

ST. NICHOLAS HURST PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD IN ST NICHOLAS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, HURST
ON TUESDAY 6TH JANUARY 2026 AT 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Curry (in the Chair),
Ewart, Kendall, Percival, Robinson and Smith.

OFFICERS: Mrs Maria Bradshaw, (Clerk).

PUBLIC: Six Members of the Public.

9646 **Public Forum**

The Chair welcomed the public and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

There were no questions in the public forum.

9647 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Boyd, Eastaugh and Openshaw.

9648 **Declarations of Interest**

There were none to declare.

9649 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd December 2025 were approved.

9650 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

9651 **Borough Councillor Update**

The Chair welcomed Borough Councillor Conway to the meeting. His key updates were:

Progress of the Local Plan Examination

The Local Plan has now passed the first stage of examination by the Inspectors. This stage considers the strategic soundness of the plan and allocation. Councillor Conway confirmed that this is extremely good news for the Borough and now proceeds to Stage 2 which looks at policy details.

Local government three-year finance settlement

Despite the Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC) vigorous campaign, the financial settlement for the Borough is less pleasing. Whilst agreement exists that an additional £9m of funding should be allocated to WBC, this will not be realised as insufficient monies are in the system. The budget has been profiled over three years with the burden becoming harder over the latter part of the three year period. £16m is in earmarked reserves to try and lesson the blow but it will be an extremely difficult time financially.

Twyford Station parking

Councillor Conway had met that day with representatives from GWR and Highways colleagues from WBC. He reported that the ambition to put an extra 50 parking spaces on the site of the old coal yard appeared an expensive option at £2m. Consideration is being given to joint capital funding arrangements between GWR and WBC. Areas for more secure cycle storage were also discussed.

It would appear that some people are now choosing to park very early in the morning on the main road, when parking spaces are available at the station. It is recognised that people are aiming to save on parking expenses. Councillor Conway reported that consideration may be given to charging for off road parking in the future. In the meantime, recommendations regarding parking restrictions in the area go to the Executive at WBC this coming week.

Some general discussion was held regarding the conflict between pedestrians, buses, cars and taxis at the forecourt area of the station and the hazard this can cause.

9652 **Friends of St Nicholas**

The Chair welcomed Mark Say to the meeting, along with representatives from the Friends of St Nicholas and local landowners. A recently formed organisation, the Friends of St Nicholas are aiming to raise funds to provide a safe pedestrian access from the village, up Church Hill to the pub and church. The cost of such is believed to be in the region of £100k.

Mr Say explained that some initial consultation had been undertaken launching the idea at the Christmas fair. The project had received great support. His attendance at the Parish Council meeting was the next stage of consultation. He was seeking support for the concept and a possible financial contribution from the Parish Council from CIL monies. He reported very positive support for the project.

Mr Say confirmed that the planning application had been submitted to WBC.

Councillor Robinson had a number of questions:

Q: will dogs be allowed to use the path?

A: yes, if safely leashed. There are gates and fencing in the plans.

Q: are there any provisions for dog waste bins?

A: not at the moment.

Q: is there a minimum/maximum term for the permissive path. What happens if the current landowners sell?

A: legal advice has recommended an easement in the deeds which covers this off in the event of the current landowners selling.

Q: it is noted that the hedge at the side of The Old School House is to be removed. This is an area of special character and removing it destroys the feel.

A: it will be replaced with hazel screening to preserve privacy.

Q: is any work planned within the curtilage of the Grade 1 listed church yard area and will this interfere with any war graves?

A: albeit the church have provided a map of burial sites this has been found to be outdated. The Arch Deacon is currently assisting with this.

Q: what other consultation have you done?

A: the Christmas fair and this meeting is the first round of consultation. We are looking to keep communication open via NHVS and Parish Council communication channels.

Mr Say invited any further questions. There were none. The Chair confirmed that the Parish Council would consider everything they had been told and revert back to Mr Say.

Borough Councillor Conway and two Members of the Public left the meeting.

9653 **Planning Applications**

Members discussed the applications attached to these Minutes. They had no adverse comments pertaining to applications 252879, 252994 and 253011. The Clerk confirmed that application 253006 had been withdrawn.

Members objected to application 253074.

RESOLVED: the Clerk to communicate comments to WBC.

