

Clerk to the Council: -
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Minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting of Walton Parish Council held at St. John's Church Community Hall, Old Chester Road, Higher Walton, on Thursday the 9th May 2024.

Present Councillor R Hardie - Vice Chair
Councillor S A Harris - New Chair
Councillor R D Bennett
Councillor A J Williams
Councillor V C Lacey – Co-opted
Councillor J C Greene

In Attendance Parish Clerk R J Hallam
Residents 0
Borough Councillors Wheeler and Scott

Prior to the start of the meeting, Councillors Hardie, Harris, Bennett, Williams and Greene all completed Declarations of Acceptance of Office.

The Vice Chair opened the meeting at 7.02pm and welcomed everybody.

He then took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for the friendship and help he had provided during the 15 years he had spent with the Parish Council. He presented the Clerk with a card and gift.

17. Apologies for Absence

The Vice Chair reported that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Hazeldine (holiday) and Hewitt (holiday) and Councillor Shaikh (Ill)

18. To Receive nominations and elect the Chair of the Council and to receive the Chair's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The Vice Chair invited nominations for Chair.

Councillor Greene nominated Councillor Harris, this was seconded by Councillor Williams. *There were 3 votes in favour and 2 abstentions. It was resolved that Councillor Harris be elected as Chair.* Councillor Harris completed the Declaration of Acceptance Office and took the Chair.

At this point Councillor Harris welcomed Borough Councillor Matt Scott and went on to thank former Councillor Shaikh in his absence for his time as Chair and the long service he had given during his time as a Parish Councillor and the enthusiasm and hard work that he brought to the role.

She mentioned that the Parish Council was now in a period of transition with new councillors possibly being co-opted on.

She then went on to reminded councillors of the importance of complying with the meeting protocols.

19. To Receive nominations and elect the Vice Chair of the Council and to receive the Vice Chair's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The Chair asked for nominations for Vice Chair.

There were no nominations for Vice Chair.

As there were no nominations, the election of a Vice Chair was carried forward to the June meeting.

20. Co-option – Discussion and co-option on filling the councillor vacancies in Lower Walton Ward. Applications for co-option and to re-join the Parish Council had been received from former councillors (prior to the 2nd May 2024 election) Lacey and Hewitt.

Councillor Hardie expressed his view that the proposal should not be taken forward as the PC should be transparent in the selection process. There could be more applicants than vacancies it would then appear that the PC may have unfairly given a benefit to the former Councillors.

Councillor Greene argued strongly against this point of view saying that the PC already knew the capabilities of the former councillors Lacey and Hewitt and the qualities they brought to the table.

It was resolved that the PC should go ahead with a vote on co-opting the candidates Lacey and Hewitt. 3 councillors voted in favour and 2 councillors Hardie and Bennett voted against. Motion carried.

It was resolved that V C Lacey be co-opted to fill a vacancy in the Lower Walton Ward of Walton Parish Council. Proposed by Councillor Greene and seconded by Councillor Williams. All in favour.

It was resolved that C J Hewitt be co-opted to fill a vacancy in the Lower Walton Ward of Walton Parish Council. Proposed by Councillor Williams and seconded by Councillor Greene. All in favour.

Councillor Lacey signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

21. To carry out an inspection of deeds and investments, review insurances and confirm Parish Records etc, Review internal controls, risk management document, standing orders and financial regulations and conduct further business appropriate to the APCM.

The Clerk had provided all councillors with a document which detailed a record of all aspects of Deeds, assets, insurance and parish records and talked this through with councillors. The insurance with Community First would be coming into its 3rd year from the 1st June 2024.

The Clerk outlined the existing Internal Controls which are carried out monthly, Quarterly, half yearly and yearly.

It was agreed that these should continue.

Councillors had been provided with copies of the Assets Register and accepted the amendments made by the Clerk.

The Standing Orders (SOs), Financial Regulations and the Risk Management Document were accepted and adopted.

It was resolved that the PC accept the Clerk's report on the above documentation. Proposed by Councillor Harris and seconded by Councillor Bennett. All in favour.

Councillor Hewitt had requested that it was noted how much she appreciated the work carried out by the Clerk and the completion of the Internal audit to a professional standard.

The Chair also said how pleased the PC was to receive such a glowing Internal Audit with due credit going to the Clerk.

22. Adjournment

It was resolved that the meeting go into adjournment. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Bennett. All in favour.

Former Councillor Karalius (DMK) agreed to pass on the drainage mats for the tubs to Gardenia.

