



Appleton Parish Council

Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green Road, Appleton, WA4 5EQ

Telephone 01925 268153 Email clerk@appletonparish.gov.uk

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Appleton Parish Council held on 20th January 2026 at 7pm in Appleton Parish Hall

Present: - Councillors L Booth (Chair), R Bett (Vice Chair), G Chapman, L Chapman, E Manson-Sawko, J Wheeler, P Lewenz K Critchley and P Walker.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

An apology for absence was received from **Cllr H Speed** due to illness, which was accepted.

2. Members Code of Conduct

Members were reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in items of business on the agenda, and that declarations are a personal matter for each Member to determine based on the circumstances. Members were also advised that any requests for dispensations relating to pecuniary interests would be considered by the Parish Council and, if granted, formally recorded.

The following declarations were made:

- **Cllr Judith Wheeler** – Planning, DMC and Stockton Heath Festival Trustee
- **Cllr Peter Walker** – Planning and DMC

The meeting was recorded by **Cllr. Ghazala Chapman, Cllr Kenneth Critchley, and Karen Newton Clerk/RFO.**

3. Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

The paragraph for future agendas – (Public Participation) will be amended to reflect the standing orders

4. **Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the following meetings be approved as a correct record:

Full Council – Tuesday 15 December 2025

Proposed by: Cllr L Chapman and **Seconded by:** Cllr G Chapman

Finance and General Purposes Committee – Thursday 15 January 2026

Proposed by: Cllr L Chapman and **Seconded by:** Cllr P Lewenz

Planning Committee – Tuesday 16 December 2025

Proposed by: Cllr L Chapman and **Seconded by:** Cllr P Lewenz

5. **Finance & Governance**

5.1–5.8 The following items were **deferred** to the **Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 5 February**, due to the Clerk not having access to the bank:

- Approval of the Payment Schedule for November 2025
- Approval of the bank reconciliations for November 2025
- Approval and authorisation of the Payment Schedule for December 2025
- Noting the publication of items over £100.00 for November 2025 on the Parish Council website
- Approval of the Payment Schedule for December 2025
- Approval of the bank reconciliations for December 2025
- Approval and authorisation of the Payment Schedule for January 2026
- Noting the publication of items over £100.00 for December 2025 on the Parish Council website

6. **Grant Applications**

6.1–6.2. It was noted that applications were **not received in time for the meeting**, and therefore no consideration of applications or grant awards took place.

6.3. A festival report from **Stockton Heath Festival Committee** was received and noted. The Committee thanked the Parish Council for its support of last year's festival. It was noted that the event is run by the **Stockton Heath Festival Committee** and not by Stockton Heath Parish Council.

7. **Precept**

Cllr Chapman introduced the proposed precept, initially calculated at **1.03%**, noting a potential increase to **8.44%** due to two additional costs: the **Community Centre Study (£10,000)** and the **Medical Centre Dudlow Green (£5,000)**.

Members discussed the proposal:

- Several Councillors commented that the Parish Council's reserves are substantial and that a precept increase may not be justified.

- Councillors acknowledged the recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee but suggested that the additional costs could be met from the **earmarked reserves**.
- Councillors noted that the proposed annual increase equated to only approximately **£4 per household**, and some commented that residents may struggle with rising costs.
- Other points raised included the Council's responsibility not to base its precept solely on comparisons with other councils and consideration of potential increased funding from housing developments.

Following discussion on the proposed precept increase to **8.44%**

A **named vote** was taken to increase the precept by **8.44%**.

- **For:** Cllr Chapman, Cllr P Walker, Cllr G Chapman
- **Against:** Cllr Critchley, Cllr Bett, Cllr Wheeler, Cllr Lewenz, Cllr. E. Manson-Sawko
- **Abstention:** Cllr L Booth

The **motion** to increase the precept to **8.44%** was lost

A **named vote** was taken to **not increase the precept**

- **For:** Cllr Critchley, Cllr Bett, Cllr. E. Manson-Sawko
- **Against:** Cllr L Chapman, Cllr P Walker, Cllr G Chapman, Cllr Wheeler, Cllr Lewenz
- **Abstention:** Cllr L Booth

The **motion** not to increase the precept was lost.

Following further discussions on the proposed precept

It was **noted** that the exact precept calculation resulted in a figure of approximately **36.50** per Band D property. However, to avoid an uneven decimal, the precept figure was **rounded up to 36.51**.

- This rounding results in a total precept of **£190,910.79**, which is **£40.79 over the original budgeted amount**. Consequently, this requires an increase to a budget line to cover the additional amount.

It was **proposed to increase the precept to 1.03% if the spreadsheet does not round exactly the calculation be accepted up to 1.05%**.

Proposed by: Cllr Bett and **Seconded by:** Cllr L Chapman

A **named vote** was taken **for increasing the precept by 1.03% Precept**

- **For:** Cllr L Chapman, Cllr G Chapman, Cllr Wheeler, Cllr Lewenz, Cllr Bett
- **Against:** Cllr Critchley, Cllr P Walker, Cllr. E. Manson-Sawko,
- **Abstention:** Cllr L Booth

The motion to increase the precept up to **1.05%** was **gained**.

