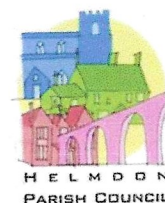


HELMDON PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING



Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Helmdon Parish Council held in the Helmdon Reading Room, Church Street, Helmdon on **Wednesday 27th May 2026 at 7:30 pm.**

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

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

- 550. Election of Chair** - It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Moody as the Chair. Cllr Moody completed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The councillors thanked Cllr Hart for her service as Chair over the last year.
- 551. Election of Vice Chair** - It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Hart as the vice-chair.
- 552. To receive and approve apologies for absence** - Apologies were received from Cllr Fitton. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the apologies from Cllr Fitton. Unitary Cllr Eastwood will be late to the meeting. As Cllr Eastwood needs to go on to other Parish Council (PC) meetings it was agreed that Cllr Eastwood can have 3 minutes from the open forum whenever she arrives.
- 553. Declarations of Interest** - Cllr Hart declared an interest in item 388 - payment to On Tap Helmdon Ltd as she is employed by that company. Cllr Moody declared an interest in item 388 - payment to NCALC for membership as he is an employee of NCALC. Cllr Hart declared an interest in item 383 as a landowner of land over which the route crosses.
- 554. To confirm members for the following committees:** It was **RESOLVED** for the committees to remain with the existing membership.
- a. **Finance** - Cllr Moody, Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Hart, Cllr Fitton.
 - b. **Planning** - Cllr Marchant, Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Hart, Cllr Shepherd, Cllr Minshall.
 - c. **HR** - Cllr Hart, Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Moody.
- 555. To Review the Terms of Reference for the following committees:**
- a. **Finance** - It was **RESOLVED** to re-adopt with no changes.
 - b. **Planning** - It was **RESOLVED** to adopt with the proposed changes.
 - c. **HR** - It was **RESOLVED** to re-adopt with no changes.
- 556. To confirm parish representatives:**
- a. **Internal Controls Councillor** - Cllr Hart.
 - b. **Parish Paths Warden** - Cllr Shepherd.
 - c. **Parish Highways Representative** - Cllr Moody.
 - d. **Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator** - Cllr Moody.
 - e. **Police Liaison Representative** - Cllr Minshall.
 - f. **Health & Safety Officer** - Cllr Hart.
 - g. **Tree Warden** - Phillip Bridger.
 - h. **Flag Master and Deputy Flag Master** - Geoff Bridger, deputy role left vacant and will advertise for volunteer.
 - i. **Webmaster** - Richard Farquharson.

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- j. **Recycling Warden** – Cllr Minshall. It was **RESOLVED** to converge with Blackpits Liaison as both relating to recycling to be the Environmental Sustainability Officer.
- k. **Speed Indicator Device Officer** – Cllr Moody.
- l. **Defibrillator Officer** – Sophie Harwood.
- m. **HS2 Liaison Officer** – Clerk.
- n. **Allotment Working Group** – Cllr Moody, Cllr Shepherd, Cllr Fitzroy-Ezzy.
- o. **Parish Plan Working Group** – Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Moody, Cllr Shepherd, Cllr Fitzroy-Ezzy, Cllr Minshall.
- p. **School and Pre-School Liaison** – Cllr Hart.
- q. **Flooding Wardens** – Chris Thorpe, Richard Farquharson.
- r. **Blackpits Liaison** – Now combined with Recycling Warden role.
- s. **Station Road Green Working Group** – Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Minshall, Peter Coy, Cllr Hart.
- t. **Any other representatives that may be considered necessary – Climate & Nature Champion** – Cllr Sparrow.

The council expressed their thanks to all those who have fulfilled the roles over the last year.

557. **To readopt the following policies with no changes** – It was noted that the Complaints Procedure will need the contact details changing once the new Clerk is in post. It was **RESOLVED** to readopt the policies.

- a. **Records Retention Policy**
- b. **Complaints Procedure**
- c. **Sickness and Absence Policy**
- d. **Grievance & Disciplinary Policy**
- e. **General Privacy Notice**
- f. **Data Protection Policy**
- g. **System of Internal Control and Internal Audit**
- h. **Health & Safety Policy**
- i. **Biodiversity Policy**
- j. **Governance Framework**

558. **Approval and signature of the minutes of March 25th, 2026** – Subject to the removal of 'be' and addition of the words 'continue to' in the Speedwatch section it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved and duly signed.

