

HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL
HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of the Annual meeting of the Parish Council held at St Mary's Church, Kinsbourne Green on Monday 1 June 2026 starting at 7.00pm

Present: Parish Councillors Sheffield (Chair), Crispin, Moore, Randall and Ring.
Also in attendance: Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk). Mr P Barrett.

33/2026 Appointment of Chair

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Sheffield be appointed Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing year. Her acceptance of office was received.

34/2026 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Ring be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing year. His acceptance of office was received.

35/2026 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared

36/2026 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2026 were approved.

37/2026 Matters arising

Minute 27/2025 – Street sign cleaning

The Chair thanked parish councillors for responding to the dates she had suggested for cleaning signs and said that she would confirm the preferred date(s) and the arrangements.

Minute 27/2025 – Parish Council newsletter

This was scheduled for late summer/early autumn once the future of the Parish Council had become known.

Minute 30/2026 – St Albans and District Association of Local Councils

Councillor Ring said that he had written to the Chair of the SADALC, Councillor David Yates setting out options for the future of the Association. Councillor Yates had replied to say that he felt that the Association would continue and would in his view become active again in the summer of 2026 once the outcome of the Community Governance Review became clear and the effects of Local Government Reorganisation were understood.

38/2026 Internal Audit Report 2025/26

The Internal Audit Report, as prepared by Alex Sage, was received and it was noted that there were no issues of concern that had been raised during the audit of the 2025/26 financial statements. Mr Sage had noted several matters. Firstly, that one invoice from Townsend Nursery was for four grass cuts over a three-month period. It was noted that all grass cuts paid for had taken place. Second, that the invoicing for dog waste collection costs was now up to date as a result of two annual payments being made in the 2025/26 financial year. Third, a small rounding error on the AGAR had been corrected. Finally, Mr Sage had drawn attention to a new question on the Annual Governance Statement regarding whether effective IT and Data Management was in place in accordance with proper practices. The Clerk said that this new question had been added to clarify data compliance previously covered under another question. However, the Parish Council's Data protection Policy had not been updated since 2021 and should be reviewed. It was therefore on the agenda for the current meeting.

The audit work was carried out pro bono, but as allowed for in the budget, a gift of wine had been made in lieu of payment. The Audit Report, together with other accounting information, would be published on the Parish Council's website in the coming weeks in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

39/2026 Summary Receipts and Payments Accounts 2025/26

The Clerk said that the summary receipts and payments accounts and balance sheet did not contain anything unexpected. Unbudgeted expenditure on a new bench and litter bin and donation to The Friends of Kinsbourne Green Common had been offset by a saving on projected legal costs and tree work. The balance carried forward on 31 March 2026 was £11,895.30 resulting in a small decrease in Reserves. As previously reported, Reserves were currently higher than necessary and this would be addressed during the budget discussions in January 2027, unless the Parish Council was abolished in the meantime.

It was RESOLVED that subject to correcting the accounting period dates on the Balance Sheet, the Accounts of Harpenden Rural Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved, and that the Chair be authorised to sign the Summary Receipts and Payments Accounts and Balance Sheet.

40/2026 Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

The Parish Council considered the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 contained in Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Each section of the statement was considered, and it was agreed that each point had been met, apart from point 9, which was not applicable.

It was RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 be approved and signed by the Chair and Parish Clerk.

41/2026 Accounting Statements 2025/26

The Parish Council considered Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) – Accounting Statements 2025/26. It was noted that the amounts set out in this document had been extracted from the Receipts and Payments Account as discussed under minute 39/26.

It was RESOLVED that the Accounting Statements 2025/26 be approved and that the Chair be authorised to sign section 2 of the 2025/26 AGAR

42/2026 Certificate of Exemption from External Audit

The Clerk said that it was not necessary for the Parish Council to undergo a limited assurance review by P K Littlejohn LLP, external auditors, as long as the Parish Council certified itself as exempt. There were a number of requirements for exemption, the main one being that both income and expenditure were less than £25,000. In addition, the Parish Council had to comply with the Transparency Code for Small Authorities by publishing certain financial information, including the Certificate of Exemption, on the Parish Council website by 1 July 2026. The Clerk confirmed that all the required accounting information would be published before that date.

It was RESOLVED that the Chair and Parish Clerk sign a certificate of exemption, AGAR 2025/26 Part 2, for submission to P K Littlejohn LLP, The External Auditors.

43/2026 Schedule of Payments and review of expenditure v budget

The Clerk said that there was little to report from the first two months of the financial year. The main point was that VAT reclaimed for 2024/25 had come to £508, which was about £200 more than expected at budget time. This was due primarily to the decision to purchase a new litter bin, plus two dog waste collection invoices being received in the same financial year.

