



**Minutes of a Highnam Parish Council (PC) Meeting
held on Tuesday 17th March 2026**

Chair Cllr Charlie Coats
Cllr Hannah Layzell
Cllr Bill Nicol
Cllr Mark McGillion
Cllr Bill Badham

Cllr Nick Cook
Cllr Sarah Hands
Cllr Russ Bailey
Cllr P McClain
Cllr Dave Rhodes

In Attendance: Wendy Barnard - Parish Clerk (PC)/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)
35 Members of Public

Public Questions:

- **Thanks were offered for the recent hedge cutting.**
 - **Concerns were raised again regarding the poor condition of a section of road between the village & the golf club;** the Council is pressing for a meeting with the highway surveyor to address this and other issues.
 - **A request was made to chase the £500 allocated last year for a bench in Mary Field.** This will be looked in to
 - **A resident asked about replacing dead trees at the front of the new houses on Lassington Reach.** The Council clarified this is a Lassington Reach management committee issue and Cllr Rhodes explained the trees have already been replaced twice unsuccessfully so will not be replaced again.
- 1. To receive apologies for absence.**
Councillor Jill Smith
 - 2. Members of the council are invited to declare any interest they may have in the business set out below.**
None
 - 3. To allow dispensations.**
N/A
 - 4. To approve minutes of meeting held 20th February 2026**

It was agreed the minutes were a true account of the meeting held. Proposed by Cllr Layzell, Seconded by Cllr Rhodes. All in favour

5. To receive Reports

i. County Councillor's report

Grassroot funding is still available, and we will be talking about the Local Government Reorganisation later.



ii. **Borough Councillor Paul McLain**

The recent distribution of Council Tax bills, while the local rate remains the ninth lowest in the country, the proportion of the total bill allocated to core local services has become "terrifyingly" small.

The discussions regarding the Strategic Local Plan and the ongoing Local Government Review. Strong personal views on these structural reforms, I will not elaborate further at this time to ensure my position does not unduly influence the current Council debate.

Borough Councillor Jill Smith

The Budget for 2026/27 mentioned in last month's report has been agreed at Full Council. Also agreed was the Council Tax increase by 5%, and the maintenance of the allowances for single occupancy, etc., as before. TBC is still one of the lowest in the Country.

The Counter Fraud Team that works across 6 councils in the area, including TBC, has received national recognition for its outstanding leadership and innovative approach within Local Government.

Responses are encouraged from individuals and Parish/Town Councils to comment on the proposed Local Government Structures, Pros, Cons, and preferences. All the information is on local Council Websites.

iii. **Chairman's Report – Cllr Charlie Coats**

The length of the agenda and the importance of many of the items for consideration at this month's meeting very eloquently demonstrates that we are, as a Council, currently dealing with an unprecedented number of complex high-profile challenges. This requires us to maintain a clear focus on these big-ticket items whilst at the same time not losing sight of the many other issues which are important to our residents. It is crucial, especially at this time, that we clearly and regularly communicate with the community and take every opportunity to gauge local opinion on these key issues. We need to do more to encourage attendance at our monthly meetings. By way of example, Local Government Reorganisation and the prospect of a new settlement in the village are two very significant issues which are likely to dominate our agendas for the foreseeable future

On a positive note, and at long last, our meeting with senior regional officers from the Environment Agency regarding the illegal tip to the rear of Over Farm takes place this Thursday 19 March. We will take this opportunity to very firmly register our dissatisfaction at the length of time it is taking them to take decisive action.

The Clerk continues to press for a meeting with all parish councillors to provide training and a briefing on the implications of the new Assertion 10 provisions. Can Cllrs please bring their diaries to the meeting so this can be arranged without further delay.

I am delighted to be able to announce that Wendy Barnard has been appointed as the new



Halls Manager by the Highnam Community Centre Trust. She will take up her duties on 6 April. There is precedent to this as her predecessor also combined the roles of Clerk and Manager, and there are many advantages to such an arrangement.

This week is National Village Halls Week. To celebrate these all three halls will be open for residents to look round between 4-6 pm on Friday 20 March. Draft Option appraisals prepared by Quattro Architects as part of the strategic review of the Centre will also be on public display in the Gambier Parry Hall.

6. To Consider Planning Applications received.

26/00107/FUL	12 Limekiln Grove Highnam	Erection of a single storey extension on rear elevation	No Objection
25/00566/FUL	Part Parcel 8900 Lassington Lane Highnam Gloucester Gloucestershire	Proposed installation of a ground mounted Solar PV farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) plus ancillary infrastructure and equipment, landscaping and access.	
Amendments to the proposed developments			
The Council will submit further objections. Key concerns include the loss of high-quality agricultural land (over 80% is Grade 2 or 3A), visual blight, insufficient skylark mitigation, and unsuitable site access for heavy construction traffic			

7. Finances & Governance

a. To approve invoices for payment as per the Payment Schedule, circulated prior to the meeting,

Item	Expenditure	Power to Spend	Comment
Salaries	£ 976.12	LGA 1972 s. 112(2)	Salaries
Currys	£ 7.20	LGA 1972 s. 111	Laptop Insurance
GiffGaff	£ 6.00	LG(FP)A1963s 5	Mobile Phone
HMRC	£ 83.87	LGA 1972 s. 112(2)	Tax/National Insurance
HCCT	£ 75.70	LGA 1972 s. 134(4)	Room Hire
Unity Bank	£ 6.00	LGA 1972 s. 111	Bank Charges
PATA Payroll Services	£ 40.35	LGA 1972 s. 143	Payroll Services

The payments were approved-Proposed by Cllr Layzell, Seconded by Cllr Rhodes. All in favour

b. Memorial Tree Policy

To consider the draft Memorial Tree Policy (as attached) and, if thought fit, to resolve to adopt this as a new formal policy for the Parish Council to



govern the application.