The Council recognises the financial pressures on residents and is mindful of keeping the precept increase to a minimum. It is proposed that rather than raising the precept, the Council's reserves will be carefully managed and used to meet any shortfalls in funding required for essential services and projects. This approach allows the Council to maintain financial stability and continue supporting the community without placing additional burden on householders. By utilising earmarked reserves prudently, the Council can address current financial needs while planning responsibly for the future.

8. Assertion 10 - AGAR

The Council **noted** that **Assertion 10**, introduced for the **2025/26 AGAR**, requires councils to demonstrate compliance with **UK GDPR**, data protection laws, and digital governance standards.

This includes using council-owned email domains, maintaining an accessible website, having up-to-date IT and data protection policies, and ensuring proper data handling and security.

Failure to comply could lead to audit concerns and public scrutiny. The Council acknowledged the new policy outlining how these requirements will be met.

9. New/ Out of date Policies

Members were asked to consider and adopt the following **new policies**:

1. **IT and Data Policy** – Clerk
2. **Lone Working Policy** – Cllr Richard Betts
3. **Policy on the Use of Public CCTV Applications** – Clerk

Members were asked to **consider** and **adopt** the existing policies that are out of date on the website:

4. **Dignity at work policy** – Appleton Parish Council
5. **Code of Conduct** – Appleton Parish Council
6. **Expenses Policy** – Appleton Parish Council
7. **Income and Debtor Policy** – Appleton Parish Council
8. **Biodiversity Policy** – Appleton Parish Council
9. **Retention Policy** – Appleton Parish Council
10. **Grants Policy** – Appleton Parish Council
11. **Staffing Committee Terms of Reference** – Appleton Parish Council

RESOLVED: That all policies listed above were received and noted. **Cllr R Bett** and **Cllr E Manson-Sawko** will review all policies and submit to the F&GP Committee for review as previously resolved by the Council, prioritising those required as part of **Assertion 10**, and will report back before the end of **March 2026**.

10. Upgrade to email web hosting

Members considered upgrading the Parish Council's email hosting to increase mailbox storage and reviewed the associated costs.

RESOLVED: To upgrade the email web hosting at a cost of **£99.99 per year**.

Proposed: Cllr L Chapman and **Seconded:** Cllr G Chapman

Vote: All agreed.

11. Reports from Parish Council Representatives

Councillors' Reports

Cllr P Lewenz

- Reported that works at *The Dingle* are progressing well.
- The working group is collaborating effectively with the Woodland Trust.
- Discussions are ongoing regarding future housing developments and the creation of a perimeter zone along the woodland path.
- Provided an update on Warrington and Stockton Heath libraries following funding reductions:
 - Stockton Heath Library remains open.
 - Staffing has been reduced to one assistant in the morning and two in the afternoon.
- Requested a future meeting discussion on library services.

• **Cllr J Wheeler**

- Reported that Stockton Heath Parish Council will hold discussions on library services in **March 2026**.
- Suggested Appleton Parish Council consider the matter after that meeting.
- Attended a Boundary Commission meeting held at short notice.
- Requested that parish and ward boundary considerations be added to next month's agenda.

• **Cllr E Manson-Sawko**

- Reported that the Cricket Club Chair is changing.
- The club is considering opening the Pavilion as a wider community hub/café/centre.
- Suggested inviting representatives to a future meeting to present their plans.
- Considered the pavilion an asset to the parish.

• **Cllr J Wheeler (additional)**

- Noted the pavilion has significant historical value.
- Has collected extensive historical research relating to the building.
- Tip closure consultation – the parish council will be notified

• **Cllr Ghazala Chapman**

- Raised concerns regarding the recent escaped prisoner incident.

• **Cllr L Booth**

- Reported contact with Reverend Duel, who is in contact with the prison.
- Was put in contact with the prison chaplain, who was unable to comment.

- Has requested a meeting with the prison governor, alongside Cllr Speed and another councillor.
- Awaiting a formal report.
- Was informed that prisoners nearing the end of their sentences are transferred to Thorn Cross Prison.
- Prisoners are integrated into employment schemes; the escape occurred during this process.
- The escaped prisoner has now been recaptured.

12. PCSO / Police report/Update

The council **received and noted** the following update and report from the local PCSO.

