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**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL
ON TUESDAY 18TH AUGUST 2026 AT 7.00PM**

Present:

Councillor I Sparks (Chairman)
Councillor R Cook
Councillor C Dennis
Councillor L Hull
Councillor M Jackson
Councillor J Jemmett
Councillor C Lewis
Councillor B Lynham
Councillor P Wall
Clerk
22 members of the public

26/66. Apologies for Absence

No apologies received.

26/67. Minutes

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 21st July 2026 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

26/68. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hull in planning item 26/01683/FUL.

26/69. Essex County Councillor Update

Councillor Rocha was not present. Please see Appendix 1 for Councillor Rocha's report which was read out by the Clerk.

26/70. Braintree District Councillor Update

Councillor Spray read a report, please see Appendix 2.

26/71. Public Participation session

Nine members of the public raised the following:

- Concerns about a picnic bench being placed on the village green.
- Mary Gee Green – never been a path to the rear of Tillwicks. Clearance of this area will result in loss of habitat.
- Thanks given for submitting reports prior to the meeting.
- Four Colnes Horticultural Society not in a position to show the film mentioned in item 26/81(c).
- Concerns about the wall to the west of Foundry Lane.

- Mary Gee Green – in favour of cutting back brambles/hedgerow.
- Concerns and objections raised about Queens Road car park restrictions proposal.
- Thanks given for the support for the Youth Group.

26/72. Chairman's Update

The Chairman's update was received. See Appendix 3.

26/73. Vice Chairman's Update

The Vice Chairman's update was received. See Appendix 4.

26/74. Clerk's Report

The Clerk's update was received. See Appendix 5.

26/75. Finance and Internal Control

- The budget update was received.
- It was resolved** to approve the request from Gigaclear for a wayleave agreement to carry out additional broadband works at The Green, with a request to make good any damage.
- It was resolved** to agree the proposed amendments to the Finance and Internal Controls Committee Terms of Reference and ECPC Statement of Internal Control (2026).
- It was resolved** to create Oversight Groups as follows: allotments, climate change, environmental initiatives, open spaces and play areas into a new Village Environment group; and car parks, toilets, workshop and EV charges to be incorporated into the Highways group. Roles will be reviewed at the September meeting.

26/76. Planning

TPOCON/TPO/DD

- 26/01758/TPOCON** – Tree works to reduce Magnolia at 1 Tillwicks Close. **No objection.**
- 26/01833/ TPOCON** – Tree works to Liquid Amber and Ivy at 16 Park Lane. **No objection.**
- 26/01719/TPO** – Tree works to London Plane Tree at 2 Shut Lane. **No objection.**
- 26/01863/DD** – Tree works under the dead or dangerous exemption to remove dead Elm at 31 Halstead Road. **No objection if tree deemed genuinely dead.**

HH

- 26/01712/HH** – Proposed single-storey rear extension at 1 Bourne Brook View. **No objection.**
- 26/01638/HH** – Proposed replacement of the attached garage with a one and a half storey side extension and a single-storey rear extension at Brabazon House, Station Road. **No objection subject to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) being satisfied that the scale and design of the one and a half storey side extension do not result in an unacceptable impact on neighbouring amenity or the character and appearance of the street scene.**

Councillor Hull left the meeting for item (g).

FUL

- 26/01683/FUL** – Erection of new storage building and the formation of an associated compound area at Land South of Olivers Plants, Coggeshall Road. **No objection subject to the LPA being satisfied that the building and compound are appropriately screened and landscaped, that the access and highway arrangements are safe, and that there is no unacceptable impact on the rural character of the site or neighbouring amenity.**

REM

- 26/01660/REM** – Reserved matters for one detached two-storey dwelling following approved outline permission 24/00693/OUT at Gu Brath, Coggeshall Road. **No objection in principle, but the council requests that the LPA carefully considers the neighbour representation regarding potential overlooking of Moonraker and that any landscaping adjacent to the access maintains the required highway visibility splays.**

LBC

- (i) **26/01784/LBC** – Installation of wi-fi equipment at 17 Foundry Lane. **No objection.**

Other Matters

- (j) **It was resolved** to create a Planning Committee to consider and respond to significant planning applications affecting the parish and approve its Terms of Reference.
- (k) The submission of amended site extents through the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation process was noted and **it was resolved** to submit the report prepared by Councillor Dennis.
- (l) Recent planning decisions made by Braintree District Council were noted as follows:
- 26/01278/HH – Proposed single storey side/front extension to form garage/store, following demolition of existing garage at 42 Park Lane. **Granted.**
 - 26/01418/TPOCON – Tree works at 42 High Street. **No objections raised.**
 - 26/01294/HH – Proposed pergola and outdoor kitchen at 4 Hunts Yard. **Granted.**
 - 26/01520/TPOCON – Tree works at 30 Hayhouse Road. **No objections raised.**

To find further information about applications and their progress, see: [Simple Search](#)

26/77. Highways

An update on Highways was received. See Appendix 6.

26/78. Village Environment

The proposal to introduce a 3-hour maximum stay, with no return within 1 hour and no overnight parking at the Queens Road car park was withdrawn by the proposer.

26/79. Section 106

- (a) The Open Spaces Improvement Project proposal was withdrawn by the proposer. *Councillor Wall left the meeting.*
- (b) The Proposal of Works for the Mary Gee Green was deferred pending further information.
- (c) **It was resolved** to approve the proposal to commission the museum to create an information board regarding Mary Gee, for installation on the Mary Gee Green, at an appropriate cost of £500-600.

26/80. Health and Safety

An update on health and safety matters was received. See Appendix 7.

26/81. Village Hall

- (a) An update on village hall matters was received. See Appendix 8.
- (b) **It was resolved** to discuss with Braintree District Council the removal of two glass recycling bins and the trade waste bin currently located in the Village Hall car park
- (c) The proposal to host a presentation of the National Emergency Briefing Event on the Climate and Nature crisis was withdrawn by the proposer.