The Chair thanked DMK for all the work she had done with Gardenia.

Bedding plants would need to be ordered for the planters.
The meeting went back into session at 7.40pm.

23. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 4th April 2024 were reviewed.

It was resolved that the minutes be accepted as a true record. Proposed by Councillor Williams and seconded by Councillor Lacey. All in favour.

24. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting.

The Clerk reminded councillors that this was an opportunity to review the minutes. The minutes would be approved at the next APM in April 2025.

The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on the 4th April 2024 were reviewed and found to be an accurate record.

25. Reports on Matters Arising from the previous minutes

The report had been issued with the meeting documentation.

Police Report.

There was no PCSO report. Gillian Powell is our new PCSO.

Councillor Williams spoke about the continuing spate of thefts of coppice stones on Runcorn Road and Park Lane.

Action- Clerk to ask Ann Muldowney for some feedback on the progress of any investigations.

Action – Clerk to Invite new PCSO to PC meeting.

Creamfields

Councillor Bennett left the meeting.

The Chair expressed how disappointed she was that having asked former Borough Councillor Jervis (MJ) to approach Andy Carter (AC) about arranging a meeting with Cream, to include Walton residents, who had many grievances which needed looking into. Yet nothing had materialised.

The Clerk explained that MJ had been in contact with AC and that he had said he would arrange this after the local elections.

The Chair said that Cream already had their plans in place and that a meeting needed to be in place in January or February.

The Chair had attended a Daresbury drop in event on the 8th May, organised by the Halton Borough Councillor for Sandymoor.

Jess Shields of Cream had said that Parish Councils had been invited, but it turned out that this was only PCs from Halton.

The feeling from Councillor Williams who had also attended was that the event was really a tick box exercise. It was clear that some representatives didn't really know the Higher Walton area.

Following a point raised by Councillor Hardie it was agreed that we should write to Cream to ask them to confirm that the points raised by Stefan Spiro, which the Clerk had forwarded in an earlier letter to Cream, had been attended to.

Action – Clerk to write to Cream.

Councillor Bennett returned to the meeting at 8.10pm.

26. Report from Borough Councillor.

Borough Councillor Wheeler explained that the Secretary of State had asked for a "Best Value Inspection" of Warrington Borough Council and she went on to say what this involved. It will start shortly.

27. Parish Clerk Vacancy

After some discussion the following motion was agreed.

It is resolved that Walton Parish Council appoints Lara Jacob in the capacity of Locum Clerk from 10th May 2024 for a period of 6 months (or until a permanent appointment to the substantive role is made if earlier). The purpose of this appointment is to enable the effective handover/transition/management of business from the current Clerk Ray Hallam until the permanent appointment is filled. Proposed by Councillor Lacey and seconded by Councillor Greene. All in favour.

28. Walton Parish Playground Trust.

The Clerk confirmed that former Councillor Shaikh had tendered his resignation as Chair of the Trust and this now only left Councillor Bennett as a Trustee.

It was resolved that Councillor Greene becomes a Trustee of Walton Parish Playground Trust. Proposed by Councillor Lacey and seconded by Councillor Bennett. All in favour.

It was resolved that Councillor Lacey becomes a Trustee of Walton Parish Playground Trust. Proposed by Councillor Greene and seconded by Councillor Williams. All in favour.

The Clerk suggested that the Trustees should call a meeting shortly to appoint a Chair and new secretary and to look into what was required.

29. To receive and accept the report from the Clerk on the Parish Accounts and to formally approve the accounts for payment.

The Clerk had issued with the Agenda the Financial Report (FR) and a copy of the Receipts and Payments Account for the current year to date, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

The Clerk presented: -

Cheque number 001550	payable to R J Hallam	Clerk's Salary	£346.58
Cheque number 001551	payable to HMRC	PAYE/Tax	£86.67
Cheque number 001552	payable to R J Hallam	Off Exp Ink 2 X £11.99	£23.98
Cheque number 001553	payable to Gardenia Gardens Ltd	Warden (Inv7192 37.5X£15=£562.50 VAT£112.50)	£675.00
Cheque number 001554	payable to ChALC	Affiliation Fee renewal	£508.06
Cheque number 001555	payable to ChALC	Meeting and procedures Training Hewitt	£25.00
Cheque number 001556	payable to The MSCC Ltd	Easement Privilege of two seat back	£36.00
Cheque number 001557	payable to Parochial Church Co Walton Ches.	Hire of Hall Nov-Mar 5X£45	£225.00
Cheque number 001558	payable to D M Karalius	Matting and wicks for Amberol planters	£98.40
Cheque number 001559	payable to R Hardie	Under payment for shovels in Feb 24 chq 001537	
£21.15			

It was resolved that the Financial Report and the Accounts for Payment be approved. Proposed by Councillor Lacey and seconded by Councillor Bennett. All in favour. The cheques were signed by Councillors Hardie and Bennett.

