



Walton Parish Council

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at St John's Church Community Hall, Old Chester Road, Higher Walton, on Thursday 5 March 2026.

Present: C Hewitt – Chair

Councillors: S Harris (Deputy-Chair), A Williams, J Cooke, H Allison, R Hardie, R Bennett (arrived 19:03), Cllr Lacey, Cllr Hazeldine and E Jones.

In attendance: The Clerk - Madison Brotherton-Baker.

The Chair opened the meeting at 19:02, and welcomed those present.

291 Apologies for absence

The Clerk advised that apologies were received from Cllr Saberi.

292 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at this point in the meeting.

293 Matters to be considered with the exclusion of the press and public

[In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, section 1(2)]

At this point no items were considered necessary to exclude the press and public.

294 Public Participation

In accordance with Standing Orders, Members of the public and any visitors in attendance may address the meeting.

294.1 PCSO Report – No report was received. The Clerk advised that the report would be circulated once received.

294.2 Members of the Public - No members of the public were in attendance.

294.3 Borough Councillors – Cllr Harris provided an update on the Warrington Parish Boundary Review, noting that Warrington Borough Council (WBC) has submitted proposals to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The proposals indicate that Walton Higher and Lower may become part of the Stockton Heath Ward. Under this arrangement, there would continue to be two Borough Councillors. Walton is currently within the Appleton Ward.

It was noted that consultation on WBC's submission will run from 30 June to 7 September 2026, with final decisions expected in early December 2026.

Cllr Harris also provided an update on Warrington Borough Council's financial position, noting that WBC has set and approved its budget for 2026/27, which includes projected savings and significant reductions in expenditure. It was further noted that there will be a 7.48% increase in Council Tax for the year, and that the Council has confirmed receipt of Exceptional Financial Support.

The financial budget has been published and can be viewed online at:
<https://www.warrington.gov.uk/budget>

295 Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5 February 2026 were **Resolved** as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

Cllr Bennett advised that he does not use his Walton Parish Council official email account and requested to receive Council agendas and minutes in hard copy. Agendas will continue to be served electronically, with -paper copies also to be provided to the Councillor as requested.

The Clerk also advised that all information required to gain email access had previously been sent to Cllr Bennett. Cllr Hazeldine agreed to assist Cllr Bennett with resolving the email access issue.

296 SLCC

296.1 Clerk's Professional Membership Renewal. The Clerk advised that the invoice had now been received and the cost was £116.00, rather than the £200.00 stated in the agenda.

It was **Resolved** to approve the renewal of the Clerk's membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) for 2026/27 at a cost of £116.00.

296.2 It was noted that the Clerk will be attending the Cheshire SLCC Branch meeting on Tuesday 17 March at Helsby.

297 Financial

297.1 Online Banking Update. The Clerk provided a verbal update on the progress of moving the Council to Lloyds Online Banking, which was opened on 13 February 2026. Welcome packs were handed out at the meeting to four signatories. The Clerk had not yet received a welcome pack for Cllr Hardie and will make further enquiries.

The Clerk advised that an application for the Clerk to gain access to the account as a delegated authority had been submitted. The Clerk is not a signatory and would only have access to view the account and set up payments, subject to approval by the account signatories.

It was noted that the next step will be to transfer the Council's balance from NatWest to Lloyds, leaving sufficient funds in the NatWest account to cover any uncleared cheques.

297.2 Finance Report and Bank Reconciliation. The Finance Report had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.

The Council reviewed the bank reconciliation prepared by the Clerk to the end of February 2026.

Balance as per 23 February 2026 bank statement: £39,208.99

Less unrepresented cheques: £1,339.14

Balance in hand: £37,869.85

Cllr Bennett signed the February bank statement in accordance with the Clerk's bank reconciliation.

The Clerk advised that the missing cheque to The Print Shop (Warrington) (Cheque No. 1681) had now been cancelled, allowing a replacement cheque to be issued within the proposed payments for the month. Thanks were expressed to Cllr Hardie for arranging the cheque cancellation with the bank.

