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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2026

Councillors Present: Stuart Gourley (Chairman), Owen Jeffery, Alan Macro, Richard Somner and Clive Taylor

Also Present: Andrew Reynolds, Jon Winstanley, Emma Jameson, Thomas Radbourne, Andrew Alty, and Gareth Dowding

PART I

1 Apologies

No apologies were received

2 Notes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting 4 August 2026 were approved as a true and accurate record subject to correcting Councillor Clive Taylor's declared interest as a member of Tilehurst Parish Council.

3 Action Log

The Chairman introduced the Action Log, and noted that 17 actions had been completed, and four remained in progress.

Actions:

The Action Log to be included in the agenda pack for future meetings.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Taylor declared an interest in Agenda Item 10(d) by virtue of the fact that he was the Chairman of Tilehurst Parish Council, as his interest was a personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the meeting.

5 Updated Terms of Reference

The Highways Improvement Group resolved to approve the updated Terms of Reference.

6 Public Questions

A full transcript of the public questions and answers is available from the following link: Transcript of Q&As.

Actions:

- Public questions received ahead of the meeting to be circulated to all members prior to the start of future meetings
- Refer the active travel and cycling safety issues raised regarding Andover Road to the Cycle Forum.

7 Introduction to Marlborough Highways (New Term Contractor)

Mr Phil Hartley presented an overview of Marlborough Highways, and highlighted the following:

- It had a direct-delivery model, and a workforce of 480 direct employees
- The contract features 20 key performance indicators (KPIs) across 10 themes, focusing initially on winter maintenance and reactive works
- Marlborough Highways highlighted social value and ran an operational apprenticeship scheme that recently took on 10 apprentices from 365 applicants.

The Chairman expressed strong interest in collaborating on Marlborough Highways' carbon-neutral operational goals and their "Parish Watch" communication scheme.

Members asked about the "Accident Frequency Rate" KPI target of 0.10. Mr Hartley clarified that the rate was calculated on a rolling 12-month basis comparing total hours worked against recorded incidents.

Actions:

- Share the detailed Highways Peer Review Action Plan with Marlborough Highways to identify partnership opportunities

8 Individual Decision for Discussion

Mr Andrew Reynolds presented the annual statutory Winter Maintenance Plan, detailing primary, secondary, snow clearance, and contingency gritting networks.

The consultation received five responses from local parishes and members.

Councillor Macro highlighted safety concerns regarding the pedestrian footbridge across the motorway and slip roads between Theale and Calcot, which was heavily used by school children and workers. He felt this should be included in the gritting schedule.

Officers clarified that treating footbridges during standard hoarfrost events was operationally and financially unsustainable.

Actions:

- Officers to look into minor safety measures such as handrails for the pedestrian footbridge crossing the motorway and slip roads between Theale and Calcot, and explore long-term funding from National Highways or the Department for Transport (DfT) for a complete bridge replacement.

9 Petitions and Motions Received

Mr Gareth Dowding presented Petition A (Hampstead Norreys Speed Limit).

A petition from Hampstead Norreys Parish Council requested a reduction of the village's 30mph limit to 20mph, alongside extending the entry-point speed limit zones.

Mr Dowding confirmed that there was support for a central village 20mph zone, and that desktop assessments and speed surveys would be conducted to present a recommendation to the Speed Limit Review Panel by the end of 2026.

Ms Danielle Amor presented Petition B (No. 2 Bus Service Reinstatement).

A petition with 254 signatures requested the reversal of recent changes to the **Route 2** bus service, specifically reinstating the terminus at Pigeons Farm/Monks Lane.

Ms Amor presented data showing that the affected Monks Lane stops previously generated only 4.9% of overall route patronage (1.4% excluding Newbury College).

Early statistics from the August service revision indicated that overall network patronage across **Routes 2**, **8**, and **9** actually increased compared to last year, and average network punctuality rose from 83% to over 87%.

Councillor Taylor expressed concern that ward councillors and the public were not consulted prior to implementing these changes.

The Chairman acknowledged the consultation failure and committed to implementing a formal notification and feedback process for ward councillors on all future bus service alterations.

Officers confirmed that the Council would continue to monitor the route's performance data and promote the Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service along Andover Road.

Actions:

- Ashampstead and Winterbourne Speed Reduction petitions to be included on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Draft a formal response to the Hampstead Norreys Speed Limit Petition outlining the assessment process and the timeline for the Speed Limit Review Panel
- Draft a response to the Route 2 Bus Service petition confirming the ongoing data review, the introduction of a new ward member consultation process, and an offer to meet the petition organiser once autumn patronage data was finalised.

10 Network Management Requests

Pedestrian Crossing on Pinchington Lane and Greenham Road (Item 10(a))

Councillor Billy Drummond requested a safe, controlled pedestrian crossing on Pinchington Lane and Greenham Road to aid school children, dog walkers, and cyclists accessing the common. He urged officers to find a viable physical solution.

