Hatfield Broad Oak
PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk – Amy Wharton
Email: parishclerk@hatfieldbroadoakpc.gov.uk
Tel: 01279 927150

Minutes

for the meeting of the Parish Council Meeting

St Mary's C of E Primary School, CM22 7HH
On **Wednesday 18th March 2026**

Those present:

Chair:	Cllr K Artus
Vice-Chair:	
Parish Councillors:	Cllrs V Ambler, A Wilson, A Fisher, T Marsh, K Stedman, C Webb
Officers:	Miss A Wharton
Other councillors:	Cllr G Driscoll (UDC)
Members of the public:	30

26/2/1 Chairman's Welcome

Cllr Artus as Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Cllr Marsh back to the Council.

26/2/2 Public Questions

Public participation included the following points:

- the standards hearing decision which is appended at the end of these minutes
- the increased costs of the Dunmow Road vehicle entrance which should only have 24% remaining from original costs.
- The 87% increase in the Parish Council tax bill due to the judicial review budget
- Why mediation was not a feasible option in the judicial review according to the Council's solicitor, and that the Clerk did request clarification on the mediation proposals that was not received from the claimant.

26/2/3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Strutt and Hunt,

26/2/4 Declaration of Interests

Cllr Stedman declared an Other Registerable Interest as Treasurer and Secretary of the church. treasury and secretary of the church

Cllr Ambler declared a Non-Registerable Interest in the Judicial Review.

26/2/5 Panel 1 of the Standards Hearing held on 3rd March 2026

i) The Council noted the following decision:

The Panel agrees with the conclusion reached by the Investigating Officer, that Councillor Artus breached the following articles of Code of Conduct agreement:

Paragraph 1.1 – I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect;

Paragraph 5.1 – I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute

Because Councillor Artus failed to apologise for the comments made, this was a second breach of Paragraph 1.1 of the Code of Conduct.

Cllr Artus then repeated the offence which led to the complaint that was the subject of the Panel 1 hearing.

ii) The Council agreed to investigate training for Cllr Artus as recommended – Clerk to find out costs.

Cllr Stedman proposed to move all standards-related items under the minutes.

Seconded Cllr Wilson

Motion passed (Cllr Artus abstained)

26/2/6 Minutes of Previous Meetings

Cllr Stedman highlighted a typo which the Clerk will correct.

Cllr Ambler expressed discomfort with the comments made by the Chair during his opening statement, where he apologied for the Clerk sending the wording rather than writing the words. She added that perhaps the Chair could make another apology at the next meeting.

To stay in the minutes but be addressed at the next meeting. The minutes were agreed.

Proposer: Cllr Stedman

Seconder: Cllr Webb

Motion passed (Cllrs not present at February meeting abstained)

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting on the 25th of February were agreed subject to the Clerk liaising with Cllr Ambler regarding the wording at 26/2/31.

Proposer: Cllr Wilson

Seconder: Cllr Webb

For: 5

Against: 1 (Cllr Stedman)

Abstention: 1

Motion passed.

26/2/7 Vote of No Confidence

The vote of no confidence in Cllr Artus passed unanimously with Cllr Artus abstaining.

26/2/8 Panel 2 of the Standards Hearing held on 3rd March 2026

i) It was resolved that Cllr Artus be removed with immediate effect from all committees, sub-committees and working groups and any representative positions to which he has been appointed by the Council.

Proposer: Cllr Wilson

Seconded: Cllr Artus

Passed unanimously with Cllr Artus abstaining

Cllr Stedman proposed an amendment to also fill inquorate committees.

Seconded by Cllr Ambler.

Passed unanimously.

The following motions were voted upon but were not on the agenda and were therefore invalid as advised by the Clerk during the meeting.

- To add Cllrs Fisher and Marsh to the judicial review committee
- To add Cllrs Ambler and Wilson to the IT committee
- To remove Cllrs Hunt and Strutt from the HR committee

26/2/9 Reports from District and County Councillors

Cllr Driscoll – on the 25th of March UDC are going forward with the local plan, will then be protected from speculative developers. CIL is now open for consultation, will make developers pay for things like new roads, new schools, things to do with infrastructure. Those with postal votes needs to check they are still in date, they now only last for 3 years, check website for info.