559. **Matters arising from the minutes**

- a. **To receive an update in the actions agreed in relation to the Play Area repairs** – Cllr Hart's contact has not replied. **Clerk to e-mail the report to Cllr Sparrow. Cllr Sparrow to ask his contact to have a look at the surfacing to ask their view on what options there are for replacing the surfacing.**
- b. **Update on communications with Land Registry regarding registration of the Station Road land** – Pathfinder Legal have been contacted and they have advised that they no longer hold the paperwork and say that they returned it to the previous clerk. **Cllr Moody to contact previous Clerk to ask if she may still have the paperwork.**
- c. **Priory Barn – Update re direct contact with owner re their plans** – Cllr Hart has advised that she managed to contact the owner and they have plans in hand.
- d. **Update re proposed amendments to the Allotment Tenancy Agreements** – Defer to meeting later in the year to allow the new Clerk to consider what amendments they think would be appropriate.

- e. **Update re repair to the barriers on Jeff's Bridge** – The fence near the bridge has now been repaired.
- f. **Update regarding wildflower beds on Station Road (opposite Hinton's Close)** – Cllrs Hart, Moody, and Minshall have stripped the beds. The seeds were planted at an appropriate time when rain was forecast. There are already shoots coming up. Cllr Hart is watering when required. The seed was donated by Blackpits (Biotic NRG Group). It was noted that the Copper Beech at the top of Station Road looks like it may have died which could be because the ground there is very rocky. **Cllr Shepherd will continue to check on the tree and bring an update to the next meeting.**

Cllr Moody has not yet put an advert out for a volunteer group to manage the War Memorial Garden and the Pump Garden.

560. **To receive feedback on the Annual Village Meeting and note any matters arising** – The reports from the meeting and the subsequent questions have been published along with reports provided for the meeting. Cllr Hart advised that the responses to the subsequent questions were written by her due to the Clerk being on annual leave at the time, and some of the questions related to issues she had knowledge of due to being the landowner.

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

Cllr Eastwood joined the meeting at 8:10pm.

- Unitary Cllr Eastwood advised that as she has completed her year as Chair of West Northants Council (WNC) the role has now been passed on to Fiona Baker. Other changes have been made within the cabinet. There is £175k in the fund to endorse the new private company to run the Ability Bus service. It is likely that there will be two companies running it. WNC has agreed to change the schedule for the emptying of black bins to 3 weekly. Cllr Eastwood is aware of the Planning application for 26 houses in Helmdon and advised the application will go to committee for consideration. Cllr Eastwood will bring Tom Manning (Cabinet member for planning) to have a look at the site.
- A resident raised concerns about the possible issues of flooding should development go ahead on the Priory Fields site.

Cllr Eastwood left the meeting at 8:25pm.

562. **To consider adopting a Statement on Littering** – It was noted that the responsibility for litter in the ditches is not normally Highways and is that of the landowner, but WNC were willing to clear the ditch adjacent to the B4525 as a gesture of goodwill. A Cllr advised that this view is being challenged legally. The PC await the outcome of this legal case which may inform future action re litter. It was **RESOLVED** to adopt this statement.

563. **Consideration of what action the Parish Council should take in relation to the closure of the Ability Bus Service** – It was noted that PC's still don't appear to be kept updated about the situation but it was interesting to hear from Cllr Eastwood in item 378 that the service should be reinstated in a different format soon. **Cllr Hart agreed to chase this up in two weeks if there is no new Clerk in post and nothing has been heard about the service restarting.**

564. **Update regarding potential development of Priory Fields** – The developer informed the council yesterday that they have submitted a planning application and provided some information. The planning reference to view full details on the WNC planning portal is 2026/2019/MAF. It was suggested that a public

meeting to hear the feedback from residents should be held before a formal PC meeting to allow the feedback to be considered before the PC make a decision on their response. Residents should be encouraged to respond formally to WNC via the planning portal as well as sending their comments to the PC so the PC can take their views into account when deciding how to respond. It was **RESOLVED** to arrange a public meeting to take place from 10am to 12 noon on Saturday 13th June, and then hold an Extraordinary PC meeting at 7:30pm on Thursday 18th June to consider what the PC response should be. In order to advertise the public meeting it was agreed that **Cllr Moody should put together a leaflet/poster** which should be published on the noticeboard, website, Facebook as well as being delivered to all properties in the parish. **Clerk to order the leaflets from Texprep. Cllr Minshall to co-ordinate the delivery of the leaflets with the support of councillors.**