26/82. Youth Provision

It was resolved to support, in principle, the setting up of a local Youth Group. The support will take the form of free of charge use of the Small Hall and Kitchen and for the council to provide the required licence for the showing of films for a period of 24 months, and kept under review.

26/83. Accounts for Payment

It was resolved to approve the accounts for payment, as follows:

Staff costs	£8,091.84
British Gas	£102.92
E&J Fire Systems Ltd	£240.00

Yu Energy	£33.94
Wave	£1,860.95
Daisy Communications	£79.97
Heritage Museum	£1,200.00
P Wall (expenses)	£195.78
Ernest Doe & Sons	£308.42
Braintree District Council	£669.00
SSE	£376.08
SMC Safety Services Ltd	£360.00
Scribe Accounts	£1,065.60
Unity Trust Bank	£14.95
Rentokil Initial	£104.92
Datapartners	£74.60
Hall hire deposit returns	£200.00
S Blair-Wolker (expenses)	£18.22
Lloyds Bank (office expenses)	£32.98
Apogee	£299.40
Braintree Association of Local Councils	£50.00

26/84. General Information

The following matters were raised:

- Does the council need to start working on a review of the NDP?
- Bin numbers are large, can this be looked at?

26/85. Confidential Matters – Staffing Arrangements

- Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2), **it was resolved** to exclude members of the press and public for the duration of this meeting to consider the following confidential employment items.
- It was resolved** to increase the Assistant Clerk's hours from 20 to 30 per week with effect from 1st September 2026 in order to facilitate an effective handover with the outgoing Clerk/RFO.

Meeting closed at 9.42pm

Date of next Parish Council Meeting – Tuesday 15th September 2026

Appendix 1

Planning Related Issues:

Woodpeckers, Lowefields (26/01492/FUL) – I have submitted a formal objection to this application (demolition plus 36 dwellings), building on the Parish Council's own objection of 21 July. Grounds include: the applicant's Flood Risk Assessment modelling shows several nodes flagged as "surcharged"/"flood risk" despite the report's own conclusion that flood risk is "generally low"; the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment shows a net loss across every habitat type despite claiming a 10% gain; inconsistencies across the Heritage Impact Assessment, Transport Assessment and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; and procedural concerns including two differently-referenced Planning Statement versions. I have asked that the application not be determined until these contradictions are addressed, and that it go to Planning Committee rather than be decided under delegated powers.

Chalkney Mill / The Hatch Shed (26/00537/FUL) – This application (17 poultry units, part-retrospective) was withdrawn on 14 August, after the applicant continued construction for six months after being told informally before Christmas to stop and regularise. Following an email to BDC yesterday, I received confirmation from BDC's Planning Enforcement Officer that he is actively investigating: a site visit is being carried out where he will assess the scale, siting and use of the buildings and whether commercial activity is taking place, and he has confirmed the development is understood to have started in November 2025 – well within the statutory period for enforcement action. A further written update is expected once his site visit findings are reviewed. I separately raised a licensing concern with BDC after a report that the site may be selling animals as pets without the required licence; I checked BDC's public register and confirmed it is not currently licensed for this.

Station Road – A proposed development here remains at pre-application consultation stage and has not yet been submitted to planning. I am monitoring this.

Highways and roads

Despite how it may look I am chasing pothole repairs across the division and have escalated Station Road (which was one of the priority roads) now as well as a number of others including what was called Massive Hold Drive to Highways. I have a meeting with the Cabinet Member for Highways on Friday to discuss these as well as a significant number of other ones which are still to be looked at.

I have also been investigating parking problems on Kemsley Road as well as speeding concerns on the main road through the village. Casework is continuing on the disability parking space on the High Street. As you're also aware, I'm trying to get to the bottom of "Tree Gate" in Halstead (near where the old WHSmith used to be).

Housing

I am supporting two separate tenancy matters affecting local residents, working with the relevant housing providers.

Community

I have secured funding to help get a youth group established in Earls Colne so am looking forward to working with the Community on getting that started and in place. It is much needed.

Wider division work:

Finally, for context on the breadth of current work: I have secured a visit from the ECC Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Heritage to see the Halstead air raid shelters, and will also be showing him the riverside in Halstead while he's here to see what we can do to help preserve and conserve that space. I am also now looking at a significant number of contracts at ECC to see where monies are actually going and my



investigations on #Bingate continue as I continue to be copied into emails from unhappy residents to BDC about the service they are providing.

Finally, my response times will be slower than usual as I have approaching 100 pieces of active casework across the division. So please bear with me as I won't be as quick as I have been previously but every email matters and every constituent and resident concern matters.

Councillor Isi Rocha

Appendix 2

LOCAL PLAN: The Local Plan Sub Committee (LPSC) met on the 30th July to consider the responses from the Regulation 18 consultation. After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that the report was noted. The next meeting of the LPSC , 17th September, will look at the Evidence Base documents, including the Highways report, heritage, sustainability etc, these reports are crucial in supporting the draft Local Plan. If agreed by the LPSC, the draft Plan will go to an Extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 21st September, followed by the 6-week Regulation 19 consultation.

A number of additional sites will need to be considered by the Committee in order to reach the required housing target for the new Plan. The Parish Council has been advised of two sites for Earls Colne, both sites on land south of Halstead Road. The LPSC will consider these additional sites in September.

FAMILY SWIMMING LESSONS: Freedom Leisure and Braintree District Council are inviting families across the Braintree District to make use of free swimming sessions throughout August at three swimming pools in the District: Braintree Swimming and Fitness, Halstead Leisure Centre and Witham Leisure Centre. In addition to the free lessons, the leisure centres are offering a range of activities throughout the summer holidays many at a reduced cost. Braintree Council hopes this will help families with affordable ways to stay active and reduce the financial strain that comes with the cost-of-living pressures, especially when trying to keep children entertained during the summer holidays.