A new policy for memorial trees was approved after minor clarifications. Proposed by Cllr Layzell, Seconded by Cllr Rhodes. All in favour

c. Allotment Association Lease Extension

To consider and discuss a formal request from the Allotment Association to extend their current lease by a further ten years, and to resolve whether to grant the extension in principle and instruct the Clerk to begin the necessary proceedings

A request to renew the Allotment Association lease was approved for a further 10-year period at a pepper-corn rent (£1) Proposed by Cllr Layzell, Seconded by Cllr Rhodes. All in favour

8. Response to the Statutory Consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – Revisit from previous meeting

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has launched a [statutory consultation](#) (closing 26 March 2026) on proposals to replace Gloucestershire's existing two-tier system with one or more unitary authorities. To determine the Council's formal position on the three competing [proposals for Gloucestershire](#):

- i. **Single Unitary: One council for the entire county (backed by [Tewkesbury Borough Council](#)).**
- ii. **East/West Split: Two councils (East: [Cheltenham](#), [Cotswold](#), [Tewkesbury](#); West: [Forest of Dean](#), Gloucester, [Stroud](#)).**
- iii. **Greater Gloucester: One council for an expanded [Gloucester](#) city area and another for the rest of the county.**

The Council discussed three options for replacing the existing seven councils with unitary authorities.

- Decision: The Council supports Option 1 (a single unitary council for the whole county).
- Submission: The response will emphasise that any further devolution of powers to parish councils must be accompanied by commensurate funding and professional support

9. Strategic Planning Update – Local Plan & Strategic and Local Plan (SLP) Progress and the recent cross parish meeting regarding the Churcham development. To receive an update from Cllr Coats from recent meetings held.

- Forest of Dean Local Plan: The Council reiterated its strong opposition to the proposed 2,000-house settlement at Churcham.
- Strategic Local Plan: Concerns were raised that combined proposals could lead to a massive settlement of over 4,000 houses, doubling the size of the village and creating severe infrastructure and traffic issues.
- The Parish Councils response will be submitted by the closing date 18th March and can be viewed on the website.



10. Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) Project Funding

To receive a report and update from Cllr McGillion regarding the installation of Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) and to resolve to approve the following funding:

- i. **A total contribution of £2,500 to be allocated from the Parish Projects Reserved Funds.**
- ii. **The remaining project balance to be funded from the Section 106 (s106) funds.**

Funding of £5,000 was approved to install speed-recording signs. Costs will be split between the parish project budget and Section 106 funds. Thanks to Cllr McGillion for his work on this matter was noted. Proposed by Cllr Layzell, Seconded by Cllr Rhodes. All in favour

11. Close Circuit Television (CCTV)

To consider the attached briefing papers and projected costs regarding the potential installation of CCTV within the Parish, and to resolve whether the Parish Council wishes to proceed with further formal investigations, feasibility studies.

The Council approved the principle of researching the feasibility and policy requirements for a CCTV facility at village entrances. Proposed by Cllr Layzell, Seconded by Cllr Rhodes. All in favour

12. Oakridge Bus Shelter Installation

To receive a report from the Clerk regarding the installation of the bus shelter on Oakridge and to resolve to approve the total project cost of £3,200 as follows:

- i. **To note the £1,600 (50%) contribution via the Gloucestershire Community Match Funding scheme.**
- ii. **To approve the remaining £1,600 (50%) to be funded from the Section 106 (s106) funds.**

The shelter is being built at the moment and funds have been approved

13. Village Grass Maintenance

To consider the tenders received for the Village Grass Maintenance contract (as attached) and to resolve to appoint a contractor for the upcoming season or otherwise agree the next steps for the procurement process.

The Council accepted the lowest tender for highway verge maintenance in principle, subject to funding clarification from the County Council. Proposed by Cllr Coats, Seconded by Cllr Rhodes. All In Favour

14. Annual Parish Meeting 2026

To discuss and agree the date and format for the Annual Parish Meeting, specifically considering the suitability of a Saturday morning session to encourage wider community engagement, and to resolve to set a fixed date and venue

Scheduled for Saturday, May 23rd, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

15. Clerk's Correspondence



Complaints regarding dog fouling and dogs off leads - a reminder of dog owners and walkers' responsibilities will be placed in the Village Link & on Facebook sites

**Date of next meeting 21st April 2026
Gambier Parry Hall @7.30pm**

Date	Signature	Print Name
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