

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council, held at St Mary's C of E Primary School Hall, on Wednesday 22 July 2026 at 7.30 pm

Members Present:

Cllrs Anthony Wilson (Chairman), Kerry Stedman (Vice-Chair), Terry Marsh, Alan Fisher, Vanessa Ambler and Chris Webb.

In Attendance: Jackie Deane, Cllr Neil Reeve (UDC) and 15 members of the public.

EGM26/7/1 Chairman's Welcome

Cllr Wilson welcomed residents to the meeting.

EGM26/7/2 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence from members. Cllr Marsh notified the Chairman that he would be arriving late to the meeting. Cllr Driscoll (UDC) sent his apologies.

EGM26/7/ 3 Declarations of Interests

Cllr Vanessa Ambler declared a pecuniary interest regarding the Village Green item 8 due to her involvement in legal and financial matters relating to a Judicial Review.

Cllr Kerry Stedman declared a pecuniary interest regarding payments for consideration in item 11, for settlement of an invoice for hall hire at the primary school where she works.

EGM26/7/4 Public Questions

The following topics were raised:

Traffic - A Dunmow Rd resident raised concerns relating to speeding along the main routes through the village, including Dunmow Road and Hammond Road. She and her neighbours feel unsafe entering and exiting their driveways. The resident mentioned previously being part of the community speedwatch and, with the support of the former county councillor Susan Barker, speed checks were carried out. The data from previous assessments indicated that traffic calming measures would be appropriate and that there is limited visibility to cross the road. She requested that the Parish Council becomes proactive in setting up a road safety plan for the village and getting the Vehicle Activated Speed Sign repaired, as it is only working intermittently.

Cllr Fisher suggested that one of the newly co-opted councillors might wish to champion a new speeding initiative and Cllr Stedman mentioned that there is a highways working group which can take this forward. It was also stated that the impact of diversions from the M11 should be considered.

Housing development financial contributions - Cllr Fisher responded to a query on how community gains might be delivered from developer financial contributions. He feels that the Parish Council should be proactive in stating appropriate community gains and invited suggestions to be gathered by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING 22ND JULY 2026

Cllr Ambler stated that she can put forward proposals for the Scouts, and Cllr Stedman can liaise with the primary school over anything they might need.

A resident suggested that contributions should be requested for the church.

Cllr Fisher stated that evidence of community benefits would be brought back to a future parish council meeting for consideration.

Village Green and management by the HBOSCC - A resident asked who the main contact person should be for their concerns over Village Green maintenance and they were invited to email the Clerk.

Cllr Fisher stated that there is good communication and co-operation with the HBOSCC, the charity responsible for future maintenance.

There was a question on the timescale of a public consultation which has yet to be arranged by the HBOSCC and a representative from the organisation gave an assurance that this will be carried out later in the year.

Village flagpole - A resident raised a concern over the change of flags during the World Cup and the Chairman stated that the parish council flagpole had been used without consent.

Agenda items - Cllr Amber requested for the order of the agenda to be changed, to consider appointment of a Locum Clerk prior to consideration of the AGAR, so that she could sign the forms.

The Locum Clerk stated that she was not involved in preparation of the Council's statements, and that she understood that the Council had received advice that the forms should be signed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman in the Clerk's absence.

EGM26/7/5 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26

The Council appointed an independent internal audit firm and they were also engaged to prepare the AGAR. The internal audit was carried out and reports circulated to members, however, due to the late availability of the report, these were not available until the day of the meeting.

In the Clerk's absence, the internal auditor was also engaged to prepare all statements for the annual external audit. This included an explanation of variances in income and expenditure from the previous year, for submission to the external auditor.

a) Internal Audit Report

The report was noted.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Internal Auditor's recommendations (proposed by Cllr Stedman and seconded by Cllr Fisher, the decision was unanimous).

b) Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

Members felt unable to review and approve the statement, as the relevant documents were received on the day of the meeting.

The Locum Clerk read from the internal auditor's comments on each line of the statements for agreement, with their opinion on whether or not the governance criteria have been met.

It was agreed to **DEFER** this decision to a future meeting and it was believed that Section 1 should be signed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman in the Clerk's absence.

c) Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26

It was agreed to **DEFER** this decision to a future meeting and it was believed that Section 2 should be signed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman in the Clerk's absence.

d) Explanation of Variances

It was agreed to **DEFER** consideration of the explanation of variances to a future meeting.

The Chairman added a further point on the agenda, as it is required to publish a period of public rights to inspect the Council's accounts.

e) Publication of Public Rights

The internal auditor had prepared a notice with dates for the notice of public rights and publication.

It was **RESOLVED** to publish a notice of public rights with dates suggested by the internal auditor (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Ambler, the decision was unanimous).

EGM26/7/6 Appointment of Locum Clerk

Jackie Deane, Clerk to a neighbouring parish and previously having covered as Locum Clerk to Hatfield Broad Oak, was asked to submit a fee quote to support the Council in the Clerk's absence:

- 1) To monitor the Parish Clerk email account and action correspondence as required
- 2) To support parish council meetings when required and
- 3) To liaise with the Chairman and councillors and advise on process where appropriate.