Officers recommended that the authority undertake a comprehensive pedestrian and vehicle count during the current financial year to assess the feasibility of a crossing.

It was noted that the physical delivery of any crossing would need to be programmed for the 2027/28 financial year due to current budget and capacity constraints.

Policy on Unnamed Roads (Item 10(b))

Councillor Tony Vickers introduced the topic of attaching official names to unnamed rural roads, noting that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act had simplified previous legislative hurdles.

He highlighted that Central Government had devolved the creation of consultation processes directly to local highway authorities.

Councillor Vickers outlined a proposed drafting process where parish councils would lead on public consultation, site notices, and online mapping before submitting requests to the council's Street Naming and Numbering Officer.

This approach would require parishes to cover the administrative and legal costs.

Councillor Owen Jeffery supported the initiative, explaining that naming roads historically led to increased authority attention, such as implementing speed limits and heavy goods vehicle (HGV) bans on Crookham Hill and Crookham Common Road.

Councillor Macro noted that unnamed roads created significant safety risks for emergency services trying to locate rural accidents.

Mr Winstanley explained that establishing a legally binding, district-wide policy to avoid duplicate names and ensure robust legal standards would require substantial network management resources, meaning other projects would have to be pushed back.

Lawrences Lane (Item 10(c))

Members discussed potential future traffic restrictions to protect pedestrians and cyclists on Lawrences Lane.

The Chairman could not commit to a timeframe for reviewing the traffic restrictions but he would continue to engage with the ward members that had raised the issue.

Overdown Road, Tilehurst Controlled Crossing (Item 10(d))

Officers highlighted severe physical constraints to the creation of a controlled crossing on Overdown Road. These included driveways, bus stops, and existing speed cushions.

It was noted that Reading Borough Council was looking to install a crossing further down Overdown Road in a less congested area.

Members resolved to approve the officer recommendation to conduct a pedestrian and traffic count.

20mph Speed Limit Requests (Item 10(e))

A request had been received to reduce the speed limit on Goring Lane from 50/60mph to 40mph.

Officers and Thames Valley Police recommended maintaining the existing limit, as accident data showed incidents were concentrated at junctions due to visibility issues, rather than excessive speed on the main carriageway.

Members agreed with Officers recommendation for a focus on junction signing, lining, and visibility maintenance instead of a speed limit reduction.

A request had been received to extend the 30mph limit on approaches to Compton village.

Members agreed that the speed limit past Compton Secondary School (currently 40mph) be assessed specifically for a 30mph extension.

Actions:

- Officers recommended that the authority undertake a comprehensive pedestrian and vehicle count during the current financial year to assess the feasibility of a Pedestrian Crossing on Pinchington Lane and Greenham Road (Item 10(a))
- Executive Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways to consider developing a formal policy framework as part of the 2027/28 work programme, for a parish-led, light-touch model for the council to rename unnamed roads.
- Officers to develop option designs for traffic restrictions on Lawrences Lane for review at a future HIG meeting.
- Officers to conduct a pedestrian and traffic count on Overdown Road Tilehurst
- Officers to assess the speed limit past Compton Secondary School (Currently 40mph) specifically for a 30mph extension

11 Highways Peer Review Action Plan

Mr Winstanley introduced the Highways Peer Review Action Plan, and reported that it was highly positive.

The council had already addressed several recommendations via the new term maintenance contract.

The action plan would be systematically reviewed by members, with specific focus areas brought to future meetings.

Mr Hartley agreed to review the peer review action plan to identify where Marlborough Highways could support, particularly regarding communication strategies and technology innovations.

Action:

- The Highways Peer Review Action Plan to be systematically reviewed by members, with specific focus areas brought to future meetings.

12 For Information - DfT Highways Transparency Report Submission

Ms Emma Jameson presented the statutory 2026 transparency submission, which was publicly available on the council website

The report covered asset volumes, capital spending, grant allocations, and carbon reduction initiatives.

The submission formed the basis of the council's assessment for its "triple green" rating.

West Berkshire was currently one of only three local highway authorities in the country to hold the highest performance tier.

Members agreed to note the DfT Highways Transparency Report Submission.

13 Any Other Business

Councillor Richard Somner requested an update on Transport for the South East (TfSE) regional priorities, including rail links to Heathrow.

Officers noted that TfSE was currently reviewing its strategic position in light of devolution discussions, mayoral authorities, and potential local government reorganisation (LGR). If West Berkshire Council transitioned to a “Ridgeway” authority, its regional alignment may shift from the South East to the “Heart of England”

It was also highlighted that the main strategic corridor issues were currently being managed via the Local Prosperity Board.

Actions:

- Officers to draft a comprehensive overview of street works and lane rental proposals to present at the December 2026 HIG meeting.
- Officers to prepare a detailed briefing note on the Council’s strategic relationship with Transport for the South East (TfSE) for the next meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8:35pm)

CHAIRMAN …….

Date of Signature …….