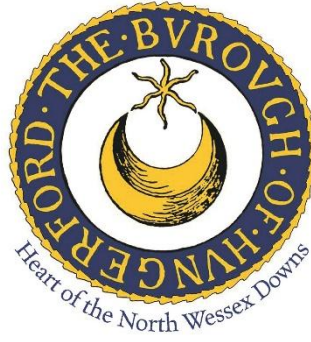


HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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Draft MINUTES of the **Full Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 7th April 2026 at 7.00pm in the Library, Hungerford.

Present: Cllrs, Simpson, Winser, Mulholland, Day, Keates, Brunning, Fyfe, Carlson, Hall, Terry, Hudson, Reeves and Cole

Also present: Members of the press, District Cllr Gaines (DG), Sue Pearson and 3 members of public.

In attendance: Town Clerk (TC)

The minutes of the meeting are recorded in order they were discussed at committee meeting.

Note: BIB (Britain in Bloom), HIB (Hungerford in Bloom), HAHA (Hungerford Allotment Holders Association) West Berks Council (WBC)

The mayor announced this will be both hers and Cllr Claire Winser's last full council meeting before they step down.

Sue Pearson was welcomed to the meeting. The mayor wishes to award her for all her hard work. Sue has been volunteering in Hungerford for 35 years and has been involved with All Aboard at Redwood House helping the elderly with meals and on trips out. She has been part of the darts league for 16 years and the Mothers Union at the church. The mayor thanked Sue and presented her with a Mayor's Coin and certificate.

FC20260051 Note apologies for absence – Cllr Alford

Also noted from the District Cllrs Vickers and Benneyworth (DB).

FC20260052 Declarations of interest – Cllr Day (BIB and HAHA), Cllr Winser (HIB), Cllrs Bruning, Keates, and Fyfe (BIB)

FC20260053 Approval of Minutes of the Full Council meeting of 2nd March 2026, and outcome of actions.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Keates

Resolution: Minutes of the meeting of 2nd March 2026 were agreed. 3 abstentions. Rest in favour

Outcome of actions:

DG has sent a chaser to Sovereign today about the outstanding repairs to the garages, complaining some are dangerous.

Fly tipping at the station car park has been reported. Furniture and piles of household rubbish are being dumped next to the recycling containers.

ACTION: The office is waiting for an urgent meeting with Kofi (WBC) about the fly tipping. We need to know the schedule of collections.

It was suggested CCTV is the answer. We have already offered WBC a joint approach however it is not for HTC to determine a solution. It is thought there are some unlicensed traders collecting rubbish in town.

ACTION: The final proof for glossy copies of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan has been approved. These should be received soon.

The pothole outside the John O Gaunt pub has finally been repaired. The communication prior to finding what was causing the problem wasn't great but the repair is now very robust. A defunct gas main, not appearing on plans, had to be removed and this involved a crane. Previously it was repaired 12 times in 18 months because the rubber surround on the pipe was too close to the surface. Wales and West had two days to fix it and they needed a week. Stirlands who were particularly affected by the works were very understanding.

WBC didn't have the budget to deliver any soil conditioner to Hungerford. It has proved to be a very popular scheme, causing some traffic jams.

All other actions are complete or on the agenda.

FC20260054 **Presentation to Cllr Claire Winser** – The Mayor thanked Cllr Winser for all her hard work. Cllr Winser said she had thoroughly enjoyed her time on the council and thinks the current council is the best we have ever had. She said it has been hard work and although it involved much of her time she has enjoyed every minute. The mayor presented Cllr Winser with a bouquet of flowers and gifts from all the councillors and staff.

FC20260055 **Receive Mayor's Report** – See attached report.

FC20260056 **Receive District Councillor's Reports** – DG invited Town Council to let WBC know if they are interested in having 20mph speed limits. She advised the District Parish Conference will take place on 29th April. The next round of Member's Bids goes live on 13th April. Matched funding is not essential. The panel will meet mid-June to consider the bids.

ACTION: Government changes on planning are undergoing consultation. DG will bring details of this to a future E&P meeting.

This concerns delegated powers at local authority level, giving more authority to the planning officer, and less to the district councillors for call ins. There will be two tiers. Household applications and some commercial will be decided through officer delegation. The mayor expressed her concern that this is taking democracy away from local councils and thinks it is a backward step.

DG will find out when the call for sites finishes.

FC20260057 **Health & Safety – Receive any complaints or concerns**

The following points were raised:

There is lots of dog fouling in the play parks. The Thursday before bank holiday, both gates were open to Bulpit Play Park and the latch was broken. It was queried if we need more no dogs' signs on the front gate.

ACTION: Office to raise concern on social media and speak to the contractor.

FC20260058 **Propose authorisation of payment run** (circulated along with copies of invoices) for March

Proposed: Cllr Winser

Seconded: Cllr Simpson

Resolution: Payment run authorised for March of £30,682.28

FC20260059 **Propose accounts to date** – Refer to circulated Income/Expenditure Report

Cllr Mulholland met with Cllr Winser and the RFO last week in preparation of taking over the monthly reporting when Cllr Winser leaves.