9654 Community Hub Update

Councillor Robinson reported that he is now waiting for building regulations to be drawn up and had no further update at this stage.

9655 Finance

The following accounts were presented for approval this month:

Jan-26								
			Main Fund	CIL*	Neighbourhood Planning	Lodge Rd Appeal	Total	
Previous Balance			£ 74448.98	217161.66	-5027.62	1442.29	288025.31	
The following accounts are presented for approval this month:								
Ref	Expenditure - Payee							
10.1	iQED (remote support)		44.06					
10.2	P Palmer (dog bin installation)		75.00					
10.3	Bibby (dog waste removal Nov. 2025)		251.32					
10.4	Treetop Landscapes Ltd (Xmas tree)		354.00					
10.5	Advantage Print room (Carol sheets)		59.58					
10.6	SCS (monthly grounds maintenance)		905.02					
10.7	P Curry (St Nicholas Night expenses)		94.92					
10.8	M Bradshaw (St Nicholas night expenses)		32.34					
10.9	5G (monthly phone)		42.86					
10.10	F Bradshaw (St Nicholas night expenses)		64.47					
10.11	F Bradshaw (St Nicholas night expenses)		16.46					
10.12	M Bradshaw (St Nicholas night expenses)		81.45					
10.13	7digital Ltd (music licence)		25.47					
10.14	Hurst Cricket Club (donation for parking on St Nichoals Night)		50.00					
10.15	St Nicholas CE Primary (Hall hire Oct/Nov)		50.00					
10.16	St Nicholas CE Primary (Hall hire Dec)		25.00					
10.17	NALC (registration fee for Local Council Award Scheme)		60.00					
10.18	Castle Water (allotments)		608.90					
10.19	Bibby (dog waste removal Dec. 2025)		251.32					
10.20	SLCC (annual membership)		253.00					
10.21	M Bradshaw	Salary (August)	1886.09					
		(Income Tax)	-143.00					
		(National Insurance)	-67.05					
		(Pension)	-122.60					
		Office	40.00	1593.44				
10.22	LGPS (Employee pension £122.60 + Employer pension £513.02)			635.62				
10.23	HMRC (Employee's Income Tax £143 + Employee's NI £67.05 + Employer's NI £220.36)			430.41				
Total Expenditure			6004.64	0.00	0.00	0.00	6004.64	
Income								
	Bank interest		908.42					
	Cashback		1.26					
	Dunt Lane rent		80.00					
Total Income			989.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	989.68	
Revised balance c/f			69434.02	217161.66	-5027.62	1442.29	283010.35	

Budget for 2026/27

The Clerk had previously circulated to Members a budget paper in respect of 2026/27. Members had no comments to add and it was agreed that the budget should be set at £72,750 for 2026/27 with a precept of £62,559. This represents a 5% increase on the previous year.

RESOLVED:

all payments were approved; and

the budget for 2026/27 was agreed at £72,750 with a precept being set at £62,559. The difference to be met from reserves.

9656 Approval of Policies

RESOLVED: the following policies were approved:

Employer Pension Fund Policy Statement;
Biodiversity Policy; and
Dignity at Work Policy, including Civility and Respect Pledge.

9657 Correspondence

Christmas tree lights.

The Clerk reported that the Christmas tree lights in the village had been victim of being snipped. Similar acts of vandalism had occurred in School Road on the evening of the 27th December. Whilst the lights are insured, the Clerk will review the cost of any claim against the purchase of a new set of lights.

Query regarding footpaths

The Clerk reported that she had been contacted by Borough Councillor Andrea with a parishoners query regarding a number of the footpaths in the village. The concern relates to the use of these paths as both bridleways and bicycles. The Clerk has sought advice from the Rights of Way Officer at WBC.

St Nicholas Night

The Chair reported that St Nicholas Night 2025 had once again gone well. The Clerk had recommended that there could be benefits to be gained from collaborating with the Church (who organise the Christmas fair) to provide a “Hurst Christmas Day”. It was apparent this year that a number of the businesses who were invited to the St Nicholas Night had already been at the Church fair and therefore declined.

The Clerk to liaise with the Church regarding 2026 arrangements and whether this collaboration could work.

9658 Information Reports

There were none to report.

The meeting ended at 8.33 p.m.

Signed.....

Date.....