It was also noted that a new cheque book for the NatWest account had been received, starting at Cheque No. 1711.

Proposed payments:

- Clerk Salary - £444.50
- Gardenia Gardens Invoice 11432 - £468.00
- HMRC PAYE - £21.39
- Clerk Reimbursement Ink (black and colour) and Paper - £51.78
- Farmers of Stockport Bronze Restoration - £2,880.00 (£2,400 +VAT)
- SLCC Membership Invoice MEM257832-1 - £116.00
- The PrintShop- Christmas Posters (Cheque reissue) - £48.00
- Information Commissioner's Office Data Protection Fee - £52.00

It was **Resolved** to accept the Finance Report and approve the above payments, and for the Clerk to prepare and issue cheques accordingly.

298 Walton Roads and Bridges

Cllr Harris provided an update following her meeting with Stephen Hunter (WBC) regarding roads around Walton. No updates had been received at this stage; however, she will continue to liaise with the new Warrington Borough Council Highways Officer.

Cllr Harris also advised that she is reviewing the Walton Road Bridge closure with Ian Brackenbury (WBC) and will provide a further update at the next meeting.

Residents' parking permits for Old Chester Road were discussed. Cllr Williams reported that correspondence had been received confirming that Warrington Borough Council intends to review the residents' parking permit scheme, with further information expected in due course.

299 Strategic Plan

Cllr Lacey advised there were no updates for this meeting.

It was noted that Cllr Saberi is liaising with the Clerk from Moore Parish Council regarding Port Warrington. An update will follow.

300 Creamfields

The Parish Council agreed to hold a resident meeting ahead of the Creamfields event to gather feedback from residents, which can be shared with the event organisers.

It was agreed that the meeting will be held at St John's Church Hall on Saturday 18 April, 10:30am – 12:00pm. Cllr Harris will prepare the agenda for the meeting.

It was also agreed that the Council will invite MP Sarah Hall and The Walton Arms Pub/ Pesto Manager to attend. The Clerk will arrange the hall booking.

301 Reports from Advisory Groups

301.1 Planning

301.1.1 The Planning Group had not yet elected a chair, nor updated its Terms of Reference.

301.1.2 The following applications were discussed:

2026/00108/FULH - 1 Old Hall Close, Walton, Warrington, WA4 6SZ- Proposed single-storey front extension and render to existing property.

WPC made no comment on this application.

2026/00181/DISCON - United Utilities, Warrington South Waste Water Treatment Works Bellhouse Lane, Walton, Warrington, WA4 6TS -Discharge of condition 4 (Characterisation, remediation and verification strategy) and 5 (Remediation and Verification) on application 2025/01486 (Motor Control Centre Kiosk).

WPC made no comment on this application.

2026/00194/TPO - 110 Old Chester Road, Walton, Warrington, WA4 6TG- Fell 1 No. Tree and Remedial works to 1 No. Tree.

WPC made no comment on this application.

2026/00201/TPO - Bennetts Farm, Holly Hedge Farm Holly Hedge Lane, Walton, Warrington, WA4 5QP- Remedial works to trees.

WPC made no comment on this application.

2026/00230/TPO - 4 Brookwood Close- Remedial work to two trees.

WPC made no comment on this application.

301.1.3 It was noted that the Council had been made aware of an enforcement matter (ENF/26/10964) relating to trees at The Walton Arms Pub, although no specific details had been provided. The Parish Council will continue to monitor the matter.

301.2 Betterment Advisory Group

301.2.1 Cllr Allison updated Members on the Betterment Advisory Group meeting held on 17 February 2026. Notes from the meeting were included in the agenda pack, and current actions were outlined.

It was noted that the next Betterment Advisory Group meeting will be held on 21 April 2026 at 2.00 pm (venue to be confirmed).

Cllr Allison advised that the Great British Spring Clean litter pick will take place between 13 and 29 March 2026.

