

**MINUTES OF THE HEMPSTEAD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 15th May 2026 AT 8PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Attendees: 4 members of the public
Parish Councillors Emma Tarry (Vice-Chair), Diana Frost, Caroline Hughes and Mark Welbourn
The Clerk, Rebecca Cox
District Councillor Mike Tayler

Apologies: Nick Turkentine (Chair), James Nicholson

1 CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Vice-Chair, Emma Tarry, opened the meeting in the absence of the Chair, Nick Turkentine. She thanked members of the Parish Council and the Clerk for their work over the year, with specific mention of Diana Frost for organising the 100th anniversary rededication ceremony of the War Memorial. Special thanks were made to Martin Foley as Hempstead's County Councillor, up to the recent election, for his persistent support particularly with Highways issues, his attendance at Parish Council meetings and his regular informative input.

2 MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 23rd May 2025

The Vice-Chair invited those present to read the minutes from the previous Annual Parish Meeting. The minutes had been previously signed as a correct record at the Parish Council meeting in June 2025. There were no matters arising for discussion.

3 FINANCES

The draft accounts for the Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2026 were reviewed by those present and the Clerk reported that the total balance at Year End in the Parish Council's accounts was £16,265 (up from £13,619 on 31 March 2025).

The Clerk noted that the Parish Council are once again grateful that Ross Midgley is carrying out the annual governance review.

The precept for 2026/27 has been increased to £14,400 from £13,800, considering increased costs for grass cutting, ongoing maintenance projects (including work to the Ring O' Trees posts and the bus shelter) and the purchase of at least one new Speed Indicator Device.

There were no questions or comments from members of the public.

4 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

The Annual Report had been circulated to residents in advance of the meeting and copies were provided to all attendees. All those present were asked if there was anything in the report that they would like covered further, but nothing was raised.

The Vice-Chair highlighted the following:

Speedwatch – a reduced number of volunteers has meant it is unable to operate at present. The Parish Council will be purchasing at least one new speed indicator device this year, which should be able to record speeds, and the data collected might be able to be presented to the Police and be used to request official speed check visits.

Bus service – the Vice-Chair confirmed that Hempstead Parish Council, along with other Councils, had petitioned against possible withdrawal of the 320/321 bus service, which was successful.

5 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

District Councillor Mike Tayler had sent a written report, which the Clerk has published on the village website, and made his report as follows:

Local Plan – until 2041, should hopefully make a big difference to major planning in the district, but none planned in Hempstead and Sampford Ward, because of lack of infrastructure. It's recognised in the Local Plan that if there were a site and need for affordable housing, this would be supported by the Local Plan. Good for the environment/biodiversity is written into the local plan. Community Infrastructure Levy – to produce money for the infrastructure to support development.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – current timeframe allows for there to be elections for the shadow Unitary Authority in May 2027, with the Unitary Authority taking over fully in May 2028. At present it still appears that this timeframe will be worked to and that it will commence as planned despite recent changes at ECC (now in control of Reform).

What this might mean locally: Thaxted Ward (Thaxted and the Eastons) and Sampfords Ward could be served by 2 or possibly 3 members of the Unitary Authority. This might give much more local input in those services currently provided by Essex County Council.

Question – Diana Frost asked Councillor Tayler whether the money Uttlesford will be using for the LGR is from precept income? *Yes – rationalisation of Uttlesford services and reduction in building will have saved money, will be covered in the corporate plan and budget. Investments have meant Uttlesford better funded than other. Wouldn't be sustainable if went on for more than 2 years.*

Council Housing – Unfortunately the maintenance contract entered into last year with Axis Europe failed and has now been taken in house and being run by Uttlesford with sub-contractors.

EPC of C target for all Council housing, which might not be practicable for many residents. This has caused concern/upset for some residents who felt that they were being forced to have air source heat pumps, which were not practicable, and were not being offered repairs to oil boilers.

Planning Function – Uttlesford District Council were successful in being released from its planning designation state in June 2025, meaning all planning approvals in Uttlesford are once again under its own control.

Buses – Councillor Tayler reiterated the success of getting Hempstead's bus service retained until July 2028.

6 COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

The new County Councillor for Hempstead, Bo Davis, had been invited to the meeting but had not yet responded and was not in attendance.

7 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

The Vice-Chair then opened the meeting for further questions and discussion, with the following being raised by members of the public:

- Hill Road resurfacing – this has dropped out of the council planning resurfacing schedule (due from January 2026 but had been taken off in February 2026) with no explanation why. The Parish Council will be investigating why it has been taken off the list and when/if there is an explanation it will be followed up.
- Nigel Smith and District Councillor Tayler thanked the Parish Council for all their work over the previous year.

The Vice-Chair thanked the members of the public, District Councillor Tayler and the Parish Councillors for attending, and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8:41pm.