Cllr Reeve – the Government has announced that they will be providing help for those unduly impacted by heating oil prices.

26/2/10 Reports of Cllrs Actions and Meetings Attended

Cllr Fisher – there was a teams meeting last Tuesday that he attended with Cllr Ambler including Laura Atkinson, Emily Mulvaney, Kim Rickards and Peter Locke. To discuss how we're going to proceed with the local lettings plan and involvement with the CIC. Will do a report on it at the next meeting.

26/2/11 Average Speed Checks

Speed watch presentation deferred to allow highways committee to meet first.

26/2/12 Bush End Ward

Cllr Webb stated that there is a plan of action.

26/2/13 Village Ward

Cllr Ambler to talk to the scouts regarding the asbestos survey and feed back to the Clerk.

26/2/14 Recreation Ground

i) Cllr Ambler explained that she met with the Clerk at the recreation ground where there was visible damage to corners of the tables. Met again with Cllr Fisher, more concerned about the issues in the ditch. Cllr Fisher has sent a sample of the potential asbestos for testing. Would like to get some clarification of where we

stand with the ditch, more hazards in the dip than with the recreation ground itself. To discuss with the Clerk, to check with Cllr Beadle.

ii) Cllr Ambler volunteered to be the permanent representative for the recreation ground, this was agreed unanimously.

26/2/15 Grants

The grant applications for the flower festival of £1000 and the parish magazine of £600 were agreed.

Proposer: Cllr Artus

Seconder: Cllr Fisher

For: 5

Cllr Ambler voted for the parish magazine but against the flower festival.

Motion passed.

26/2/16 Parish Council information sheet

Councillors to send content for the parish magazine to the Clerk to collate and draft an article.

26/2/17 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

It was agreed to add Cllr Marsh, Mick Howarth, Ellie Chinnery and Susan Bard to the committee.

Proposer: Cllr Fisher

Seconder: Cllr Stedman

Motion passed (Cllr Artus abstaining)

26/2/18 Planning

No comments.

26/2/19 Finance / Payments

The payment schedule was approved.

Proposer: Cllr Artus

Seconder: Cllr Stedman

Passed unanimously

26/2/20 Training

Clerk to get more details from the Monitoring Officer.

26/2/21 Items for next agenda

Public participation arrangements

The invitation from the CIC to nominate a corporate director

Wording for parish magazine

Date of the Council's annual meeting

26/2/22 Date of the next meeting

The meeting pattern consideration was deferred to the annual meeting.

26/2/23 Confidential topics

It was resolved that under 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

Proposer: Cllr Artus

Seconder: Cllr Wilson

Passed unanimously

26/2/24 Village Green Vehicle Entrance Update

A discussion was had regarding the vehicle entrance.

26/2/25 Judicial Review Update

An update was provided on the judicial review.

- Meeting Close

Motions not included on this agenda:

Motion	Requested by	Justification
To CONSIDER the following agenda items relating to governance arrangements following the Standards Hearing held by the Uttlesford District Council Audit and Standards Committee on 3 March. The purpose of these motions is to consider the Council's governance arrangements and committee structures in light of that hearing. Debate should remain focused on governance and the effective operation of the Council.	Cllr Wilson	A motion cannot determine whether other motions should be considered, by the nature of being on the agenda they are to be considered. This is the type of statement to be included in the Chair's welcome rather than as a motion.
Standing Orders: To enable the Council to properly consider governance matters arising from the Uttlesford District Council Audit & Standards Committee dated 3 March, the Council resolves that the following Standing Orders be temporarily suspended for the duration of this meeting only: · Standing Order 1(a) – relating to the	Cllr Wilson	Standing order 1a – as you explained this was to ensure the standards hearing was at the beginning, the monitoring officer said the second panel has to be in confidential session so the purpose could not be achieved. I trimmed the agenda to ensure all business