The Council discussed a potential vacancy for a Parish Ranger/Handyman. It was agreed that this would be reviewed by the Employment Advisory Committee to determine whether there is a requirement for this position.

Cllr Harris updated the Council on actions undertaken to seek permission from Warrington Borough Council to cut back overhanging branches from the tree adjacent to the War Memorial, which are causing damage.

It was noted that Cllr Harris has contacted Warrington Borough Council regarding the matter, highlighting the local public interest in the War Memorial.

Cllr Harris will pursue this further and arrange a meeting with a representative from Warrington Borough Council to progress the issue.

301.2.2 Summer Bedding Plants

The Council considered the recommendation of the Betterment Group regarding the planting of community planters. It was **Resolved** to approve expenditure of £405.12 plus VAT (£486.14) for the planting of seven 1m planters with summer bedding and one 1m × 1m planter with herbs for community use, with plants to be purchased from Primrose Hill Nurseries.

301.2.3 Relocation of Planters on Park Lane / A56 Junction

The Council considered the recommendation of the Betterment Group to relocate the two planters currently located at the Park Lane / A56 junction. It was suggested that moving the planters would help keep the junction clear and improve visibility for vehicles. It was **Resolved** that the planters be relocated to Worsley Road / QEII Field. Cllr Bennett advised that he would assist with moving the planters. The exact location within QEII Field will be reviewed.

301.2.4 Residents' Survey – Draft Proposal and Progress Update

Cllr Williams provided a progress update and confirmed that the proposed survey will be sent as a paper copy to all residents. The survey will also be available to complete online or via paper copy, with drop-off locations at St John's Church, Stockton Heath Library, and Broomfields Leisure Centre.

The Clerk will update the survey to incorporate recommendations from the Betterment Group and circulate the final draft to all Councillors for comment.

301.2.5 St John's Church Car Park Proposal

It was noted that the Betterment Group's recommendation for the Church car park was Option 3 (opposite the Lychgate), rather than Option 2 as stated in the agenda pack.

The residents' meeting held by the Church on 25 February was noted. The Clerk advised that a resident had been in contact to share feedback from the meeting.

It was agreed that Cllr Harris would act as the liaison with the Church and residents regarding the potential car park proposal, given her existing involvement with Warrington Borough Council regarding local roads in Walton.

The Council agreed that further information would be required regarding the potential impact on residents and the local environment before any formal Council recommendation on a car park option could be made. The Clerk will advise the Church.

It was agreed that any recommendation made by the Parish Council would be subject to the necessary planning permission being obtained.

301.3 **Events Advisory Group**

301.3.1 Events Advisory Group Meeting – 17 February 2026

Cllr Cooke provided Members with an update from the Events Group meeting. The meeting notes were included in the agenda pack.

301.3.2 War Memorial Plaque Event.

The Parish Council agreed that the event will be referred to as a Service of Rededication, rather than a plaque unveiling. Clerk to amend poster for the event and to promote on the Walton Parish Council Facebook page.

Cllr Cooke confirmed that the event, to be held on 10 April 2026 at 11:00am, will be attended by MP Sarah Hall and the Mayor.

Decoration of bunting or other proposals for the event will be reviewed by the Events Group.

Cllr Cooke advised that she is currently reviewing the required paperwork with Warrington Borough Council for the event.

301.3.3 Refreshments for the Service of Rededication

It was **Resolved** to approve expenditure of up to £250 for refreshments following the War Memorial Service of Rededication.

301.3.4 Wreath for War Memorial Service of Rededication Event

It was **Resolved** to approve expenditure of up to £50 for the purchase of a wreath for the War Memorial for the Service of Rededication event.

301.3.5 Easter Decorations – QEII Field

It was **Resolved** to approve expenditure of up to £50 for the purchase of Easter decorations for QEII Field. It was noted that Councillors will check the current storage location for last year's Easter decorations.

Cllr Cooke updated the Council that the Events Group will be putting the Easter decorations up on the QEII Field on 30 March, 2026 at 11:00am.