Police & Community Safety Report

- **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB):**
 - 15/12 – The Cross Church, Appleton Thorn: Report of a male causing issues outside the church while children were inside. The male left prior to police arrival; reassurance was provided to children and staff.
- **Theft:**
 - 30/12 – Stretton Distribution Centre: Theft of a push bike. Enquiries ongoing, including CCTV review.
- **Suspicious Activity:**
 - 02/01 – Acton Avenue: Report of a male offering gutter cleaning service. Police attended; no trace found.
 - 10/01 – Cann Lane South: Resident reported a Ring doorbell being taped over. Logged for local awareness.
- **Vehicle Damage:**
 - 30/12 – London Road/Windmill Lane: Reports of a damaged vehicle. Damage confirmed to have occurred on the motorway.
- **Drink Driving:**
 - 15/01 – Firs Lane: Male refused to provide a breath sample and was arrested.
- **Incident Overview:**
 - A total of **166 incidents/notifications** were reported to police during this period for Appleton, including prison releases from Appleton Thorn and motorway-related incidents.
- **Street of the Week:**
 - Braeburn Drive
- **Speed Enforcement Activations:**
 - 16/12 – Grappenhall Lane: 7 activations
 - 22/12 – Witherwin Avenue: 5 activations
 - 07/01 – Wrights Green: 0 activations
 - 16/01 – Longwood Road: 2 activations
- **Planned Police Surgeries:**
 - 22/01 (11:00–12:00) – Broomfield's Leisure Centre
 - 28/01 (17:00–18:00) – Broomfield's Leisure Centre
 - 05/02 (17:00–18:00) – Broomfield's Leisure Centre
 - 01/02 (10:00–11:00) – Appleton Thorn Village Hall

- **Other:**
 - A joint estate walkabout with Torus Housing is planned for **21 January**.
 - No further updates at present regarding the future of PCSOs.

13. Parish Hall New Kitchen

Members discussed the one quotation for the new kitchen.

RESOLVED: To defer consideration until **three quotations** have been received and agree a working group at the next meeting.

14. Parish Hall Curtains

Members discussed the one quotation for the Curtains.

RESOLVED: To defer consideration until **three quotations** have been received and agree a working group at the next meeting.

15. Memorial Trees for Roundabout

Members discussed quotations for the planting of new memorial trees.

RESOLVED: That the quotations be left with **Cllr R Betts** and the **Clerk** to seek confirmation regarding the ongoing maintenance of the trees once planted.

16. Fencing attached to a property in Willow

Members considered the matter of fencing attached to a property on Willow Lane. It was noted that the fence had already been erected prior to the Council's discussion of the matter.

Members raised concerns that the fencing had been installed before the Council had the opportunity to consider the proposal.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk write to **the resident** to advise that liability rests with them, as their contractors installed the fencing rather than the Parish Council.

17. Section 106 Speed Awareness Signage – Appleton Cross Development

Members noted the Section 106 obligation associated with the Appleton Cross development for the provision of three speed awareness signs.

Members received and noted correspondence from **Cllr Helen Speed** regarding the status of the signage. It was reported that, due to officer absences, the Section 106 obligation does not appear to have been progressed and that the signage may not yet have been formally ordered.

Cllr Helen Speed advised that she confirm whether the Section 106 order has been issued and, if not, will progress this at the earliest opportunity and keep the Parish Council updated.

Members discussed ongoing concerns regarding vehicle speeding through Appleton Thorn village and the adequacy of current speed awareness measures.

RESOLVED: To **note** the update received and to await further confirmation regarding the ordering and delivery of the speed awareness signs, and to continue engagement with relevant authorities regarding traffic-calming measures.

18. **Cathedral Hygiene**

Members noted that parish approval is required and that the current service may require **three months' notice** if a change is made.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk check existing contracts before a decision is made regarding the new service proposal.

19. **Community safety concerns**

Members noted and discussed the recent escape of a prisoner from Appleton Thorn Prison, acknowledging that the individual has since been recaptured.

Key points discussed included:

- Information available regarding the incident and subsequent recapture.
- Concerns raised by residents regarding safety, communication, and emergency response.
- Lessons learned and reassurance measures for the local community.
- Whether to request further information or engagement from relevant authorities, including the Prison Service, Police, or Community Safety Partnership.

It was noted that this item had been discussed earlier under **Item 11**.

RESOLVED: That the matter be noted and monitored, with further engagement from relevant authorities to be considered if necessary.

20. **Bridge Lane Playing Fields**

Members discussed ongoing issues with dog fouling at Bridge Lane Playing Fields and noted concerns raised by residents.

RESOLVED: That consideration of possible actions be **deferred to the next meeting**.

21. **Dates and time of next meetings**

Dates Noted: Upcoming Meeting Schedule

- **Thursday, 5th February 2026**
 - 9:15 am – Planning Committee
 - 9:45 am – Finance and General Purposes Committee
 - 11:30 am – Extraordinary Full Council Meeting
- **Tuesday, 17th February 2026**
 - 6:30 pm – Planning Committee
 - 7:00 pm – Parish Council
- **Thursday, 19th February 2026**

- 10:00 am – Employment Committee
 - **Thursday, 5th March 2026**
 - 9:15 am – Planning Committee
 - 9:45 am – Finance and General Purposes Committee
 - **Tuesday, 17th March 2026**
 - 6:30 pm – Planning Committee
 - 7:00 pm – Parish Council
 - **Thursday, 19th March 2026**
 - 10:00 am – Employment Committee
22. Agenda items were addressed as scheduled.
The meeting was officially closed at: 9:20PM

Signed.....

Dated.....17-3-2026.

Deputy Chair.