Horsham Churches Together

# Minutes for HCT Forum – WEB VERSION

**Date:** Thursday 8th October 2026 **Time:** 7pm for 7.30pm start
**Venue:** Brighton Road Baptist Church, Brighton Road, Horsham, RH13 5BD
**Chair:** (PD) Pete Dibdin (Development Co-Ordinator)

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS HAD BEEN CIRCULATED PRIOR TO THE MEETING:

1. Meeting Agenda
2. Minutes of last Forum, including AGM (9th July 2026) – Web Version
3. Development Co-Ordinators Report
4. Horsham Matters Report

## Opening Prayer

PD opened the meeting in prayer, committing the discussions ahead to the Lord.

## Worship

There was a time of worship with a music lyric video "We Seek Your Kingdom" by Noel Robinson, Andy Flannagan, and Graham Hunter.

## Welcome

PD welcomed everyone to the Forum meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves, stating their names, the churches they represented, and whether they were attending the Forum for the first time.

New HCT Delegates: Valerie from St Mary's Horsham; Alin and his brother Afil from Bethel Church of God, Horsham.

## Apologies for absence

Apologies are listed with the attendance at the end of the Minutes. Apologies included Mark Lavender, HCT Deputy Moderator, who was unable to attend the meeting.

## Minutes of last Forum (including AGM (9th July 2026) and matters arising

Draft Minutes - circulated prior to meeting. There were no comments and no matters arising. PD signed the draft Minutes as approved and as an accurate record of that meeting.

## Moderator Update

PD advised that Clive Urquhart has stepped down and retired from his role as HCT Moderator after six years of service. The Forum acknowledges and appreciates Clive's commitment and service to HCT. A potential successor, has been approached who is currently considering the role. Members were asked to be patient while this process continues, with further updates to be provided as they become available, and to pray for God's guidance in appointing the new Moderator.

## Horsham Debt Advice (HDAS) Presentation

Mike Newman (MN), Chairman of Horsham Debt Advice Service (HDAS), presented an overview of its work. The presentation slides are available here, and printed copies were made available to attendees.

**About HDAS:**

- Background: Debt and financial vulnerability in Horsham have increased, particularly since Covid. MN highlighted the increasing financial vulnerability of clients, including those facing mental health difficulties, disability, unemployment and family breakdown.
- HDAS is open to all and provides, free, face to face, impartial, independent and non-judgemental debt advice and support for people experiencing financial difficulties. This includes budgeting assistance, debt-management options, negotiating with creditors, and ongoing support with an emphasis on dignity, fairness and safeguarding. HDAS is currently supporting 110 clients with over £1.8 million of debt.
- The service is delivered entirely by trained volunteers from all walks of life and experience. Probably half to maybe 60% are active church goers in different denominations within the Christian church. Based at Park House in Horsham Park, with volunteers providing support Monday to Thursday.
- Established in 2003 as an initiative of Horsham Churches Together, HDAS is a registered charity subject to Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulations. Controlled by their Trustee Board and its members, which are the churches who contribute financially each year, although these donations do not cover all operating costs.
- HDAS are allied with and working together with Christians Against Poverty (CAP) at Lifesprings Church. HDAS clients come to them, although they have on a few occasions gone out to their clients. Whereas with CAP their policy is to go out to visit their clients, the two organisations therefore complement one another's services.
- HDAS are affiliated with a national charity, Community Money Advice (CMA), which provides training, guidance and an online case-management system. CAP operates differently, with advice and support provided through its head office.
- On 24 March 2026, CMA and CAP announce that they are uniting to form the UK's largest community- based debt advice charity – both Charities will continue to operate in partnership and maintain their individual identities while combining their network to provide free, regulated debt advice. This took effect in June 2026.
- Churches were encouraged to be alert to vulnerable people in their communities and signpost them to appropriate support. Also, to pray for clients and volunteers, and support the charity's fundraising efforts. HDAS is seeking an additional trustee to provide independent oversight following a resignation due to long-term illness. Anyone interested was invited to contact Mike Newman or Jonathan Colson.

Finally, there was a Q&A:

1. A question was raised about using mobile technology to facilitate street donations and assist with translation for people whose first language is not English. MN advised that previous attempts at translation had proved laborious and often produced overly literal, unhelpful translations. HDAS now has a card reader to accept donations.
2. In response to a question about whether bailiffs still seize furniture and possessions, MN confirmed that this does happen in certain circumstances, Bailiffs may list and seize possessions if a debt remains unpaid after a court order or warrant has been issued.

## • Horsham Matters Report

A formal report from Kelvin Glen (KG), CEO of Horsham Matters, was circulated before the meeting.

KG highlighted that HM's work extends beyond its 15 weekly foodbanks across the Horsham district. The charity seeks to understand the underlying causes of food poverty, build trusting relationships with clients and provide non-judgemental support. Many people seeking help are in employment but struggle with rising living costs, illness, debt, or someone losing their job and not finding another job quick enough. Early intervention is vital to prevent financial difficulties from escalating and affecting families' health and wellbeing.