- 565. To consider whether provision of dog waste bins in the village is adequate and determine any next steps** – There was an issue with the contractors a few months ago and at that time the PC decided to purchase larger bins but this was put on hold due to the fact that the new contractors were emptying more regularly so it appeared that larger bins weren't necessary. There seems to be confusion for some residents about the ownership of the black waste bins in the parish and a resident suggested one of these should be changed to a dog waste bin. The black waste bins are owned and emptied by WNC so the PC cannot remove a waste bin and replace with a dog waste bin. After discussion the Cllrs agreed that there are sufficient dog waste bins in the parish and the litter bins can also be used for dog waste so it was **RESOLVED** to take no further action.

Cllr Hart left the meeting at 8:56pm.

- 566. To consider whether the PC wishes to respond to a letter from West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) regarding an application to add a route in Helmdon to the Definitive Map and Statement** – The PC has supported the application previously. It was **RESOLVED** that the PC does not have any additional evidence to submit so no further response will be made.

Cllr Hart returned to the meeting at 8:59pm.

567. Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the 2025-26 Financial Year

- a. **To review the effectiveness of the system of internal control** – It was **RESOLVED** that the PC is confident that it has an effective system of internal control.
- b. **To receive and note the recommendations from the Internal Auditor's Report 2025-26** – It was confirmed that the Internal Auditor's Report has been received and no issues were raised.
- c. **To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26** – It was **RESOLVED** to tick 'yes' to all statements except statement 9 which is 'not applicable' and for the document to be signed.
- d. **To approve the Accounting Statements for 2025-26** – It was **RESOLVED** that the Accounting Statements are accurate and the document should be signed.
- e. **To confirm the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights as 3 June to 14 July 2026** – It was **RESOLVED** to use these dates for the Exercise of Public Rights.

- 568. To receive quotes for tree work as specified in the tree survey and agree which contractor to instruct** – Two quotes have been received, but one other chose not to quote as they stated that they feel some of the work suggested is too harsh and may cause further damage to the trees and may create additional safety issues. Similar feedback was received from one of the two companies that quoted so it was **RESOLVED** to defer the consideration of quotes until the

569.

survey has been reconsidered and potentially amended quotes obtained. **Cllr Minshall and Cllr Hart to work through the tree survey, considering the issues that have been raised, and create an updated quote specification. To receive an update and data from the Community Speedwatch (CSW) Group and to consider next steps** – The report was received. 90% of vehicles were fully compliant across the 3 police approved sites in the village. 31-34mph – 8% were travelling at those speeds but the police do not prosecute at those speeds. 1.7% (12 vehicles) over 35, and 0.1% (1 vehicle) over 40mph. The data suggests that at those sites there is not a speeding problem in the village. More CSW sessions will be held. It was suggested that two 'You are entering a Speedwatch area' signs should be purchased and located at two of the entrances to the village to see if these make any difference to speeding. **Clerk to order signs.** The data suggests that there isn't a significant speeding issue in the parish that would justify significant spending on features such as Chicanes but further data may suggest the need for new Vehicle Activated Signs.

570.

To receive an update from the Village Shop Working Group – The group has met a number of times since the last PC meeting and have a group consisting of Cllrs and residents. They have looked at shops in other locations and they put out a survey over the last few days to find out what residents would like from a shop in the village. Some responses have already been received. It was noted that it was unfortunate that the survey went out just before the PC was made aware of the planning application which includes a shop as this may have given the impression that the PC are in discussions with the developer about a shop, but this is not the case. The PC has not provided any information to the developer other than to say that the PC did not have enough information to give them any feedback as to whether the PC would support a Village Shop as the PC is in the early stages of researching the need and viability of a shop.

571.