RIVENHALL INCINERATOR: Braintree District Council has written to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government, Angela Raynor, requesting that the recent planning applications submitted by the Incinerator operator be reviewed. These applications ask, among other things, that the 'visible plume' from the stack be allowed to remain and the hours that HGVs move on and off site be extended to include Sundays, Public Holidays and Bank Holidays. The Council's concern is that changes to these conditions, put in place when permission was first granted, move the operation of the plant further away from its intended purpose and will have a detrimental affect on the local landscape and the amenities of residents living close to the site.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR GRANT: I have now allocated all the £1500 in my fund and I believe that Cllr Courtauld has also distributed all of his..

With best regards

Councillor Gabrielle Spray

Appendix 3

By the time that you read this, the Four Colnes Show will have been held where the Parish Council had a stand. Hopefully, we were inundated by the residents talking to us, offering help, giving us ideas to work on etc. We displayed a number of information sheets on several topics and hope they helped. There were also Petitions regarding the speed limit in Station Road and the fate of the disabled bays in the High Street. We ran an impromptu surgery for residents to talk to us and also provided a suggestion box for ideas. Hopefully some of the suggestions will be readable!!

Your Councillors have been busy regarding their Responsibilities, and I hope their progress will improve matters. Please remember, Rome wasn't built in a day!

BDC will be running a camera trial at the Car Park regarding the vandalism which keeps occurring at the toilets very soon and hopefully we shall be able to take it over once concluded.

I thank the residents who attend the monthly Parish Council Meetings as their input is well directed and important to us when given. We do take note and work on them. Unfortunately, some items are shrouded in Rules and Regulations we have to counter, but the hard work of the Office and their knowledge always helps us towards a good finish. If your item is one of these, please be patient as sometimes we have to deal with Authorities who seem to work like snails.

Councillor Ian Sparks

Appendix 4

Planning

Planning continues to generate considerable interest from residents.

The application at Woodpeckers, Lowefields – 26/01492/FUL, for 36 homes, has attracted a significant number of objections, with concerns including the scale of development, traffic, infrastructure, drainage and its wider impact on the area.

The applications relating to The Castle, 77 High Street – 26/01472/FUL and 26/01473/LBC have also generated substantial public concern, particularly around the loss of a historic village asset, heritage impact, viability, drainage and the effect on the character of the village.

The level of public engagement with these applications reinforces my view that the Council should consider establishing a formal Planning Committee.

This would allow larger or contentious residential or commercial applications to be considered in greater depth and, importantly, provide residents with a clear opportunity to attend and express their views before the Parish Council determines its consultation response.

I would like the Council to explore the practicalities of establishing such a committee, including its membership, delegated authority, Terms of Reference and arrangements for public participation.

S106 Funding – Recreation Ground

There is £10,133.31 of remaining S106 Outdoor Sports funding which needs to be allocated within the required timeframe.

With the September deadline approaching, I believe we need to liaise with the Recreation Ground representatives as a priority to establish what facilities or improvements are currently needed and which of those would be eligible under this particular S106 fund.

This will allow the Council to identify a suitable use for the remaining funding and ensure that the opportunity to invest it back into recreation facilities for the village is not lost.

Highways

I continue to work alongside and support the Chairman on highways matters, particularly where issues have been raised by residents or require further liaison with the relevant authorities.

Council Support and Looking Ahead

As Vice Chairman, I will continue to support the Chairman, councillors and officers where required and help ensure that matters raised by residents are followed through appropriately.

Over the coming month, I would particularly like to progress the Planning Committee proposal, ensure the S106 funding is progressed with the Recreation Ground before the deadline, continue monitoring significant planning applications affecting the village, and ensure residents have a clear route to make their views heard.

Councillor Catherine Dennis

Appendix 5

Clerk's Report

1. Lone Working device through Eco Online. Five app licences have been purchased at £10 per licence per month. In addition, £111 pa for 24/7 monitoring and a one-off £100 set up fee.
2. This will be my last full Council meeting as Sophie will be clerking the September meeting. I will still be around at the time for support.
3. How the Clerk Report evolves will now be up to Sophie!

Appendix 6

The works at Stonebridge on the repairs there, appear to be going well. Obviously, the weather helps. I noticed that they seem to have the temporary bridge bank supports coming on well, so hopefully once they are finished the temporary bridge can be installed and the by passing roadway completed. There is still a long way to go and we need to be patient.

We shall soon be getting the proposals to ECC ready for the reduction of the speed limit in Station Road and the reinstatement of the disabled bays in the High Street as legally enforceable. Again, not something that happens as quickly as we want but we are on the case. Thanks to the residents for signing the Petitions regarding these items, it all helps our case.

Potholes I notice are slowly being repaired around the area, You have to look hard to see them as there are so many thousands to repair and the roads seem to be just one bad pothole, but Highways seem to be actively working on them. Even so, keep complaining to them about the potholes you find and report them.

The hedge on Halstead Road opposite Great Pitchers has been cut back eventually so that it one problem away.

Councillor Ian Sparks

Appendix 7

I've achieved a lot this month, including:

- Met with BDC Street Scene officer to discuss the installation of CCTV cameras in the car park.
- Arranged new signs for the car park, including CCTV signage.
- Had a new sign made for the public toilets.
- Resolved V5 issues for R&R.
- Ensured the new employee has the correct PPE for working, along with metal boxes purchased for chemicals, to ensure we meet our health and safety obligations.
- Met with the workers on multiple occasions, including early mornings, to make sure everything was going well.
- Arranged with the Clerk for additional cleaning chemicals and put an ordering system in place for the Community Workers to follow.
- Ensured the Village Hall CCTV cameras were mounted.
- Put CCTV notices up in the car park and installed one sign in the village area.
- Arranged for the stairlift to be repaired.
- Arranged a first aid course at a discounted price. Three workers and I attended, and all achieved 100%.
- Spoke to the Clerk about obtaining new, up-to-date first aid kits, which have been ordered.
- The phones for the Community Workers have arrived.
- The Clerk has also helped with looking at the lone worker policy. Lone working equipment will be purchased.
- Had signage designed and printed ready for installation.
- Looked at the lock in the Village Hall in relation to safety.
- Looked at the toilet sign at the corner of Queens Road and spoke to the Clerk, who has arranged for it to be inspected by ECC.
- Bought and applied Parish Council stickers to the Kubota.
- Ensured the workers had plenty of cold drinking water.
- Had a discussion with a locksmith about certain locks, which saved us money.
- Spoke to a firm about providing us with tools.
- Looked at the cost of exterior paint and equipment.
- Looked at alternative options for the steps.
- Maintained regular communication between the office and the workers to ensure that work was being carried out as required.