HM relies on its dedicated volunteers, staff, donors and community partnerships to continue its work. KG thanked local churches for their support, noting that over 350kg of food had been donated by churches during the previous month, that doesn't include donations made by individuals within congregations. As winter approaches, churches were encouraged to continue their Harvest collections and regular donations to help HM prepare for increased demand, particularly for those facing the choice between "heating or eating".

KG emphasised the importance of listening to people experiencing financial difficulties and signposting them to appropriate support at an early stage, including HM, HDAS, CAP and the Salvation Army.

HM is expanding its reach across the district, including rural communities, with additional funding enabling it to increase staffing. HM also shares surplus supplies with other foodbanks and receives support from them in return.

**Questions:**
Foodbank donations: In response to a question about current food bank needs, KG advised that tinned meat, tinned vegetables and tinned potatoes, along with toilet rolls, washing-up liquid and personal hygiene products, are particularly useful. The current needs list is available on the Horsham Matters website and through the BanktheFood app. Churches were encouraged to continue donating food and supporting the charity through volunteering. Further details are available on the HM donation page.

- **Christmas appeal:** In response to a question whether HM will be arranging a Christmas appeal KG advised:
    - HM is changing its approach this year, allowing parents to choose food and toys for their families from dedicated Christmas shelves at its 15 foodbanks, rather than preparing pre-packed boxes. The appeal will launch after the Harvest period. Churches wishing to organise their own collection or campaign were invited to contact KG to arrange collection or delivery and obtain social media materials.
    - Dunelm will again be delivering their annual Christmas community appeal 'Delivering Joy campaign' where HM will benefit.
- **Other Christmas appeals:** Rachel Abbott from the Salvation Army also confirmed that its '*Be A Star – Christmas Present Appeal'* would run again, providing toys, gifts and food vouchers to children, families and individuals across the district in partnership with local schools.

PD advised that details of these Christmas appeals would be shared in the HCT Notices once received.

## • Development Co-ordinator's Report

A brief report prepared by PD, Development Co-ordinator, was circulated before the meeting.

PD reported that, alongside recently moving house, he had continued engaging with organisations including Horsham District Council and Horsham Matters (HM), as well as a visiting church group from the USA who had discovered HCT through its website. The visitors were interested in how local churches work together in worship, prayer and mission, and hoped to share this approach with their own church community

Positive feedback has been received on the weekly Newsletter and Communications, which is now mobile-friendly and shared via the HCT website and Facebook. One church is using it as the basis for a monthly prayer update, helping its members pray for the work of local churches and charities.

Churches were encouraged to subscribe, share their community-facing events and send news or feedback to admin@horshamct.org.uk  Appreciation was expressed to PD for his work and to Anna Pisani for distributing the newsletter.

Christmas Promotions: As in the previous year, PD will promote Christmas events across the HCT community and invited churches to submit details of their events.

There were no questions.

## • Treasurer's report

PD provided an update on HCT finances, based on a report by Veronica Horvath (VH), HCT Treasurer,  as at the end of September 2026.

Firstly, the 'Cash Position', bank balance, is £14,344, this includes designated funds of £44.45 for Eco Churches, £1,000 for Evangelism Activities and £3,000 Space Art Trust Legacy.  HCT are currently discussing how best to use these latter two gifts creatively to support the Gospel work in Horsham but are open to ideas for consideration and to share them with the Executive Team.

Secondly, the 2026 Budgeted Income £17,681, total received £13,562 (includes £693.65 recovered for 2025)

PD thanked all the churches for their contributions. As churches operate on different financial years, with some making lump-sum payments and others contributing monthly, approximately £4,800 remains outstanding.

VH has prepared a draft budget for the coming year. As this is still in draft form, it was not circulated at the meeting. The budget is expected to be similar to last year's, with a slight increase to account for inflation.

Any questions regarding the finances and budget should be directed to VH.

VH requested churches to send in their latest updated congregation numbers.

No questions were raised.

- Future Dates
  - Carols in the Carfax: Saturday 5 December 2026, 11am–1pm, with the Slinfold Concert Band. (PD clarified that there will be festive music from 11am, with the Carol singing and the Christmas story starting at 11.30am, with Mark Lavender from St John's Broadbridge Heath, and Deputy HCT Moderator, sharing the Gospel message. Then about 12.15pm the Slinfold Concert Band will play some further festive music)
  - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: 18–25 January 2027.
  - Good Friday United Service: Friday 26 March 2027, 11.15am, in the Carfax.
  - Future 2027 HCT Forum Meeting Dates (to be advised)
- Any Other Business
  - Jan Walshe (JW) raised the subject of HCT churches' involvement with local care and residential homes and suggested exploring whether further information could be shared through the HCT website. There are many HCT churches who go into local care or residential homes to see their individual members of their congregations, but there are also some churches that go into care homes to take a communion service or worship service or a dementia friendly service. JW wondered whether it would be helpful to publish details of these services and have them on the HCT website, including days and times, to help raise awareness and improve access to this ministry. JW offered to compile a list of potential care and residential homes and put together a rota.
  - Thanks to Brighton Road Baptist Church, Horsham for hosting the Forum.
- Closing Prayer

The Forum meeting divided into small groups to share and pray what is happening locally and in our nation including items highlighted in the Forum.

Meeting ended approximately 21.05

Minutes taken and typed up by AP.

There were 24 attendees, representing 16-member churches.