Proposed: Cllr Winser

Seconded: Cllr Reeves

Resolution: Agree accounts to date with net income over expenditure of £147,266 with a positive variance. It was noted the leisure centre payment has not yet been made.

Cllr Winser thanked Cllr Carlson for his support as deputy chair and wished Cllr Mulholland good luck in his future role.

FC20260060 Feedback on Annual Town Meeting on Wed 18th March 2026 –

The mayor has received a lot of good feedback. WBC recognised the meeting as a good model and will be suggesting other councils use the same format. The public had the opportunity to speak to both WBC and Sovereign. The Repair Café and Hungerford Hares would like to attend next year. It was suggested some organisations would be happy to attend without a table display and just put up a banner or poster. This would be helpful where space is an issue. DG apologised for not being able to attend. She and Jon Winstanley had to attend another meeting.

FC20260061 Receive updates on the Britain in Bloom and Hungerford in Bloom preparations – Cllr Day reported the mini polytunnels at Marsh Lane have been built and survived storm Dave. Thanks to everyone who helped at the potting up session. Dozens of seeds have been planted. The judging will take place July/Aug. Date to be confirmed. Planting will be carried out in June and July will involve tidying, admin and practising the presentation. The Mayor has rewritten lyrics to a song which we hope the children will sing. The Town Clerk is completing the Good Exchange application. BIB/HIB will be having a stall at the Sunday market to promote the events. HIB, BIB and HTC will be sharing the decoration of a tree in the high street for Tutti Day. Cllrs Hall, Brunning and Keates are involved along with the office. It needs to be completed by the end of Sunday.

FC20260062 Receive any reports (no more than 3 minutes per report and not to include any proposals).

The awarding of Freedom of the Town for REME will take place on Sat 25th April. The parade will leave the Football Club and arrive in the town centre at 11.45am. There will be approx.300 soldiers with the salute being taken by the Full Colonel. There will be a presentation by the Mayor and a backdrop of re-enactment vehicles.

ACTION: It was commented that money is being spent on Newbury Football Club but not other clubs. DG will take this back to WBC. She advised they require a certain number of pitch playing surfaces in an area to benefit mental health.

Constables Parade will take place on Sunday 19th April at 10am.

ACTION: It was agreed to defer the next E&P meeting to 20th April, due to concerns over quorum, providing it is still possible to reply with our planning responses within the WBC deadlines.

Chestnut Walk

DG advised letters have been delivered to residents living near Chestnut Walk advising of the new plans. These have been circulated to Councillors for information. The link to the new information needs to go out in Penny Post.

DG said there is funding to install either solar panels or a heat pump at Chestnut Walk, but they can't do both. DG stressed that the occupiers of Chestnut Walk will not be asylum seekers. They will be homeless people that have been evicted and are currently in emergency accommodation such as hotels or hostels. Children are only permitted to be in that type of accommodation for 6 weeks. Also it is very expensive.

The rooms in Chestnut Walk are classed as temporary accommodation and will be for as short a time as possible. The rooms can be turned into units however it is likely to be single people or couples staying there as they struggle to get housing. Sovereign has so few flats. The occupants then get an option to bid on accommodation from Sovereign. There is concern of the impact on the neighbourhood. Long term they may look to build houses there. Sovereign don't have to tell WBC if they are selling their properties and they are likely to if the cost to get a property up to standard is more than £40k.

ACTION: Cllr Terry is happy to do a presentation on Chestnut Walk at the E&P on 20th April as DG will not be able to attend.

Cllr Fyfe's query on the Station Yard application is being looked in to. The application for Station Car Park has been approved for 42 properties subject to discharge of conditions on SUDS. DG will check the S106 to see what the shared ownership options are.

PART 2 Confidential

The public and press may be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity might be prejudicial to the public interest as per the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

FC20260063 Leisure Centre update

Proposed: Cllr Reeves

Seconded: Cllr Keates

Resolution: The invoice is still in dispute so will not be paid. This will be reviewed at the Full Council meeting in June.

Cllr Terry will join the JAC.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Mayor's Report – March 2026 Full Council Meeting Cllr Helen Simpson

I can hardly believe that this will be my final report as Mayor of Hungerford. It marks the end of my term, and also that of Deputy Mayor Claire Winser. Looking back over the past ten years with Hungerford Town Council, it's been a journey that has been busy, enjoyable, sometimes challenging, but always deeply rewarding. Above all, it has been a real privilege to serve our community.

One of the most important things I've learned during this time is just how much our town depends on its volunteers. They are truly at the heart of everything we do, giving their time, energy, and care so generously. Their commitment to doing the right thing and supporting the community is something I've always admired. While I will be sad to step away from such a dedicated and supportive team, I know they will continue to go from strength to strength.

On a personal note, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to Deputy Mayor Claire Winser. Claire, your support over the years has meant so much to me. We've worked closely together and shared so many experiences, particularly at civic events, and I'm incredibly grateful not just for your attention to detail and teamwork, but also for your friendship. I know that is something I will carry with me long after this role.