- Obtained several quotes for garden furniture and planters.
- Checked around the CALA Homes land.
- Checked around the allotments.
- Looked at problems in the car park and considered possible solutions.
- Ensured that the toilets are now nice and clean and that everything appears to be working well.
Some further decoration is needed before winter.

Councillor Phil Wall

Appendix 8

File :- ECPCHALLongterm2026. **AUGUST EDITION**

Future Action Points, items of concern and current activities. This is the **August** 2026 version of a continuing progression of the original document that was prepared to support budget requests. **Changes since the last report are shown in red.**

The later addendum of Small Works has been removed from this report and is now published as a document in it's own right. It is now a prioritised reference list for the Clerk of some of the work that we might be able to make a start on, possibly using our Community Workers. Some will be rainy day or winter tasks. For some of them, the requirement for specialist tools dictates that we we will need to engage contractors.

We have had early verbal reports of Fire inspection, H&S surveys and Risk assessments all of which add to this report. They are the subject of a separate Action Plan, the main points of which are listed at the foot of this report.

We believe this document should be read and understood by all Councillors as they are all responsible for the Hall even though we have a delegated VH team.

The hall has suffered from many years of underspending on maintenance and care. Many areas and fittings are tired and dated. There are also some areas of major concern.

We believe that the Council as a whole needs to understand this and view the budget in the round. Would "your" budget be better spent elsewhere?

The team also strongly believe that the hall is under-used. We feel that it's a bit of a financial nightmare and that we should be making better use of it's earning potential by making it more attractive to hirers.

We have attempted to put a value on most remedial actions. In some cases, because the scale of the problem is as yet unknown, they are best guess.

The accuracy of the guess is unimportant, but the fact that there is a financial implication isn't.

Within the main report, the classification of importance of the various tasks is not important. All of these items need attention. H&S and Fire Safety requirements, as they evolve, make several of them urgent so will incur **unavoidable** expense.

Effectively, this is also the Hall Management Team's task check list.

Heating and Ventilation

During the heating season the hall is heated when the hirers are present. The length of the warm up period ahead of the hire is longer in the colder months and shorter when the weather warms up. There are late evening and early morning short runs just to keep the chill off. In view of the price of gas, it is a cost efficient exercise to do this. The task of programming the heating times, from creating the timetable spreadsheet to inputting that to the 4 controllers takes about 45 minutes. The advice from our Heating contractor is to do exactly what we are doing. His opinion is that the current price of gas has superseded the "old" advice about keeping buildings warm. He looked at our hirer's timetable and advised us to carry on with the plan.

He also advised that, as a default for energy saving reasons, all outer doors should be self closing.

In summer, we expect the place to be overly warm at times. The fixed glazing that we we inherited will add to the problem and will probably be a constant reminder that we need to replace the windows and make it a nicer, more welcoming, place.

We will be looking to facilitate window opening in the Small Hall. If successful, it comes with some risks of hirers failing to resecure windows.

We will be asking the CW's or CVW to return to temporarily remove the glazing and trial giving the users the opportunity to open a window. (If they will open)
We will be sticking small notices on the fixed, or painted shut, windows to advise users not to bother trying to open them. No large window can currently be opened.
Climate change needs to be taken into account. The Clerk's office should be airconditioned. Air con for the rest of the Village Hall needs to be considered in stages. Many of our exercise classes need aircon.

In early 2026 the heating system appeared to be losing water. It was professionally checked and a small leak was rectified. The apparent loss after the check was because it has become apparent that the system takes a considerable time to settle down after disturbance. We now know that the system needs bleeding at least 5 times over the course of a fortnight to be clear of trapped air. Self bleeding valves have been fitted to three radiators in the highest part of the building and a fourth will be fitted when the system is serviced in November.

For the future:- Our regular heating engineer can fix all leaks but a specialist would be needed to trace it (or them) if they were not obvious.

If underfloor work is ever needed it is probably best left, if possible, until the summer, which is less upheaval for hirers. There is some spare flooring under the stage that might be needed if floor work is involved in the main hall. That is basically carpentry work. We have made contact with a local contractor with the requisite skills for the work. May 2026:- Estimated cost for repairing 1 leak under the main hall floor is at least £1k plus £1k for floor work.

If a leak is detected under a solid floor, excavation will be needed with expensive reinstatement. If we cut holes in the small hall floor do we then patch it up or consider replacement of the entire floor covering? Estimated cost of a leak repair is £1k and groundworks £1k.

Our regular heating engineer also has access to specialist contractors for floor work.

Old under-floor pipes are bad news. Solid floor leaks also raise the possibility that we might need to re route substantial sections of pipework.

In early June '26 the system was flushed and inhibited (corrosion protected). Inhibiting a heating system is not luxury optional extra.

An inhibitor dosing point was added when the flushing was done. The automatic top up system ensures that, in the event of a leak, the correct water levels are maintained, thus ensuring that the heating remains on. The downside is that it can also dilute the inhibitor chemicals which then reopens the likelihood of corrosion. The dosing unit gives ECPC the facility to maintain the correct level of inhibitor.

*****USE OF the DOSER IS RESTRICTED TO ENGINEER AND VH GROUP.*****

If we ever have a leak under the main hall (suspended) floor, remedial work will present an opportunity to test the substrate for dampness. We will be able to monitor the humidity under the floor. Specialist assistance on the dampness, budget £2k

External Works (Inherited project)

The contractor has accepted our proposals on how to clear up outstanding works and agreed a final settlement. That has been paid and we await his attendance.

