some suggestions.** It was agreed that **if Cllr Hart's contact is unable to provide any information then Cllr Hart and the Clerk should review the inspection report again and try to get quotes for repair to bring to the May meeting for consideration.** Cllr Minshall advised that around six bags of bark is required to refill some areas to ensure the play area remains safe. **Clerk to order bark.**
 - b. Update on communications with Land Registry regarding registration of the Station Road land** - Land Registry have confirmed that the application has been closed and they need a new application. It was **RESOLVED** that the Parish Council (PC) does not wish to use the same solicitor as previously due to regular unexpected fees but that **the Clerk should contact Pathfinder (previous solicitors) to ask if they are holding the documents regarding the transfer, and request that they return them to the Clerk, whilst also ensuring it is made very clear that this request is not instructing them to do any work to ensure no charges are made.** Once the documents have been obtained the **Clerk should try to obtain legal advice about the next steps.**
 - c. Update re communications re adopting bench and tree on Station Rd Green** – The Clerk has received confirmation from the owner of the bench that they would like the PC to take on ownership and responsibility for the bench. The Clerk contacted a previous member of the WI about the tree but they advised that although the WI talked about planting a tree, they realised that the WI would be closing so didn't plant a tree. It has since been confirmed that a

resident planted the tree and installed the tree guard, and he would be happy for the PC to take on the maintenance of the tree. It was **RESOLVED** that the PC assumes total ownership of the existing bench, tree, and tree guard on Station Road Green. **Clerk to add the bench, and tree guard to the Asset Register. Clerk to write to the resident to confirm that the PC has assumed ownership of the tree, and tree guard following his conversation with Cllr Hart.**

- d. Priory Barn – Update re follow up with West Northants Council (WNC) –** WNC have advised that they have not heard from the owner of the building so they have chased them up again but they will only notify the PC if they receive any information that they can share, and that if the owner does not choose to engage, WNC have limited powers under the Listed Building Act so there is little they can do to prevent the further decline of the building. Cllr Moody advised that WNC does have legal powers to do something about this but they may be choosing not to as it is a hassle for them. It was suggested that the PC could try to find out who the owner is and contact them directly to ask what their plans are. It was **RESOLVED** that the **Clerk should try to find out who the owner is and contact them.**
- e. Progress re reviewing the Tree Survey Report –** The report has been reviewed and an inspection of the allotments has taken place to consider which trees are on individual allotments, therefore should not be worked on by the PC without prior discussion with the plot holders. The Clerk has spoken to a representative of HS2 and they have agreed to review the tree inspection report and obtain a quote for the required works to see if they could fund it from the HS2 small works fund. **If this is not possible the Clerk will obtain quotes for the work and bring to the May meeting for review.**
- f. Any other matters –** Cllr Shepherd advised that in reference to the discussion about installing kissing gates in Falcutt, WNC have agreed to supply the materials for the kissing gates (which have already arrived) but the quote the residents received was higher than they were expecting so they have asked if there is any other funding available such as HS2 funding. It was felt that HS2 would not be able to help fund this as they can only fund items for constituted groups. **Cllr Shepherd to ask the residents for details of the quote and provide details of other possible contractors who could quote for them to see if this can help with their costs.**

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

- Cllr Eastwood noted that the proposal to put in parking charges in Brackley has been removed. Green Bin charges are going up to £69, not the £80 proposed. The council tax increase is 4.95%. This will take the average charge for a band D property up to £1,959.40, which is an annual increase of £92.42.

Unitary Cllr Eastwood left the meeting at 8:06pm.

- A resident noted that the PC is discussing the possibility of a village shop and they feel like it is not feasible and that the PC should not 'go down that road'.
- A resident noted their concerns about the closure of the Ability Bus Scheme and the impact that this will have on residents, particularly the elderly. They understand that Ability were taking around 1200 people, mainly disabled people, to do their shopping, going on trips etc, and these people will now not have access to various facilities. Cllr Hart advised that she has contacted the MP about this in her role as Clerk to

King's Sutton Parish Council and it is understood that the MP has arranged a meeting with the leader of WNC to discuss this and to see if anything can be done to save the service. **Clerk to put this on the next agenda for discussion.** More discussions are being held over the next few weeks so hopefully more will be understood about what the issues are to see if they can be resolved.

