



Minutes of the Highclere Parish Council Meeting

Westridge Studio

Tuesday 11 November at 7.30pm

Members Present: Cllr York (chair), Cllr Bartholomew, Cllr Morrey, Cllr Malone, Cllr Falconer

Clerk: Amy White

In attendance: One parishioner; Colin Wall (NP lead).

1. 62/25 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Easton and McIver sent their apologies.

2. 63/25 Declarations of Interest

None.

3. 64/25 To agree Minutes of Meeting held on 14 October 2025

The Minutes of 14 October 2025 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, Cllr York.

4. 65/25 Matters arising from Meeting held on 14 October 2025

Number	Action	Person
56/25	Clerk to set up Cllr Malone on email, send register of interests to BDBC etc- Actioned.	Clerk
58/25	Clerk and Cllr Izett to create Oakley Farm flyer for distribution- Actioned.	Clerk, Cllr Izett
60/25	Clerk to organise grant payment to Forever Loved Horse Therapy- Actioned.	Clerk

5. 66/25 Public participation

One parishioner observed the meeting.

6. 67/25 Neighbourhood Plan

Colin Wall attended and provided the following report:

Year-to-date Recap and Status report November 2025

There are three aspects which contribute to the current state of play with regard to the Highclere Neighbourhood Planning:

- 1. The availability of finance to support further NP development*
- 2. The state of development of the NP itself, and*
- 3. The progress of the Borough Local Plan (LP) towards the adoption of a revised version.*

Finance

At the end of the last fiscal year an assessment was made as to how much would be required to allow the development of the NP to be completed. It was determined that the total required would be matched without significant difficulty through government grants, slightly increased Parish funding and probable support from the Highclere Society. At that time the final SEA (strategic environmental assessment) report was awaited before further NP work could sensibly continue.

Unspent grant funding was paid back as per the protocol, and preparation was underway to reapply for appropriate 2025-26 funding to take us nearly to completion. In late-March it was announced that no new funding would be available. In June, the SEA was finished with no serious negative implications for the NP and no changes required.

A meeting with BDBC in early July brought bad news. Our Housing Requirement (HR) would likely change from 10 dwellings over the plan period to 20. Further, the almost 200 houses in Highclere Parish recently allowed at Watermill Bridge would give us no benefit regarding our own HR.

This has a serious financial impact as it appears that a new SEA (the last one took nine months) will be necessary. The consultants who did the last one, AECOM, have been approached to give us a ballpark figure for this but no response has yet been forthcoming.

The Borough has conducted a survey of local NP groups about funding in light of the government's withdrawal, and a report has been delivered. Its recommendations and the likelihood of funding coming forward are unknown at this point, though breath should not be held.

NP Development

By the end of last fiscal year our consultants, Plan-ET, had completed all outstanding updates and awaited the SEA to continue. The next step was to move to a Regulation 14 local consultation as a pre-cursor to responding to that by making requisite amendments to the NP and submitting it to BDBC. Currently that step has not been able to be taken and we await the actual content of BDBC's LPU consultation before we can know what is or is not possible for our own NP.

BDBC Progress

This is the most significant issue, impacting both of the other aspects. A statement was released by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council (BDBC) on December 19th 2024 that the imminent Reg 18 consultation on the Local Plan Update (LPU) had been cancelled because of the newly-released NPPF and its impact on the Housing Requirement. Further, BDBC had been informed by MHCLG that the LPU would not pass examination unless it was based on the latest HR calculations. This required BDBC to go back a number of steps and their newly revised LPU is due to go out for Reg.18 consultation later this month (Nov '25).

BDBC's LPU position on allocated sites and spatial strategy raises two major issues for the NP:

The previous Spatial Strategy was based in large part on erroneous geographic identifications and on sustainability data from 2021. If this has not been corrected/updated how can the SS be valid?

On what basis can BDBC claim that their spatial strategy is not in specific conflict with the new NPPF vis-à-vis NP HR. The NPPF directs LPAs to provide NP teams with an HR for their Designated Area. BDBC's settlement-based approach does not allow or accommodate this. BDBC's position would seem to be open to robust challenge, not least since the Watermill Bridge permission and Oakley Farm allocation would provide some 700 dwellings.

Summary

Depending on the response received from AECOM, sufficient funding may prove to be available to complete the NP. There are no significant process barriers to that completion.

While nothing can be done to hasten BDBC's LPU process, both the PC and the NP team should be ready to robustly challenge the LPU in the upcoming consultation.

Cllr York asked the council to consider whether and how to progress the NP. Colin Wall stated that the Highclere NP could continue progressing the second SEA alongside the BDBC Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation, meaning it doesn't have to wait for the Local Plan to be adopted.

The council agreed to continue to fund the Neighbourhood Plan.

Action: Colin Wall to research a different SEA provider to compare to the quote already requested from AECOM.

7. 68/25 Reports from County and Borough Councillors

Cllr Izett was attending the BDBC cabinet meeting and will report back to HPC as soon as possible.

8. 69/25 Loss of 7, 7A Bus Services: Current Action

Cllr Hurst of EWPC shared a report on the latest bus information; this is at the end of the Minutes and fully supported by HPC. The Clerk is attending a meeting with Reading Buses at Greenham on 04 December.

9. 70/25 Planning

No applications received since previous meeting.

Oakley Farm: Cllr Izett was speaking on behalf of Highclere and East Woodhay parishes at the BDBC cabinet meeting at the same time as the HPC full council meeting.

Action: Clerk to add Cllr Izett's Oakley speech at BDBC cabinet meeting on Facebook.

10. 71/25 HPC Action Plan

Speed Indicator Devices: HPC's only SID was stolen off the A343 in September. This is now in process with the insurance company, but whether any money will be recouped is as yet unknown.

Cllr Easton has researched current new options and costing.

Council agreed in principle to fund two SIDs.

National Landscape: A productive discussion was held on how we can emphasise the importance of the NWDNL. HPC will include their logo on Minutes and other communications, as well as on Facebook, the website, etc.

The Glebe: There is still no decision from the diocese, despite chasing.

Action: Cllr Bartholomew will look into footpaths and route maps to advertise NWDNL.

11. 72/25 Financial Matters

a. Accounts for payment

The Clerk presented accounts for payment (see end of Minutes).

Bank reconciliation as at 31 October 2025:

Unity Bank Current Account: £22105.90

Unity Bank Savings Account: £46033.92

Total: £: **68139.82**

Budget first draft

Precept spend: Currently on track for spend 1/3 lower than budget, due to over-budgeting for: Clerk salary, planning consultant costs, Glebe land rental, Misc maintenance and tree work.

Precept 26/27: Current advice from Clerk is for minimal % increase in precept spend.

CIL: HPC has approx. £17k of CIL. Cllr York asked the whole council to consider project ideas for how to spend it.

12. 73/25 Items to take forward to subsequent meeting

Projects for next F/Y and 3-5 years (as per Action Plan). Policies and procedures for updating.

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 09 December 2025

Actions from 11 November 2025 Meeting

Number	Action	Person
67/25	Colin Wall to research a different SEA provider to compare to the quote already requested from AECOM.	Colin Wall
70/25	Clerk to add Cllr Izett's Oakley speech at BDBC cabinet meeting on Facebook.	Clerk
71/25	Cllr Bartholomew will look into footpaths and route maps to advertise NWDNL.	Cllr Bartholomew