The project to replace the front windows will be the next task.

Main Hall Floor

A small section of floor in front of the stage had suffered damage from rising damp and was replaced in about 2020/21. The exercise was neither trouble free nor entirely successful and the underlying dampness was addressed by an extractor on the opposite wall.

We feel that the improved ventilation was essential but that it wasn't correctly targeted. The underfloor area in front of the stage probably has very little airflow and that is contributing to the rapidly increasing amount of new blackening in front of the replacement section. We can be certain that the damp problem is still with us.

For the sake of clarity, experience tells us that black on the top goes all the way through so it cannot be sanded off.

The floor to the south side (nearer the entrance lobby) is now showing signs of bowing. That is, the floor is no longer flat (as sanded) and each plank has some curvature. We think that is because the damp is affecting that section and causing swelling.

An air brick at the front of the hall is below soil level. This needs to be remedied before we get rain. The possibility of more airbricks being below soil level on the kitchen wall and outside the bar seating area needs investigating.

We have a partially covered air brick beside the RH front door that needs attention.

At the time, the floor was sanded and re sealed (2019 ish), the contractors said that we could not consider another sanding as the floor wasn't thick enough.

We believe that, as a minimum, we need to be budgeting an annual reserve so that we can do the job when the need arises. In around 2019, the quoted replacement cost was £12,000.00 ish. The 2026/7 budget includes an £8k budget item that we feel should be transferred to an earmarked reserve at the end of the year. The figure was set as an optimistic 3 year target. The job will probably not be as simple as a new floor, because we will need to address the underlying issues of dampness. As a minimum, we probably need to consider adding a membrane to the substrate and possibly re-instating the ventilation that was largely stopped up when the kitchen extension and lobby were added. That might mean getting the underfloor area air piped to outside. (Digging up the floor or the use of a boring machine to create space for new pipes.)

The underfloor ventilation needs to be improved.

In the long term, taking account of the high water table under the Hall, we could consider a suspended concrete floor.

We believe that reserving £8k per year with a 3 year target for the estimated "simple" replacement is imprudent and insufficient.

There is a sump under the stage that is set into the water table and collects surplus water which is periodically pumped away. When storing anything under the stage, free access to the sump must be maintained. In heavy rain, the Con Club driveway drains to beside the Chamber notice board. That can't be helping. We need to look at directing Con Club water away to the road and not to under our floor. We possibly need to consider lowering the level of the ground beside the hall.

If any section of the floor failed, the project to resolve the issues would involve paying for professional advice and project management.

The potential size of repair bills raises the possibility of making serious inroads into our reserves or taking out loans.

Known (Current budget to Reserve) £8k

Potential £30k plus

Lobby Roof.

All mastic joints were remade in early June 2026. Despite recent heavy rains, there have been no leaks.

Hall Hirer Access.

It's unwise to expect our long run of lack of issues with hall security to continue. The lack of a person who can be called out for hall problems is a concern that needs to be urgently addressed. The original proposal failed to consider who would be on the end of the emergency contact phone, whose phone that might be or who might be expected to turn out in an emergency.

A villager who lives locally has stepped forward to express interest in being the emergency contact. White Colne have such a person and they get paid for call outs and attendance.

An alternative access scheme, using cards, was investigated but discarded for cost reasons.

An electronic key safe for the main door has been received. We plan to put this into operation around the end of August. The existing safe might be moved to the rear door, or retained as an emergency reserve.

We may eventually need to provide an electronic lock at the rear entrance. The keys of the existing lock have been found and more copies procured. **A different solution to providing access to the small hall when the partition is in place might be to get a key lock fitted to the double fire doors in the lobby.**

Questions about the, as yet unenacted, Martyn's Law have been reviewed after the assistant Clerk and one Councillor attended an on-line course. Our Halls are largely unaffected. Nevertheless, we do have safeguarding issues which arise because the halls cannot currently be securely segregated. Until the new keysafes are in place we need to ask the Clerk to periodically change the access code. The fitting cost of the electronic locks was not included in the original motion. Known minimum of £500. * (Electronic Locks plus fitting)

Main Electrical Supply Board.

We have been advised that we should consider an update to the main supply board to MCB/RCD, a more up-to-date, and safer, unit that should see us safe from major changes for at least 10 years. Currently, we just meet regulations but after the anticipated updating of the regs, we won't. The Fire Inspector called for fireproof cabinets. This upgrade provides them. We feel that electrical safety items should be done sooner than later. At best, we have to do this within two years so, even if we ignore the Fire Inspector's advice, we need to be either putting money away or just doing it. The H&S survey revealed that the board needs to be 1. more secure and 2. have a 30 minute fire protection enclosure. The electrical upgrade provides the fire proofing and we will be fitting a lock to prevent unauthorised access.

Known Cost £3,700.00. Normal procurement rules (if below £5,000.00) still apply. Our main electrical contractor indicated in mid June 2026 that he was ready to proceed. Two other contractors visited in early July. **Quotes received. We now have 3 quotes.**

Clerk Security

We need to look at the safety and security of the Clerks. We need a better camera entry system. The cameras purchased by the previous admin are record only. They may have their uses but entry security isn't one of them. The office door needs beefing up, the glass needs to be replaced or security filmed, the lock should be controllable by the clerk from the desk and we should probably look at installing a panic alarm.

The H&S survey also raised this issue and **are actioning this item.**

Known Estimated Cost £ 3k

Chamber Street Door

The closing and latching of the door needs to be addressed from a security point of view. The door doesn't consistently self latch which leaves the Clerks vulnerable. This may be a simple matter of either adjusting or replacing the closer so a Carpenter will be consulted asap. This might be a job for a CW..

H&S have suggested that this door might need to be adapted so that it can be used as a fire escape when the bar is in use.

The H&S team are actioning this item.

We may need to make access from the stairs into the Chamber a coded lock option that the Clerks can control via the intercom system. **Any modifications will need to take account of the fact that this is also a fire escape. H&S actioning this item.**

Known Estimated Cost £300.00* Expenditure Agreed by Full Council

Floor Washer machine

The existing floor washer was incomplete, unserviceable, never used and has been scrapped.