order of business at meetings · Standing Order 5(g) – relating to the tenure of the Vice-Chairman · Standing Order 9 – relating to the handling of motions The Standing Orders shall resume full effect once this meeting has been concluded.		would be covered. Standing order 5G is statutory and cannot be suspended. Standing order 9 has statutory elements and cannot be suspended.
That Councillor Artus be removed from the office of Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council with immediate effect.	Cllr Wilson	This would be in contravention of the Local Government Act 1972 – agreed to amend to a vote of no confidence.
Appointment to Judicial Review Committee & Working Group To RESOLVE that Councillor _____ be appointed to the Judicial Review Committee and Working Group with immediate effect. Appointment to Planning Working Group To RESOLVE that Councillor _____ be appointed to the Planning Working Group with immediate effect.	Cllr Wilson	In the context of the agenda this pre-determines the motion about removing Cllr Artus from all committees etc. Can be on next agenda.
To RESOLVE that Councillor Artus be removed with immediate effect as an authorised signatory or approver on all Council bank accounts and financial authorisation systems, and that the Responsible Financial Officer update the financial mandates accordingly.	Cllr Wilson	This isn't logical and just causes administrative problems as hardly anyone goes into the banking to approve payments. The banking authorisation is an administrative check on me to ensure I'm uploading things correctly, there is no power there.
Dissolution of HR Committee To DISSOLVE the HR Committee with immediate effect in order that the Council may review and strengthen its governance arrangements relating to personnel matters. Establishment of Personnel Committee To RESOLVE to immediately establish a Personnel Committee to oversee staffing matters, consisting of 5 members and that the following councillors be appointed to those positions: Cllr Wilson, Cllr Ambler, Cllr Webb, Cllr Marsh & Cllr Stedman.	Cllr Wilson	This is changing a motion in the last 6 months, therefore requires a special motion. *(this was submitted after the deadline for a special motion)*

Appointment of Vice-Chairman That Councillor _____ be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.	Cllr Wilson	Cannot remove the Vice-Chair by law as explained above. This would have also pre-determined the outcome of that motion.
Governance Direction to Officers That this Council affirms: 1. That Council officers act only on properly minuted Council or Committee resolutions or formally delegated authority; 2. Confirms that no individual councillor may issue instructions to officers outside such authority; 3. Instructs the Proper Officer to ensure that this governance position is applied consistently. 4. In reference to the JR committee that all members are copied into all correspondence and that communications with solicitors are confirmed by majority of the committee or working group.	Cllr Wilson	I don't really understand this as a motion. 1) I have to have some discretion to function. Otherwise this is generally the legal position anyway. 2) The Chair is my line manager so that inherently comes with some direction. But the legal position is I work for the council as a whole not individual councillors. 3) Connected to the above 4) Confirming everything with the majority would just be impractical, and there will only be 2 members for now. I always ask for comments/thoughts before key correspondence is sent out. There will be no communication issues with the JR committee. *(submitted at 11:15pm on deadline day so no time for clarification)*
Amendment to Clerk's Delegated Powers (Judicial Review Committee) That, in respect of the Judicial Review Committee, the Clerk's delegated powers are reconsidered to ensure that: 1. All communications with the Council's legal advisers shall be copied to all Committee members; 2. No instructions shall be sent to legal advisers without the majority approval of the Committee or Working Group; 3. These provisions shall apply in conjunction with the existing delegated powers:	Cllr Wilson	Would need a special motion to edit delegated powers as the previous decision was taken in the last 6 months *(submitted past the deadline for special motions)*. Regardless changing them right in the run up to the hearing would just cause confusion. Other reasoning same as above. It's not necessary anyway, I only held back info because I needed to be sure of the conflicts situation *(per the Monitoring Officer's advice).*

Standards Panel

HEARING DECISION NOTICE

In relation to:

Code of Conduct Complaints relating to Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council

Reference:	
Date of Standards Panel Hearing	**3 March 2026**
Parties to the complaints	**Councillor Keith Artus**
Parish Councillor, Subject Member	
	Ms Tessa Pemberton
Complainant	
Membership of the Standards Committee Hearing	**Councillor Fiddy (Chairman)**
	Councillor Luck
	Councillor Silcock
Legal Adviser to Standards Committee	
Deputy Monitoring Officer	**Richard Auty**
	(It should be noted that neither the Monitoring Officer nor the Deputy Monitoring Officer have investigated the complaint)
Independent Investigator/ Presenting Party	**Claire Ward, Anthony Collins Solicitors**
Independent Person	**Catherine Wellingbrooke-Doswell**

Background

Introduction

Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council has adopted a code that requires compliance by its members whenever they conduct council business or give the impression they are acting as representatives of Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council.