Jackie Deane left the room for consideration of this item.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Jackie Deane as Locum Clerk at an hourly rate of £32 per hour inclusive of travel and expenses, to cover the Clerk's absence affective from 16th July 2026 (proposed by Cllr Ambler and seconded by Cllr Fisher, the decision was unanimous).

The Chairman brought forward the next item.

EGM26/7/7 Co-option of Councillors

It was **RESOLVED**, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the press and public be excluded from this item due to the confidential nature of the personal information relating to applicants (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Ambler).

At 9.08pm Cllr Terry Marsh joined the meeting.

Each applicant was invited to attend individually for interview in closed session, as stated in the co-option policy.

It was **RESOLVED** to co-opt new members (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Fisher):

- a) Sharon Andrews was co-opted to the Council
- b) Norman Bond was co-opted to the Council.
- c) Tessa Pemberton was co-opted to the Council.

The Locum Clerk handed co-option forms to the new members and these were completed. Registration of Interests forms were distributed, for completion and return either to the Locum Clerk or Uttlesford District Council within 28 days.

Members of the public were allowed to return to observe the meeting.

EGM 26/7/8 Village Green

Cllr Fisher's update on the Village Green was circulated to members ahead of the meeting. His report included details of the maintenance contract.

Cllr Stedman noted that Clause 14 of the Management and Maintenance Contract requires HBOSCC to make available to the Parish Council its Annual Charity Report, including as a minimum a report of its performance against its obligations under the Lease, and stated that this had not been provided to the Council.

Action: The Parish Council should request a copy of the November 2025 annual report, and its Annual Charity Report, to be retained on file.

Note: The Parish Council is keen to arrange a meeting with the HBOSCC to discuss their future plans.

Cllr Ambler raised concerns about advice sought on procurement regulations and a representative of HBOSCC, present at the meeting, agreed to respond on those matters.

Action: The Parish Council should provide a list of requested documents on email to HBOSCC.

The Chairman stated that parish council documents have been deleted from the Council's online files in April and May 2026 and that IT support is working to recover them.

The Locum Clerk requested support in providing evidence to Essex County Council for payments made for improvements to the path at the Village Green, now managed by HBOSCC,

Action: The Locum Clerk was asked to contact the HBOSCC for a copy of invoices for the sum of £9,600 relating to the grant received from Essex County Council CIF Fund.

Cllr Ambler and Cllr Pemberton stated that additional information should be provided, relating to the Village Green and Cllr Pemberton has had advice from the monitoring officer regarding a statement she wished to make regarding the Judicial Review.

The Locum Clerk advised that Cllr Ambler's detailed legal queries should be taken forward in more detail in private session. Members agreed to discuss queries over the Lease of the Village Green and any other legal and confidential matters in closed session, at the end of the meeting.

Cllr Fisher reported on works on the pond. Cllr Fisher reported on works to the pond, whereby the specification and schedule of works, which had been previously approved by the Council, were not in compliance with the works required to be undertaken by the Council under the Contract for Management and Maintenance of HBO Village Green. He proposed that a meeting be arranged with HBOSCC to agree on what works the PC had a liability to carry out and what additional works the HBOSCC would wish to add.

Action

It was agreed that Cllr Fisher would arrange a meeting with HBOSC, including inviting any other Councillors who may wish to attend, and provide a revised schedule of works, to be discussed and approved at a future meeting, and from which competitive tenders could be obtained.

EGM 26/7/9 Judicial Review

Members agreed to discuss this matter in closed session at the end of the meeting.

EGM26/7/10 Insurance Renewal

The Council's insurance with Hiscox was due for renewal on 4th August 2026 and an invoice was presented to the meeting. The Locum Clerk was informed that the renewal sum of £2, 226.88 included insurance of open space, play equipment and machinery for maintenance of the Village Green.

Action: The Locum Clerk was asked to arrange for those assets identified on the 2025 Asset Register as pertaining to the Village Green and subsequently transferred to HBOSCC to be removed from the Council's insurance cover, and for the premium to be

revised accordingly.

It was **RESOLVED** to renew the Council's insurance with Hiscox, up to the sum of Up to the sum of £2, 226.88 (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Stedman, the decision was unanimous).

EGM26/7/11 Council Administrative Matters

i) Report on Administrative Matters

The Locum Clerk circulated a report on email prior to the meeting detailing outstanding invoices and IT contracts which were due to expire. The Locum Clerk requested support in providing a response to a FOI for budgetary information on the increased precept claimed for the current financial year (deadline 14th August 2026).

li) Finance and Payments

The Locum Clerk circulated a list of outstanding payments on email ahead of the meeting. Contracts for renewal included the virtual landline, and mobile phone contract.

It was **RESOLVED** that efforts should be made to renew and change contact details for the contracts, however, if the virtual landline cannot be put into the parish council or Clerk's name, the direct debit should be cancelled (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Ambler).

It was noted that the Council has recently changed its finance package, however, the previous contract is yet to be cancelled. An early cancellation fee was quoted.