We now have a decent machine that washes, picks up and dries and a smaller machine for confined spaces. There is a health and safety issue here. We have users who lay on the floor. We need to take account of that and have a timetable for floor cleaning that takes account of the hirers who need very clean floors.

Notice Boards.

The damaged paintwork shows us that we need notice Boards in order to satisfy the need for posters and notices whilst avoiding damage to walls.

This project would need to precede painting.

We suggest that we use the simple “click” type with round corners.

A4 are £4.99 and A3 are £6.50. There might be a case for A2 too. Each site will need an individual approach. Estimated cost includes paying for fitting.

May 2026 agenda item for 4 x A3 boards (already purchased) was approved along with further expenditure to a total of £300.00.

We also need to tidy up existing statutory notices. This plan will include providing frames for them all. H&S have also requested more No Smoking signs.

The prohibition of sticking anything to the walls will be added to the Hall Hirers conditions of Hire.

Bar Glass Washer.

The glass washer has been serviced and is now working.

For future reference:-

Approximate cost of Parts:-

Element £130.00 *

Main Thermostat £60.00 *

High Level Stat £47.00

PCB (Controller) £380.00

Fitting of any or all replacement parts on a return visit is £55.00 *

We need to consider an annual maintenance visit.

2026 = £95.00

Bar Bottle Cooler and Bar area improvements.

Bar bottle cooler now in place.

Correct glasses purchased.

The procurement of a few more wine glasses is in hand.

Users report that we can now consider it to be a workable bar but we need to make it clear that there are no draught beer facilities at present even though some of the required equipment is present.

We can now store ice in the donated undercounter freezer which is in the glass washing room and where it makes a convenient shelf for when the glass washer is in use.

In the long term we should, perhaps, procure an ice maker. The current number of hirers does not justify that option at present.

Martyn's Law

ECPC Village Hall is unaffected.

Safeguarding of vulnerable users, Hall door locking and use of the hall partition are considered elsewhere in this report.

Split the Kitchen

In conjunction with splitting the halls, (see below) access to the kitchen should be just that, and not a through passage. If necessary, we can overcome the difficulty of the hirers having access to drinking water by providing bottled water. Locking the kitchen also means that hirers don't have access to the hall that they are not hiring. This measure also helps with efforts to make the caretaker efficient.

It needs to be done, for security purposes and to prevent access to a kitchen via “the back door” or access to either hall via the kitchen.

Push button coded locks have been received.

H&S advice is that we also need to restrict access by children. We believe that the combination operated latches achieve this.

These locks are easily and quickly opened in the case of emergency exit.

Split the Halls

We have started to use the divider in the lobby. **A lock has been procured.**

If we can be sure that the toilets for each hall are only used by the respective hirers and that the others are not, the caretaker can apply their efforts proportionately and we can make better use of the available hours. We would have better control over their activities and the hours worked would be more efficient. Each hall already has its own doorbell.

This plan means that we would need to ask Small Hall users to enter via the back door and then temporarily disable **(for the period of hire)** the panic bars on the double doors to the lobby. This raises a security issue.

The hirers will need educating.

We need to make clear to hirers of the Small Hall that Large Hall hirers might access "their" area, using the key safes, in order to access the light switches in the lobby. We may be able to just ask small hall hirers to switch off the lights in the main hall.

We may need to consider raising the height of the barrier above the folding doors for security reasons. That might also reduce the sound transmission between the two halls.

The divider glass needs safety film.

Medium Priority

1. Toilet Flushes

The flushing mechanisms are showing their age. The ease of flushing and the speed of response to operating the levers in two toilets is poor. We need to consider replacing the cisterns/flushes. One toilet seat needs replacing.

We await a report from our regular small works plumber. The cost of the first phase of works has been agreed by full council. **Remains outstanding while we wait for the plumber.**

Known budget costs £400.00*

2. Inner Fire Doors

The recent Fire Inspection noted that some of the obligatory door seals are defective. Possibly a CW task. To some extent, this work will need to be coordinated with painting.

Known Budget Cost £500.00*

3. Door Blinds

One window blind between the hall and lobby needs to be replaced. We should also consider fitting blackout roller blinds to the other doors to enhance hall users' privacy. **Fitting could be carried out by our own staff.**

Known Budget Cost of 3 blinds is £60.00*

4. Return the single lobby door to standard Spec.

As standard, doors are normally set to lock on closing with provision to disable the automatic locking for the period of hire. That means that it's just a door that people can use just the same as at home but without needing a key. (Pull the handle and the door opens). Hirers would be given the option to disable the self locking whilst the hall is in use. The door would then self close (as it should do) but still be openable. The idea is that the heat in the lobby is retained and a buffer of warm air is in place between the outside world and the halls. Contractor to be approached to re-enable manual disabling of the bar operation. **On the CW work list to review and report back.**

Can saving energy and money ever be a bad idea?

The safeguarding of vulnerable users applies to this item.

Budget cost £250.00

5. Rectify the faulty locking on the left hand door (from the inside) of the double lobby doors.

Both doors can be set to non self locking (fuel saving mode) and the key to do this is already on the hirers' key set. The left hand door drags and the locking off mechanism is faulty. We need a contractor (or competent CW) to remedy both faults. It would also improve the hirers' experience. The default on both doors should be to self close. The right hand one would need attention to stop it self latching open, purely for energy saving reasons.

Budget cost £400.00. **On the CW work list to review and report back.**

6. Rectify the Rear Hall Door locking system.

The lower bolt drags on the ground and it is difficult to close correctly. This causes a security issue because the user of the hall may not be strong enough to correctly close the door. **The mechanism is loose and this item has been added to the Potential CW worklist to review and report.**

We have had several recent incidents of the Caretaker/Councillor finding the door partly unlatched. We may need to ask a contractor to shorten the lower bolt. Lubrication of the bolts has improved the situation but the dragging bolt needs urgent attention. We think that the door also needs a closer for energy saving reasons. We might need to replace the entire mechanism. Budget cost £1,000.00 or £250.00* for remedial action.