30. Report from Advisory Groups.

Donations Advisory Group

The application from St. John's Church (churchyard maintenance) had been received. The Group will meet on the 31st May and bring a recommendation to the next PC meeting.

Planning Matters

The Planning report had been circulated to councillors with the meeting documentation.

No comment on 00349 & 00503.

00277 Clerk to ask planner to review whether this represents overdevelopment.

Grantham Avenue application refused again owing to the tree.

Report from Village Betterment Advisory Group

It was resolved that the PC spend up to £200 on the purchase of climbing summer plants to be placed at the base of local hedges. Proposed by Councillor Williams and seconded by Councillor Hardie. All in favour.

Looking at hedges on Mill Lane and Chester Road for planting.
Group met on 2nd May, see circulated minutes for activity of the Group.
Responsibility for the supervision of Gardenia needs to be decided (agenda item for June)

31. Internal and External Audit.

Councillors had been sent copies for their perusal of Section 1 and 2 of the AGAR for 2023/24, along with copies of the Receipts and Payments Account for Y/E 31/03/24 and the Internal Audit Plan. All these reports had been considered by the councillors.

It was resolved that the Annual Governance Statement be accepted and approved. Proposed by Councillor Lacey and seconded by Councillor Greene, all in favour.

It was resolved that the Receipts and Payments Account for 2023/24 be accepted and approved. Proposed by Councillor Lacey and seconded by Councillor Bennett, all in favour.

It was resolved that the Accounting Statements be accepted and approved. Proposed by Councillor Bennett and seconded by Councillor Hardie, all in favour.

The Clerk explained that there now had to be an annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit and he explained the Audit Plan put forward by JDH Business Services Ltd.

It was resolved that the Parish Council approved the Internal Audit Plan put forward by JDH Business Services Ltd. Proposed by Councillor Greene and seconded by Councillor Williams, all in favour.

Action - It was agreed that in future years this documentation would be put before the Parish Internal Audit Group who would bring their recommendations to the full Parish Council.

All councillors had been given copies of the Internal Auditors "Internal Audit Report" which had recorded that there were "No issues arising" following the conclusion of the Internal Audit.
Councillors expressed their gratitude to the Clerk for the work he had done in achieving a no issues conclusion.

32. Report on Parish Matters.

Other Parish Matters.

Ivy Killing our trees.

Councillor Bennett advised of the ongoing menace of the ivy threatening the well being of the trees in Walton.

Everybody needs to be vigilant and do their bit to eliminate this threat. Secateurs and loppers can be used to stop the growth of ivy at the tree base.

Action – Councillor Bennett will make a list of the worst areas that needs attention.

Action – Details of this should be placed on our website and Facebook

33. Reports from Appointed Representatives

Footpaths – Councillors Hazeldine and Williams – No report.

Roads/Traffic and Street Lighting – Councillor Bennett – reported the cutting of the grass on Chester Road central reservation.

Grids are silted up on Chester Road from The Toast Rack Bridge to Holly Hedge Lane.

The Holly Hedge Lane street sign at the Runcorn Road end has been knocked down.

The blue police sign outside Fox Hill on Chester Road has been knocked down.

Vegetation needs cutting back high up round lamp 6, outside the Community Church Hall on Old Chester Road.

Action – Clerk to report to WBC.

Walton Hall Estate – Cllr. Harris reported that she had written to Neil Simpson and Sean Kelly about the points raised by Councillor Hardie in March, in relation to weddings and the golf course.

Action – The PC to invite Neil or Sean to PC meeting possibly July or September.

34. Review of Correspondence

None.

The Chair referred to the circulated correspondence from the SWPCG and the recent death of a prominent member Cliff Taylor and WPC sends it's condolences.

The services of John Groves and the barrister are to be retained.

Notes on the parish's contribution were also detailed.

Stockton Heath PC were being asked if they would make a contribution.

35. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be Thursday 6th June 2024, at St. John's Community Church Hall, Old Chester Road, Walton, commencing at 7.00pm.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 21.31 hrs.