The following payments were approved.

Payments to 1 June 2026		
(i)	Open Spaces Society subscription 2026/27	45.00
(ii)	Herts Assn of Parish and Town Councils subscription 2026/27	352.23
(iii)	Zurich Municipal Insurance premium 2026/27	300.00
(iv)	Clerk expenses from 1 April 2026 Giff Gaff phone rental April and May £12.00 Milage £20.00 Gift for Auditor - £78.00	110.00
(v)	Ionos hosting costs April and May 2026	12.00
(vi)	St Nicholas PCC Room hire 1 June 2026	30.00
(vii)	Townsend Nursery Grass cut late May. (Invoice awaited)	56.40

44/2026 Zurich Municipal Insurance Renewal

The Clerk said that it had agreed by email that the Council Insurance for 2026/27 be renewed owing to the fact that the renewal date was 1 June 2026 and the need to avoid any gap in cover.

It was RESOLVED that the decision to renew the Parish Council Insurance with Zurich Municipal for the year ending 31 May 2027 be confirmed. Note: If the Parish Council is abolished on 1 April 2027, then there is a possibility of part of the premium being refunded.

45/2026 Community Governance Review - Update

The Clerk said that there was no further news to report. The District Council's Strategy and Resources Committee would be meeting on 23 June 2026, and papers for that meeting would be available online about a week beforehand. Councillor Moore said he would make inquiries as

to whether the relevant Strategy and Resources Committee papers would be made available to Parish Councils at an early stage.

46/2026 Kinsbourne Green Common - Update

The Clerk reported that Kevin Moore had advised that no further communication had been received from the County Court regarding the Common boundary matter near Pollards Farm.

It was noted that there was a suggestion that parcels of Common land fronting properties on The Common/Annables Lane that had not been sold to property owners, might be put up for auction. Further clarification was required.

47/2026 Replacement of wooden posts on the triangle of Common land and solving the issue of slippery conditions near the Parish Council's dog bin.

Councillor Ring said that having inspected the posts on the triangle of Common land with Councillor Sheffield, they had concluded that around eight needed to be replaced. Councillor Ring said that new 150mm diameter posts could be sourced for £16 each and five bags of Postcrete would be needed to fix the posts. He was willing to undertake the work required.

Solving the problem of the slippery conditions near the Parish Council dog bin was more complicated and there were several options that could be explored.

It was RESOLVED that

- (i) £200 be allocated from the budget to cover the cost of the work to replace wooden posts on the Common and that Councillor Ring's offer to undertake the work be gratefully accepted
- (ii) Councillor Sheffield speak to the Friends of Kinsbourne Green Common about overcoming the problem near the dog waste bin

48/2026 Pass Wide and Slow

Councillor Sheffield said that further to the last meeting, she had made further inquiries about the 'Pass wide and slow scheme'. It appeared to be the case that if you were directing traffic to behave in a certain way then County Highways would need to approve the location of any signs and whether they could be attached to existing signage. As a way forward, Councillor Sheffield said that she could identify a couple of suitable locations and then liaise with County Highways as to their suitability. This was AGREED.

49/2026 Data Protection Policy Review

The Parish Council reviewed the Data Protection policy approved in October 2021 in the light of the new AGAR assertion (Minute 38/2026 refers)

The Clerk said that the Parish Council had used a generic email address for a number of years and was fully compliant in that respect. In terms of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Councillor Crispin said that he felt the new website was compliant, but would undertake a

further review. The Clerk said that the Parish Council held very little personal data, but that he would undertake a data audit prior to the next meeting.

50/2026 Planning Applications and decisions 10 March to 23 May 2026

The Parish Council considered recent planning applications and decisions. It was noted that three applications on the schedule had not yet been formally registered as further information was required.

In respect of application 5/2026/2056 – Removal of existing hedge and fence with a replacement hedge being planted, with picket fence and brick piers and low wall, it was AGREED that the District Council be asked to ensure that the proposal did not involve encroachment on to common land.

51/2026 Fly tipping

Councillor Sheffield reported on a chemical toilet spillage in Roundwood Lane outside Faulkners End farm. This had now been cleared.

52/2026 Parish Council benches

The Parish Council noted that there were two Parish Council owned benches, one on the common at the front of Councillor Randall's property and another further along the road. Both were in poor condition. Councillor Ring said that he would inspect both of these and circulate details of refurbishment costs.

53/2026 Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held on Monday 21 September 2026

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.40pm

Clerk to the Council

Chair