A pull handle and a Closing Procedure notice has been added to the door.

7. Painting and Decorating

Currently, the decoration of the entrance lobby and small hall are incomplete but passable. We also have a lot of damage from posters being stuck to walls with bluTack.

"Don't stick stuff onto the walls" will become part of the hirers' conditions with financial penalties for infringements. Parties and Christmas seem to be when the damage occurs.

After much thought we have concluded that we should get the work done by professionals. We need to make it clear that we need a contractor who is prepared to work round the hirers as there are some fairly long periods of non use of the halls. We think that this approach would give us some visible progress and a decent finish.

Some painting has been approved by Full Council.

Three painters have been approached and have quoted. There is a wide gap between their prices so the suggested approach is to use the cheapest in (say) the kitchen or bar to assess their work. Then review the situation.

We have Full Council approval to decorate the Bar, Bar Store and Bar Seating Areas for £650.00 but have now postponed it and have obtained full Council approval to paint the Small Hall and rear lobby.

This work is currently on hold while we provide wall hanging hooks that hirers might use to hang decorations.

Staff to receive training on hoists in order to enable safe working at height.

Mr T. (one of the quoting painters) didn't like the stark white in the lobby. We agree. We discussed "National Trust" green and blue for there but not everywhere. Definite pastel shades. VH team to decide if and when and put it to Council. We have specified Dulux trade or close alternative paints.

We should also be creating specific reserves for the jobs.

We could consider replacing some or all of the toilet mirrors that are showing signs of ageing.

Whilst we should be looking for grants, we should also take a prudent view and make financial provisions. Or just save up by creating reserves.

8. Rear Lobby Entrance Grit Trap Mat

There is currently no way that visitors who use the rear door can clean their shoes. We need a mat well or grit trap so that the Small Hall floor can be kept cleaner. Poor weather and the winter add to this problem so it needs to be resolved by about October. **A source of supply of wells and mats has been identified.**

9. Hall Chairs

We have had complaints about the lack of proper cushioning on the chairs. It's a fair point. We have found a supplier of upholstery foam and will be doing exploratory work. **A review of the task has been added to the list of jobs that might come under the heading of rainy day jobs for the CWs.**

Low Priority Level 4

1. Downpipe on outer wall of bar seating area

Appears to be blocked. Lower end not visible so where the water eventually goes is unknown. The high level of the Con Club drive is probably not helping the underfloor dampness. **Generally, the height of the soil beside the wall needs review. Airbrick(s) might be obstructed.**

2. External Window Sill - Clerk's Office

Whilst assessing the S&S work we noticed that the window sill to the south window of the Clerk's office appears to need a repair, at best. It's oak, so won't be cheap if a replacement is needed. Say £1,000.00. note that there are Heritage/Conservation issues on repair work.

This could be part of the window project if that is progressed reasonably soon but the H&S survey suggested that it needs urgent inspection to determine if it might fail, fall and cause injury. Not considered dangerous but is unsightly. Estimated repair Cost £1k*

3. Main Hall front doors

These are not as easy to close as they should be. We have had recent episodes of doors being left open/unlatched. They need attention from an expert. Fitting a pull handle and giving clearer advice might help.

Minimum budget £400.00. **A review of the problem has been added to the list of possible CW jobs. A pull handle and Closing instruction notice have been added to the doors in an attempt to alleviate the situation until a permanent solution is found. .**

4. Roof/Ceiling Insulation

Whilst the heating upgrades were in progress we were able to inspect the insulation above the Small Hall. It's thin and well below the current suggested thickness. We need to plan for improvements and look for "ECO" grants. We need a plan in place ready for when the grants appear.

The insulation above the Main Hall has not been inspected.

5. Curtains/Blinds

All curtains and runners are showing their age. We feel that, as a minimum, the runners should be replaced. The practicality of doing that but not replacing the curtains at the same time needs to be considered.

If we hire a hoist for other works, a review of the curtain runners will be undertaken. Some replacements might be needed.

6. Remote Thermostats

There is a case for setting the temperatures and heating times remotely. **Originally suggested as possibly a task for the Assistant Clerk. Staff changes might mean that we follow White Colne's lead and employ a Hall Bookings Administrator on a fixed weekly hour contract.** The cost of a remote system has not been explored. No action currently planned as VH team prepare the weekly spreadsheets and they and the caretaker adjust the timers, so is cost free.

7. Add a Commercial Dishwasher to the kitchen.

Should we make the kitchen more attractive to hirers by providing a commercial dishwasher.? This is a long term project that would need more research and costings. Franke Kingfisher, counter top model.

£1116.00 plus fitting £150.00

Estimated Cost £1266.00 *

8. Add a Commercial microwave to the kitchen

Nisbetts, Samsung £580.00 *

We feel that it would make the hall more attractive to hirers.

Supply of a microwave is included in possible Youth Group plans.

9. Fridge/Freezers

The white fridge appears to not be working properly. Say £400.00 for a domestic type replacement. It would be a larger type fridge (no freezer compartment) and the actual unit should be a spot decision on the day. No urgency until we have hirers, but do we even need two fridges?. Perhaps procure a second hand one? An untidy option, but perhaps dispose of the fridge and use the space for storage in crates?

10.. Small Hall Projector Screen.

The projection system in the Small Hall projects onto a plain wall. In an ideal situation, we'd have a proper screen. There has been very little demand for this so, until now, we have considered the wall to be sufficient. We need to make clear that access, other than to play BluRay films, to this system requires a computer, some expertise, and practice. It is not Plug and Go. Work needed on a written operating procedure.

The discussions around use of the hall for Youth activities will change the priority on this. ECC Youth service may have funds for a screen. Grants might be available. Budget cost for an electrically operated screen, £300.00.

Showing of films attracts a Performing Rights charge for a licence.

We have been offered a screen and will investigate it's suitability.