I will remain in office for the rest of the month and am very much looking forward to the upcoming Hocktide celebrations. It will be especially nice to welcome visitors from the Twinning Association, who will be experiencing Hocktide for the first time. My final civic duty will be the Freedom of the Town ceremony; an event I'm particularly pleased we've been able to bring back after earlier plans were disrupted during COVID. It feels like a fitting way to close this chapter.

Community Litter Pick

Thank you to everyone who took part in the annual litter pick on the common ahead of the cattle being released. I'm sorry I wasn't able to join you this year due to another civic commitment, but I truly appreciate the effort and care shown by all the volunteers who helped keep this important space looking its best.

Berkshire County U13 Rugby Cup Finals

I was delighted to attend the Berkshire County Under-13s Cup Finals, hosted by Hungerford

Rugby Club Juniors. The event was also attended by Ian Wilson and Sean Gale. Despite the weather turning later in the afternoon, the matches were fantastic to watch and full of energy and sportsmanship. Congratulations to all the players involved, and especially to Newbury U13 Boys for winning the cup.

Police Meeting

A recent meeting was held with Lee Dillon MP, alongside representatives from Hungerford Town Council, West Berkshire Council, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and Thames Valley Police, to discuss local policing and proposed structural changes.

During the discussion, it became clear that the current full-time sergeant role dedicated to Hungerford will be replaced by a shared sergeant covering both Hungerford and Thatcham. This was not in line with the reassurance previously given to the Town Council that no changes would be made. It was also indicated that direct contact with the new sergeant would be more limited, which is a concern, as strong communication and local engagement are vital.

Lee Dillon was quick to raise these concerns during the meeting. From the Council's perspective, it is important that we work more closely with the policing team, particularly given the valuable local insight we receive from residents. The police currently operate a monthly or quarterly priority-setting process, and it is felt that Hungerford Town Council could play a constructive role in contributing to this, ensuring that local concerns are properly reflected.

At present, the Council is often informed of policing priorities after they have been set. Moving forward, there is a strong view that regular, more collaborative meetings would allow for better two-way communication, including the opportunity to raise sensitive issues in a more appropriate setting. In addition, earlier awareness of police engagement in schools and community events would help the Council to support and share these activities more effectively with residents. Cllr Fyfe has agreed to continue this engagement alongside Cllr Gaines.

Chris Boulton

I attended the Celebration of Life for Chris Boulton, former Chief Executive for Greenham Trust. The occasion provided a fitting opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the remarkable contribution Chris made throughout his life. I know he will be a huge loss to the Greenham Trust family. Chris's own family gave a wonderful, warm insight into a man who was persuasive, passionate and dedicated to helping so many organisations reach their potential.

Town Meeting

Thank you to all those who came and supported Hungerford's Annual Town meeting. It was a very busy evening with lots of local organisations sharing news, concerns and successes. Thanks to the office for organising another brilliant annual meeting. Feedback has been very positive. HTC's format is now being shared and requested by WBC to other parishes. Minutes of the meeting are available on HTC's website.

I wish to thank Hungerford community for their support, encouragement and warmth over the last ten years. I've been truly honoured to serve my hometown. Your messages, cards and emails have meant a great deal, I will treasure the amazing memories made, serving the Hungerford community.

Maybe I'll write a book! Not just yet though, I'm here until the 30th of April.

Cllr Helen Simpson – Mayor

**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES REPORT FOR FULL COUNCIL MEETING ON 07 APRIL 2026
MONTH 12 INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT FOR MARCH 2026**

101 FINANCE:

Bank interest of £776 has been received.

102 ADMINISTRATION:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £546 positive variance.

103 GRANTS & DONATIONS:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £40,346 positive variance this month. The Leisure Centre payment budgeted at £43,000 is yet to be paid.

104 POOL HOUSE:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £58 positive variance.

105 CONTINGENCY:

No Expenditure this month.

107 ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING:

No Expenditure this month.

109 HUNGERFORD 2036 PROJECT:

No Expenditure this month.

201 RECREATION & AMENITIES:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £1,112 positive variance.

202 WAR MEMORIAL GROUND:

Net Expenditure is a £21 positive variance this month.

203 ST SAVIOURS:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £1,128 positive variance. Burial fees of £2,346 received this month.

204 CROFT FIELD:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £1,132 negative variance. The negative income of £1,226 was an accrual for payments made from April 2026.

205 LIBRARY MAINTENANCE COSTS:

Net Expenditure was a £35 positive variance this month.

206 TRIANGLE FIELD:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £1,101 positive variance. The annual Archers payment of £1,000 was received.

301 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS:

No Expenditure this month.

302 HIGHWAYS:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £8,038 positive variance. Smarten Up Hungerford's funds of £824 were received from the Chamber of Commerce. Town & Manor reimbursed £100 for 2 SID Batteries purchased by HTC.

303 CCTV:

Net Income over Expenditure is a £250 positive variance this month.

901 RESERVES:

Transfer of £267 from EMR to purchase the SID batteries.

March's Net Income over Expenditure is a £52,228 positive variance.

Year to date Net Income over Expenditure is a £147,266 positive variance.

Signing out!

Claire Winser
Chair of F&GP
03 April 2026