301.3.6 Events Assets and Storage

Possible storage solutions for assets used by the Events and Betterment Groups were discussed. It was suggested that the Parish Council enquire whether Walton Hall may have suitable storage space available. The Chair will make enquiries with the Walton Hall Estates Manager.

The Chair asked Councillors to consider possible locations for a central storage space and report back.

The Clerk will circulate the assets register to the Events and Betterment Groups for review.

301.4 Donations

301.4.1 Donations Group Meeting – 10 February 2026

The meeting notes of the Donations Group meeting held on 10 February 2026, included in the agenda pack, were acknowledged.

301.4.2 Donations Limits

The Council considered the Donations Advisory Group's recommendation to maintain the current donations limits.

It was noted that any exceptional requests falling outside the remit of the Donations Advisory Group should be considered by Full Council.

It was further noted that the Donations Advisory Group recommended that the Parish Council does not adopt a Grants Policy at this time, due to the level of the precept and the limited capacity to administer a formal grants scheme.

It was **Resolved** to accept the recommendation and maintain the current limits of £200 per individual donation and an overall annual cap of 5% of the Parish Council's precept for total donations.

301.4.3 Terms of Reference

It was **Resolved** to approve the updated Terms of Reference for the Donations Group, as included in the agenda pack.

301.4.4 Donations Policy and Application Form

It was **Resolved** to approve the updated Donations Policy and Donations Application Form, as included in the agenda pack.

301.4.5 Donations Application Received

The Council considered an application for financial assistance towards a Girlguiding residential trip.

Cllr Jones advised that the Donations Group had met on 4 March 2026 and recommended that the application should not be supported, as it fell outside of the Walton Parish area and therefore did not meet the Council's donations criteria.

It was **Resolved** to accept the Donations Group's recommendation and decline the application.

The Clerk will write to the applicant to advise them of the Council's decision.

302 Reports from Portfolio Holders and Outside Representatives

302.1 Footpaths/Towpaths

Cllr Hazeldine reported damaged barriers at the Chester Road / Runcorn Road junction and advised that he had experienced difficulties reporting the issue via the Warrington Borough Council reporting portal. Borough Councillor Matt Scott confirmed that he will liaise with Cllr Hazeldine to report the damaged metal fencing to Warrington Borough Council.

302.2 Highways, Vegetation and Street Lighting

Cllr Allison advised that there had been no further updates from Warrington Borough Council regarding the cutting back of vegetation on Hobb Lane. Borough Councillor Matt Scott will follow this up with Warrington Borough Council.

The Chair thanked Councillor Bennett for his detailed review, including photographs and videos provided to the Clerk to support reporting issues within the Walton area. These matters have been reported to Warrington Borough Council by the Clerk and recorded within the Councillors' Contact Tracker.

302.3 Walton Hall Estate

No report.

303 Report on Actions taken and correspondence received since the previous meeting.

303.1 QEII Field – Title Deeds and Reference Documents

Members noted that the QEII Field title deeds and associated reference documents have been scanned and securely stored electronically on the Council's OneDrive system. It was further noted that the original hard copy documents remain retained by the Council.

303.2 The Correspondence Log

The Correspondence Log was included within the agenda pack. The Clerk provided a verbal update on several items of note.

- A resident email was received regarding a mud-trodden path. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact Gardenia to discuss reinstating the grassed area.
- A resident had emailed the Council providing feedback following the residents' meeting in relation to the St John's Church car parking proposal. It was noted that this matter was discussed under Minute 301.2.5.
- A Freedom of Information (FOI) request has been received requesting complaint information held by the Council. The Clerk noted that a response is due by 23 March 2026 and will be actioned accordingly.

304 Items for inclusion on the next agenda

Items to include the War Memorial Rededication Service and the Residents' Questionnaire. The Chair noted any further suggested agenda items should be sent to the Clerk.

305 Set date and time of next meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting and the next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Thursday 2 April 2026 at St John's Community Church Hall, Old Chester Road, Walton, commencing at 7.00pm.

The meeting closed at 21:18