11. Provide more Storage.

Some of the kitchen cupboards are under utilised so some rationalisation of their contents should be done and locks fitted.

Capital Projects and Long Term Improvements

1. Front Section Wooden Windows (Replacement)

These were part of the "grand plan". They are old, single glazed, insecure and failing. We need to progress this. Note that there are "heritage" issues here too.

Budget Cost £60k but grants are involved.

Estimated cost to us £30k*

2. Small White "sash" windows on South face (Toilets)

All are rotten and need to be replaced. They are possibly part of the inherited "big" plan, We suggest that we start replacing in fours or reserving or looking at grants.

£4,000.00 pa annual reserve as a minimum, and hope for the best.

Any grant income would be a windfall, but it would be imprudent if we made grant income part of our plans.

We need to have priced plans on file so that we can quickly respond to grant availability.

Old papers suggested aluminium units to match in with the entrance doors. There appears to be no merit in not using PVC. It might also have better thermal properties as well as being cheaper.

Known suggested annual reserve £4k*

3. Large Sash Windows in Small Hall

We have very old, but recently repaired and painted, sash windows that cannot easily be opened. Opening is currently impossible now that the secondary glazing has been fitted. We have already had complaints about lack of ventilation so will be investigating ways round the problem. Making the windows openable creates a potential security issue.

We need modern, properly insulated, windows with a remote opening system. When we get to this we will need to robustly oppose the "Conservation" view that they need to be made of wood.

Priced plans are needed for the file.

Known Estimate £10k*

4. Large Sash Windows in Large Hall

The Small Hall comments also apply to these windows. They have only had cursory attention in the last two years. They have secondary glazing but are in poor condition. There is probably no easy answer to this. The windows are to be painted shut. Any future plans need to include remote opening.

Priced plans needed for file.

Known Estimate £10k*

5. Paper Towels

All toilets have a single rolled paper towel dispenser. The system comes under pressure when we have weekend hirers. We currently have no weekend caretaking so we need more capacity.

When we know that there will be heavy use, the caretaker should be asked to put new towel rolls in and thoughtfully move them around.

Ideally, we need alternative/back up folded towel dispensers, a second dispenser or electric dryers.

Say 5 off folded paper dispensers at £40.00 each = £200.00

6. Prepare Long Term Toilet Refurbishment Plan

We probably need to have ready made renovation projects planned and priced. Should grant funds become available, we would then be in a good position to get the claim in early. For a start, the toilets, whilst functional, are very dated so we need modular design schemes ready to go.

Outside assistance needed.

Estimated £50k*

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The following were all new items for the JUNE 2026 Meeting:-

Not a full list. The H&S report has not been seen

ACTION PLAN ITEMS - H&S

1. Clerk office window filming. **H&S Group actioning this.**
2. PAT Testing.
3. Stair Lift Servicing - **Surveyed in late June. Repairs in August.**
4. Redundant dance mats (not ours) **are gone.**
5. Safety Tape on Stage Stairs and Bar Seating area margin.
6. Check that the Stage lighting documentation is complete. **It is.**
7. Steps to stage need gates. **Low Priority.**
8. Bar fridge freezer move to glass washer area. **Actioned.**
9. Remove glass wash area door. Possibly a job for CW/Handyman
10. Non slip mats for bar top. **Supplied in early June. Thank you to The Drum PH in Earls Colne.**
11. Foyer "box office" glass filming. Low priority.
12. Small Hall stairs to stage need gates. Low priority
13. Electronic lock project to be progressed. **Main door lock received. Keys procured for rear doors.**
14. Replace childproof inserts in electrical sockets. **All low level sockets are now protected. The kitchen ones, on the assumption that it's only infants at risk, will not be done. NB that UK sockets are inherently safe anyway. The infants at risk would need tools to open the shutters to expose live contacts.**
15. **Fit code operated locks to both end of the kitchen. Locks received.**
16. **Rearrange shelves in COSSH cupboard. More storage lower down and none above head height. Storage for floor washing machines attachments is needed.**

ACTION PLAN ITEMS - FIRE Some questions to H&S and the author of the report remain unanswered at present.

1. Front RH fire door operation **On the list for CW attention. A pull handle and an operating instruction notice have been fitted.**
2. Gas Meter cupboard needs a Fire Key, not a keysafe lock. **Received. Carpentry probably involved so will be an outside contractor task.**
3. Cooker gas and electrical tests. Sibley consulted in June. **Visit tba.**
4. Cooker hood filters. Councillor to Clean.
5. Extract system Services:- 1 x kitchen, 1 x Glass wash area, 1 x Main Hall, 1 x Toilets. Sibleys can do all except the Main Hall one. **Date tba.**
6. Move Fire Assembly Point sign. **H&S have resolved this.**
7. All fire door brush seals
8. Main Hall PA PAT testing? **Same time as everything else.**
9. Remove bump stop on Main Hall entrance from Foyer. This was put in place because the closer is rather fierce. **We have added this to the list of jobs that the CW's might be able to tackle.** There will be a spare closer when the glass washer area door is removed. If it can't be adjusted to close softly, we will need to change to conventional closers. Estimated £400.00
10. Fireproofing of Stage Curtains. Investigate and remedy if needed. Some research has been done. Supplier of materials identified.

ACTION PLAN ITEMS - FOOD HYGIENE

1. Current Food Hygiene Certifications
2. Draught Beer lines. No action proposed. Visiting bars will be told that there are no facilities. Without cask refrigeration, these are of no use.

ACTION PLAN ITEMS - OTHER

1. Procure a floor washer. **Purchased**
2. Procure a small area spot cleaner. **Purchased.**
3. Rectify/replace Bar area water heater. **Actioned July '26**
4. Progress the poor performing toilet flush and other minor issues **Agreed at the June meeting. Awaiting Plumber.**
5. Painting Small Hall Agreed at June meeting. The question about a) festoon lights and b) More hooks for Xmas decorations has now been resolved and is on a list of CW tasks. New notice boards will need to have been fitted before paint.