Action: The Council should contact Edge IT Systems and retain access to the data. The package should not be cancelled at this stage.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the payments below (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Fisher, the decision was unanimous excepting an absention from Cllr Stedman regarding hall hire):

	Description	Net Cost (£)	Total (£)
Hiscox Insurance Company Ltd	Council insurance annual renewal (subject to a reduction	£2,226.88	£2,226.88

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING 22ND JULY 2026

	for disposed assets, if appropriate)		
TBS Hygiene inv 8767	Bin collections	84.00	100.80
Cloud Next	Website host annual charge 27 Jun	tbc	tbc
B B Business Associates Ltd	Audit and AGAR support	200.00 395.00	200.00 395.00
St Mary's C of E Primary School	Hall Hire	75.00	75.00

Cllr Ambler informed the meeting that the Clerkco received Council correspondence at a P.O. box, however this is due for renewal.

Action:

The Council should enquire about future arrangements for the renewal of the PO Box.

PART 2

EGM/26/7/12

It was **RESOLVED**, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, (as extended by s.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Fisher).

A resident welcomed the new members of the parish council

Members of the public left the meeting.

Cllr Bond left the meeting.

1. Staffing and IT

Cllr Ambler gave a verbal update on matters relating to the Clerk's sick leave and IT enquiries. She requested that members decide how they would like the Clerk to respond to request for passwords and access codes in her absence.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Locum Clerk should contact the Clerk and request passwords to be communicated on email to the Locum Clerk using the Parish Clerk

email address, as an agreed method of correspondence.

Access is needed to the following:

Parish Council website, Neighbourhood Plan website, laptop and mobile phone, IT administrator details, website host, mobile phone contract provider and the virtual landline. Access information for the two accounting software packages, the Dropbox account and details for the PO Box should also be requested (proposed by Cllr Ambler and seconded by Cllr Stedman).

The Locum Clerk raised her concern that staff wages have not been paid and monthly reporting has not been done, due to the normal methods of payment being disrupted.

Action: It was agreed that the Locum Clerk should contact a dedicated payroll service provider and for fees for this service to be considered by the Chair and Vice-Chair, to resume payroll as soon as possible.

Cllr Fisher requested that priority be given to getting access to the neighbourhood plan website.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree of up to £500 to set up a new neighbourhood plan website, and for those funds to be reimbursed from funds due from Uttlesford District Council for the neighbourhood plan (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Pemberton, the decision was unanimous).

Cllr Stedman raised a separate matter relating to developer financial contributions and that she had received correspondence on her personal email address.

Action: Members were reminded that all parish council correspondence should be confined to the dedicated councillor email addresses.

2. Village Green and Judicial Review

Cllr Tessa Pemberton stated that she had sought advice from UDC democratic services prior to the meeting, and was advised to declare a non-registerable interest in Village Green matters. She requested a dispensation to speak but not vote and requested to make a statement regarding costs awarded to the Council on a Judicial Review.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept a dispensation for Cllr Pemberton to make a statement (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Fisher).

Cllr Pemberton made a statement regarding a sum of money which had been fundraised by residents, to contribute to the costs of the judicial review.

There was a general discussion regarding the annual payment due to HBOSCC for maintenance of the Village Green. Cllr Ambler questioned if there is evidence that the appointed solicitors were present during the signing of the lease of the Village Green

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING 22ND JULY 2026

to HBOSCC. She also raised her concerns regarding the fallback arrangements for the agreement.

Cllr Ambler explained her concerns relating to the contract and she requested that advice should be sought on the terms of the contract and the related bond.

Action: It was agreed that Cllr Wilson will enquire with the solicitor to respond to queries raised by Cllr Ambler. He asked Cllr Ambler to compile a list of requested documents relating to the Village Green transfer.

Cllrs Pemberton and Ambler left the meeting at 10.40pm.

The Chairman gave an update on working group meetings and subsequent correspondence, including an offer of payment to settlement of costs.

Cllr Andrews left the meeting at 11pm.

Cllr Wilson reported on behalf of the Judicial Review Committee, and a letter he sent on behalf of the Committee relating to a settlement offer.

The Locum Clerk was asked to relay additional correspondence received on email, which had not been circulated to members due to its confidential nature.

The Locum Clerk stated that she knew nothing of the background of the Judicial Review or any legal advice that the Council has received. She added that she could not verify the information she had received on email relating to a settlement offer and she could not advise members on any action they might take.

There was a general discussion over matters previously discussed by the working group, the statement made by Cllr Pemberton and advice they had previously received on potential costs of debt recovery and on how members should respond to a settlement offer.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the offer made for a full and final settlement of costs awarded to the Council, (proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr Marsh, the decision was carried by 4 votes for and 1 against, noting an objection from Cllr Stedman).

EGM26/7/12 Date of the next meeting

It was agreed that the next ordinary meeting of the Council will be held on Wednesday, 9th September 2026 at 7.30pm at St Mary's C of E Primary School Hall.

Close of Meeting - The meeting closed at 11.25pm.

Signed by the Chairman

Date