Complaint

The complaint relates to allegations of misconduct of the Subject Member in

their capacity as a Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Councillor. The complaint against the subject member, Councillor Artus was first submitted by the complainant on 15 May 2025.

The complainant alleged that the subject member, Councillor Artus had breached the Parish Council's code of conduct by saying that he hoped an individual who raised concerns with the Highway Authority about the Parish Council's intended arrangements pertaining to parking and vehicular access for a community event *"rots in hell."*

Following the initial complaint, it was determined the complaint be resolved by way of informal resolution. Councillor Artus was required to make a public apology at the Parish Council meeting on 9 July 2025. Councillor Artus was informed that non-compliance with the informal resolution would result in the complaint being reconsidered with a view to it being investigated.

The Monitoring Officer in consultation with the

Independent Persons found Councillor Artus had failed to apologise at the meeting on 9 July 2025 and therefore had failed to comply with the informal resolution. In accordance with the Council's complaints procedure, an Independent Investigating Officer was engaged to investigate the complaint and consider any further potential breaches of the Code by the Subject Member, Councillor Artus.

The Independent Investigating Officer found evidence of breaches of the code of conduct pertaining to the complaint. The independent investigation determined that Councillor Artus had breached paragraphs 1.1 and 5.1 of the Parish Council's code of conduct (which the Parish Council adopted on 25 April 2023). These paragraphs state that that councillors will treat other councillors and members of the public with respect (1.1) and that councillors will not bring their role or the local authority into disrepute (5.1).

The report was forwarded to both the Complainant and to Councillor Artus, both were afforded equal opportunity to comment on the factual findings by way of rebuttal and afforded parity of opportunity and time to make appropriate submissions.

Following receipt of the investigation report and the Investigating

Officer's findings, the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the

Independent Person has

recommended that the complaints outlined were

considered by the Standards Hearing Panel for determination

The Hearing

Preliminary Issue for the Panel:

The Complainant and Subject Member made submissions to the Panel as to whether the hearing should be conducted in public or in private session.

The Procedure for Member Code of Conduct Complaints at paragraph 8.3

provides that agendas for hearings

panels shall be held in public unless:

• This would involve disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule

12A, Local Government Act 1972; and

• In all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the

exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(a) A hearing must be held in private where this is necessary to prevent

confidential information being revealed. Confidential information means

information that has been provided by a Government department under the

condition that it must not be revealed, as well as information

that cannot be

revealed under any legislation or by a court order.

(b) The law also gives the Hearing Panel the power to hold a private meeting

to prevent 'exempt information' being revealed to the public. The categories of

exempt information are those set out in Schedule 12A to the Local Government

Act 1972. However, regulations also provide for three additional categories of

'exempt information' in relation to the Hearing Panel:

(i) Information which is subject to any obligation of confidentiality.

(ii) Information which relates in any way to matters concerning national security.

(iii) The deliberations of an Audit & Governance Committee or of a Sub-

Committee of an Audit & Governance Committee established under the

provisions of Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000 in reaching any finding

on a matter referred under the provisions of Section 60(2) or (3), 64(2), 70(4)

or (5) or 71(2) of that Act.

The rules relating to confidential information are different from the rules

relating to 'exempt information'. Hearing Panels must hold some parts of a meeting in private where confidential information is likely to be revealed.

However, they have the discretion to decide whether or not to exclude the

public if 'exempt information' may be revealed.

The Panel decided the Hearing should be held in PUBLIC.

Reasons for the decision:

The Complainant submitted that the hearing should be in public as the complaint consisted of comments made at a recorded public meeting.

Neither the Complainant nor the Subject Member had objection to the hearing being held in public.

Disclosure would serve the public interest in promoting public understanding of the standards process. Such transparency may also increase public confidence in the standards regime.

The Hearing

The Panel had regard to

Article 6 of the European Convention on

Human Rights and to Section 6(1) of the

Human Rights Act 1998, which places a

duty to act fairly and in line with the rules of natural justice:

The Complainant and the subject member were afforded equality of opportunity in time to make submissions to the Panel and ask questions of the parties involved in the process.