Finance:

- a. **To note the bank balances of £293.49 and £43,544.85 as at 20.05.2026**
- The Chair confirmed the balances stated are correct.
- b. **To review the Council's spend in 2025-26 using S137** – In 2025-26 the S137 spend was £0.
- c. **To note and approve receipts and payments:**

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

Cllr Moody left the meeting at 9:19pm.

Cllr Hart led the meeting in a proposal to pay the invoice to NCALC which was **RESOLVED.**

Cllr Moody returned to the meeting at 9:20pm. Cllr Hart left the meeting at 9:20pm.

Date	Pymt Type	Payee	Invoice No	Description	Amount
30.03.26	DD	NEST		Pension Mar 26	£63.14
31.03.26		Unity Bank		Account fee	£7.00
30.03.26	BACS	SLCC	BK225604-1	Training - KB	£70.20
09.04.26	DD	Yu Energy		Electricity	£47.79
22.04.26	BACS	NCALC	INV-5223	Code of Conduct Training JP	£55.20
22.04.26	BACS	Shield Maintenance Ltd	10059	Dog bin emptying	£46.80
22.04.26	BACS	Helmdon Community Foundation	521	Room hire Jan to Mar 26	£145.00

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22.04.26	BACS	R&G	122578	Verge mowing - Mar	£361.30
22.04.26	BACS	E-on Energy Solutions	6018817616	Annual street light maintenance	£316.80
22.04.26	BACS	Staff costs		April	£760.91
22.04.26	BACS	HMRC		Tax and NI Apr	£139.03
30.04.26	DD	NEST		Pension Apr	£63.14
30.04.26		Unity Bank		Account fee	£7.00
08.05.26	DD	Yu Energy	03830173	Streetlighting Apr 26	£39.33

Cllr Hart returned to the meeting at 9:21pm.

Invoices to be paid:

Payee	Invoice No	Description	Amount
NCALC	INV-5473	Annual membership, and DPO	£508.97
CPA Horticulture	INV-141079	10 x 60L bags of softwood chippings	£116.00
Shield Maintenance Ltd	10176	Dog bin emptying	£46.80
R&G Grounds	122678	Verge mowing - Apr	£626.15
Staff costs		May	£759.11
HMRC		Tax and NI May	£139.03
NEST		Pension May	£63.14
On Tap Helmdon Ltd	7108	Hire of de-turfing machine	£105.36

Receipts:

Date	Received from	Description	Amount
31.03.26	Unity Bank	Interest	£152.44
March	Various	Allotment fees	£160.00
April	Various	Allotment fees	£80.00
02.04.26	CCLA	Interest	£95.39
13.04.26	HMRC	VAT refund	£2,123.43
29.04.26	WNC	Precept	£16,309.00
05.05.26	CCLA	Interest	£92.70
May	Various	Allotment fee	£40.00

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

- 572. To confirm the meeting dates and time for 2026-27** – Ordinary meetings will take place on 24th Jun, 22nd Jul, 23rd Sep, 28th Oct, 25th Nov, 27th Jan, 24th Feb, and 24th Mar at 7:30pm. Finance Committee meetings will take place on 1st Jul, 10th Sep, 12th Nov, and 14th Jan at 7:30pm.
- 573. To note the resignation of the Clerk and agree any actions required** – The resignation of the Clerk was noted. The councillors expressed their thanks to the Clerk for her service over the last 18 months. It was **RESOLVED** to remove Kirsty Buttle from the bank mandate and add the new Clerk to the bank mandate. A Cllr asked that the reasons for the resignation be noted by Cllrs. The HR Committee will work to make sure that all staff have a proper working environment.
- 574. To appoint a councillor as Proper Officer (unpaid) to hold office until the day that a new clerk is appointed** – It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Hart as the unpaid Proper Officer until a new Clerk is appointed.

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575. **To exclude members of the public and press on the grounds that the following business is confidential** – It was **RESOLVED** to exclude members of the public and press.

5 members of the public left the meeting @ 9:25pm.

576. **To receive a recommendation from the HR Committee on the appointment of a Clerk to the Council** – It was **RESOLVED** to accept the HR Committee's recommendation in principle, subject to the person accepting the job and their availability. If the person does not accept, then it was agreed that the HR Committee can choose whether to approach some of the other applicants or to start the process of advertising the job again.

Meeting closed @ 9:32pm

Signed.....Moody..... Date. 23/9/26.....