



Minutes of the Highclere Parish Council Meeting

Westridge Studio

Tuesday 08 September at 7.30pm

Members Present: Cllr Easton (chair), Cllr Bartholomew, Cllr Morrey, Cllr Eyre, Cllr MacIver

Clerk: Amy White

In attendance: Two members of the public

1. 38/26 Apologies for Absence

Received from Cllr York, Cllr Falconer, Cllr Izett.

2. 39/26 Declarations of Interest

None.

3. 40/26 To agree Annual Meeting Minutes of 07 July 2026

The meeting Minutes of 07 July 2026 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, Cllr Easton.

4. 41/26 Matters arising from Meeting held on 07 July 2026

Number	Action	Person
21/26	Clerk to purchase a replacement SID and possibly a trail camera (£50 from Amazon)- still waiting on SID decision- see item 7.	Clerk
29/26	Clerk to advertise councillor vacancy on website- Actioned.	Clerk
32/26	Clerk and Cllr Easton to send information on Tubbs Lane pole suggestion to Brian Cairney- Actioned by Clerk. Cllr Bartholomew to contact nearest residents to explain HPC plan for a SID mounted on Tubbs Lane- Actioned.	Clerk Cllr Bartholomew
34/26	Clerk to add internal control policy to website- Actioned.	Clerk
35/26	Clerk to ask councillors for suggestions for Lengthsman- Actioned.	Clerk

5. 42/26 Public participation

No one requested to speak.

6. 43/26 Reports from County and Borough Councillors

Cllr Izett gave his apologies and sent in the following report (note point 2 referring to the Unitary changes is now out of date as HPC has just been made aware that this is now not being progressed by government):

1) Consultation on future of Clere School.

While it was generally known that the school was struggling in terms of pupil numbers and financially, for many local people and parents of children at the school, the announcement last week by HCC came as a very significant shock. Borough councillors were not informed in advance. The decision to seek closure was made, it is understood, in May by the governors.

The initial public consultation runs to 2nd October and there are 3 “drop in” events for parents and families of different year groups.

Evingar ward borough cllrs are supporting efforts that have now been immediately actioned to better understand the background to this development and to seek credible ways to find a sustainable future for the school. Understanding the views and concerns of families at the school and local residents will be important, something that will become evident shortly no doubt. Questions about the option of becoming an Academy, the impact of Govt changes to future housing numbers locally and whether these have been taken into account in assessing future demographics and the viability of a school at the Clere, and how realistic the alternative of the Hurst School is are among the many questions that we are seeking answers to. The Cabinet member for Education has been asked a series of key questions via the formal consultation process by our group leader, Cllr Simon Minas- Bound to be addressed before any decision to close the school is approved.

2) Local Plan

The administration in Basingstoke has now formally conceded that the current draft Local Plan will not meet the govt’s December timetable. The govt has been unwilling to accept that issues over future water supply are grounds for an extension. This means that the Local Plan process will now have to re-start in accordance with the new NPPF which is much more streamlined and prescriptive. The evidence base will have to re-visited and housing supply calculated for a 10 year timeframe. The new system requires that the process is done within 30 months. The various stages will be a) scoping consultation Autumn 2026, b) publication of Gateway 1 in spring 2027, c) public scoping consultation on main issues and d) publishing of final community engagement strategy in 2029.

The possibility of the 3 boroughs which will form the new North Hants Unitary from 2028 joining up to make one new Local Plan is not being progressed because Hart and Rushmoor are too advanced with their own plans to want to pivot to a single plan. Meanwhile it is openly acknowledged that the borough will be exposed to speculative development with no 5 year housing supply, an out of date plan and changes to the NPPF making development more permissive.

3) NPPF Changes

From August changes apply to the NPPF. On the positive side, greater weight applies to protecting the scenic beauty of the National Landscape. Major development like solar farms should only pass in exceptional circumstances. But there is new support

for rural exception housing including infill within groups of house and linear settlements outside settlement boundaries.

From October, borough cllrs are unable to call-in applications, and in future most applications, large and small, will be determined by officers rather than the planning committee, other than in very exceptional situations.

7. 44/26 HPC Action Plan

Please see the updated action plan on our website: www.highclere-pc.gov.uk.