- 537. To receive recommendations from the Planning Committee regarding a submission to the Local Plan Consultation** – It was agreed to remove the reference to support policy H04. Subject to that amendment it was **RESOLVED** to submit the response to the Local Plan Consultation as recommended by the Planning Committee. **Clerk to submit response.**
- 538. To consider whether the Parish Council (PC) wishes to engage with the potential developer of Priory Fields prior to a planning application being submitted** – The PC agreed that the best approach would be for the developer to organise a further public meeting. It was **RESOLVED** that the **Clerk should write to the developer to suggest they hold a public meeting to publicise their revised plans.**
- 539. To confirm the current status relating to speed management on Station Road and agree next steps** – The Station Road group want to gather evidence before deciding what the appropriate next steps are in relation to replacing the VAS and requesting a reduced speed limit. The Community Speedwatch Scheme will continue to run over the coming months to gather data. If anyone else would like to volunteer to join the group please e-mail Cllr Minshall. **Cllr Moody to put another appeal for volunteers on Facebook.**
- 540. To respond to the WNC consultation on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy** – The consultation was noted.
- 541. To receive recommendations from the Climate and Nature Champion** – Cllr Sparrow gave some information regarding his report. One proposal was to set up a separate Climate and Nature Facebook page. It was agreed that at the moment it would be preferable to post information on the PC Facebook account but that the **Clerk should set up a new page on the website to provide information from the Climate and Nature Champion.** Another proposal considered was to hire a turf stripper (£100) to remove some turf on The Green, and the Station Road Green, to plant some wildflower seed (£48). Some councillors raised concerns about taking up grass from the Greens, and that wildflowers can look messy when they die back. Other possible locations were suggested but were deemed unsuitable due to ownership issues and quality of the soil. After some discussion it was **RESOLVED** to trial this on the Station Road Green only and see what the feedback is before deciding whether to put wildflowers in other parts of the village. **Cllr Hart to make arrangements to hire a turf stripper and order wildflower seeds.**
- 542. Report on the 4th Annual Allotment Plot Holders' meeting and to consider recommendations** – It was noted that the allotment holders had requested a skip for removal of rubbish left on plots from previous tenants but it was agreed that in order for the PC to provide this the allotment fees would need to be increased, therefore two plot holders kindly volunteered to do some tip runs if plot holders all place their rubbish in a single place in the allotments. Some discussions were held about how enforceable some of the requirements of the tenancy agreement are, and also that some of the requirements to remove sheds when people leave does not seem sensible as future users may appreciate the use of a shed. It was **RESOLVED** that the **Clerk should review the allotment tenancy agreements and suggest amendments to be considered by the PC at the May meeting.**
- 543. To receive quotes for a new electricity supplier (current contract ends 18/06/2026) and agree which supplier to instruct** – Quotes were received

from four suppliers. It was **RESOLVED** to go ahead with the 3 year agreement with Conrad Energy through Clear Utility Solutions. **Clerk to arrange the new contract.**

- 544. To receive an update from the Village Shop Working Group** – The group has met and discussed what provisions the parish already has to assess the need. The group has also arranged to speak to the last people who ran a shop in the village to get some feedback from them. The next step will be to complete a survey to get feedback from the residents.
- 545. HS2 Representative Report** – The report was noted. Residents can find lots of information about HS2 on <https://helmdonparishcouncil.gov.uk/hs2> and any more immediate/short term information can be found under <https://helmdonparishcouncil.gov.uk/news/>
- 546. Update from Highways Representative** – There is a lot of outstanding work on Welsh Lane. They have done a lot of work on potholes on the road to Sulgrave. The barriers near Jeff’s Bridge that were placed there last summer as ‘temporary barriers’ are meant to be removed by the end of March as they intend to make repairs by the end of the month. Unfortunately WNC haven’t provided any information about whether the repair will be like for like, or if they intend to put something else in its place, which is a concern as it is a high profile area in the parish and a change would have a significant visual impact. **Cllr Moody will continue to chase this.** Cllr Moody has spoken to WNC about litter picking near the B4525 and reported litter in a ditch. WNC responded that the ditch is not under their ownership or responsibility but that they will clear it anyway.
- 547. To consider how to approach the maintenance of the War Memorial Garden and Pump Garden in 2026** – There is a proposal in the Parish Plan to set up a group for these kinds of works so it was **RESOLVED** to put out a note asking for volunteers to attend a maintenance day to maintain those areas. **Cllr Moody to arrange a date for a working group and publicise the event.**
- 548. To note finalised arrangements for the Annual Village Meeting** – Mr Pothole has confirmed he will attend. A representative from the Larder has also agreed to come to talk about the impact the PC grant has had on their organisation. The Clerk has not yet heard back from the Helmdon Community Foundation, or Unitary Cllr Eastwood. **Cllr Moody will put a note on Facebook to advertise the meeting. Clerk to chase up other potential attendees.**

3 members of the public left the meeting at 9:16pm.

549. Finance:

- a. To note the bank balances of £351.23 and £26,592.41 as at 18.03.2026 - 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
25.02.26	BACS	Kirsty Buttle		Reimbursement - reflective tape, and stationery	£19.88
06.03.26	BACS	David Shepherd		Reimbursement - keys for allotment	£32.50
28.02.26		Unity Bank		Account fee	£6.00
18.03.26	BACS	Marcus Young Environmental Services Ltd	4704	Dog bin emptying Apr 25 to Jan 26	£466.20
18.03.26	BACS	Shield Maintenance Ltd	9943	Dog bin emptying Feb 26	£46.80
18.03.26	BACS	Parish Online	34UG036-0013	1 year website subscription	£420.00

18.03.26	BACS	Staff Costs		Mar 26	£759.51
18.03.26	BACS	HMRC		Tax & NI Mar 26	£138.63
18.03.26	BACS	NCALC	INV-5181	Training - JP x 2, and BM	£126.00
09.03.26	DD	Yu Energy	0351695 9	Electricity Feb 26	£49.36
18.03.26	BACS	Kirsty Buttle		Reimbursement - land registry fee	£7.00

Invoices to be paid:

Payee	Description	Amount
Kirsty Buttle - Reimbursement/expenses	Reimbursement - SIM, One Drive, Mileage	£35.62
Unity Bank	Account fee	£7.00

Receipts:

Date	Received from	Description	Amount
03.03.26	CCLA	Interest	£86.62

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

Meeting closed @ 9:17pm

Next meeting date – 27th May 2026

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