CFI: Works have been completed on Foxs Lane with a new gateway and village shop sign. There has been some feedback questioning the gateway displaying a “Welcome to Highclere” sign. Despite Hampshire Highways advising that the signage should all read the same in the parish, the parish council is pleased to note that Highways have agreed to change the sign to ‘Welcome to Penwood’ at its own cost.

SID: Before a SID can be purchased, permission needs to be given to site a temporary pole on Tubbs Lane.

Action: Clerk to contact Brian Caaney to see if it is possible to get a temporary pole on Tubbs Lane.

Glebe: Council discussed applying more formally to rent the land to encourage the diocese to reply.

Action: Cllr Morrey to draft a formal application to rent the Glebe.

Assets of Community Value: The Red House pub is now due to renew its status as an ACV. The council discussed also applying to register the Glebe.

Action: Clerk to check with The Red House that they are still happy to be listed as an ACV.

Action: Cllr Morrey to draft an application to register the Glebe as an ACV.

8. 45/26 Neighbourhood Plan

Colin Wall sent in the following report:

The NP has been nearing its release for Reg14 consultation. During discussions with Basingstoke about their grant funding, they introduced new guidance. They advised us to send them the Reg14 Plan before its release for consultation. The stated objective was that they could ensure we were not including anything which might prove problematic either vis-à-vis the emerging Local Plan or with regard to likely Inspectors’ views. This “review” was slated to take up to three weeks.

The Plan was sent to Basingstoke on August 12th and we received a response the same day. It seemed that Basingstoke’s comments from the Screening process in June 2025 had not been addressed. On examination it became clear that this work had been deferred with our agreement until after the Screening consultations were complete to avoid any duplication of work. However, the screening process of consultation with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency dragged on for around nine months and the resulting report signalled little if any change to the Plan. With the passing of time and the euphoria of passing Screening

largely unaffected, the Basingstoke comments were forgotten. This has now been rectified - PlanET made most of the revisions advised by Basingstoke and sent them to us for review and approval. This was sent out to the SG on 19th August with a return date of the 28th. All responses were consolidated and sent to PlanET.

*Concurrently and unpropitiously, on 17th Aug MHCLG published a new NPPF with fundamental structural and process differences but seemingly few, if any significant policy changes. PlanET consulted with Basingstoke who indicated that our Reg14 Plan would need to conform to the new NPPF **before** it was sent out for Reg14 consultation. It was agreed that PlanET would need to review the new NPPF for their own benefit and would then advise us what combined Screening and NPPF changes they recommend before we go to Reg14. We await their response.*

When those changes are agreed PlanET will make them and we will send the Plan to Basingstoke for pre-Reg14 review. It is expected that Reg14 will therefore not now begin until October. There may also be additional costs arising from the work to align the NP to the new NPPF. Until the impact is known it is difficult to estimate what these might be. However, as the new NPPF seems to be changed more in structure than actual content it is not anticipated that the additional costs will be severe. However, as the Plan cannot proceed without this work being done, and we would prefer not to lose even more momentum, it would be useful if the PC could confirm that work should proceed pro tem.

Full Council agreed to support the NP and any new costs related to the NPPF updates.

9. 46/26 Planning

Planning applications (*full details can be found on the BDBC planning portal*):
No outstanding planning applications.

10. 47/26 Policies and Procedures: Councillor Code of Conduct

The Clerk shared the Code of Conduct in advance and reminded councillors of their duty to read and abide by the Code. Full council agreed to abide by the Code of Conduct.

11. 48/26 Financial Matters

a. Accounts for payment

The Clerk presented accounts for payment (see end of Minutes).
Bank reconciliation as at 31 August 2026:
Unity Bank Current Account: £66752.53
Unity Bank Savings Account: £18280.12
Total: **£85032.65**

12. 49/26 Items to take forward to subsequent meetings

Policies and procedures: data audit. Fire hydrants. Emergency plan review incl fire risks.

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 13 October 2026

Actions from 08 September 2026 Meeting

Number	Action	Person
21/26	Clerk to purchase a replacement SID and possibly a trail camera (£50 from Amazon).	Clerk
44/26	Clerk to request temporary Tubbs Lane pole to Brian Cairney of HCC Cllr Morrey to draft a formal application to rent the Glebe. Clerk to check with The Red House that they are still happy to be listed as an ACV. Cllr Morrey to draft an application to register the Glebe as an ACV.	Clerk Cllr Morrey Clerk Cllr Morrey