



Appleton Parish Council

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

Telephone 01925 268153 Email clerk@appletonparish.gov.uk

Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green Road, Appleton, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 5EQ
Telephone 01925 268153 Email clerk@appletonparish.gov.uk

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Appleton Parish Council held on Tuesday 17th March 2026 at 7pm in Appleton Parish Hall

Present: - Councillors R Bett (Vice Chair), G Chapman, L Chapman, J Wheeler, P Lewenz, Helen Speed and K Critchley.

Attendees: - Clerk – Karen Newton

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

An apology for absence was received from

Cllr L Booth – Prior Engagement

Cllr E Manson-Sawko Due to Health

Cllr P Walker Due to Health

which were 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 J Wheeler – Planning

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

3. **Public Participation**

Shibu Thomas and Rinsy Joseph, leaders of the **Appleton Christian Fellowship**, introduced their group as a small but growing community that meets regularly for prayer, Bible study, and mutual support, with a focus on encouraging spiritual growth. They emphasised a strong commitment to shared responsibility, community, and supporting one another. The group expressed an interest in engaging more widely with the local community by offering practical care, volunteering, assisting at local events, and contributing to initiatives that benefit residents.

4. **Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the following meetings be approved as a correct record:

- Full Council Meeting – Tuesday 20th January 2026
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Peter Lewenz
- Full Council Meeting – Tuesday 17th February 2026
Deferred
- Extraordinary Council Meeting – Thursday 5th February 2026
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ghazala Chapman
- Finance and General Purposes Committee – Thursday 5th February 2026
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ghazala Chapman
- Finance and General Purposes Committee – Thursday 5th March 2026
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Helen Speed
- Planning Committee – Thursday 5th March 2026
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Peter Lewenz
- Employment Committee – 19th February 2026
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ghazala Chapman

5. **Finance**

5.1 To approve the Payment Schedule for February 2026

Resolved: Deferred.

5.2 To approve the Receipt Schedule for February 2026

Resolved: Approved.

Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ghazala Chapman.

5.3 To approve the bank reconciliations for February 2026

Resolved: Approved.

Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Peter Lewenz.

5.4 To approve and authorise the Payment Schedule for March 2026

Resolved: Approved.

Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Peter Lewenz.

5.5 To note that there will be an additional payment schedule for 27th March to follow by email

Resolved: Noted and agreed by all Members.

6. **Internal Auditor Letter of Engagement**

Members considered the Letter of Engagement for the appointment of the Parish Council's Internal Auditor, JDH, for the financial year 2025/26. The terms of engagement outlining the scope of the internal audit, the responsibilities of the auditor and the Council, and the proposed audit arrangements were reviewed.

Resolved: That the Council approves the Internal Auditor Letter of Engagement and authorises the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer to sign the document on behalf of the Council.

Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Peter Lewenz. All Members agreed.

7. Environmental Working Party – Establishment of Environmental Committee

Members considered the proposal to convert the Environmental Working Party into an Environmental Committee, approve the Terms of Reference, appoint members, and elect a Chair.

Resolved:

- That the proposal to establish an Environmental Committee be deferred for formal adoption at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- That the proposed Committee budget/spending limit be increased to £2,000.
- That the Terms of Reference be amended to reflect the revised spending limit prior to adoption.

Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Peter Lewenz. All Members agreed.

8. Governance Policies for Adoption

Members considered the following policies as recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee:

- Code of Conduct
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Resolved: That the above policies be adopted subject to the suggested amendments.

Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Peter Lewenz. All Members agreed.

9. Governance Policies – (previously deferred)

To consider the following policies and documents deferred from the previous meeting pending amendments:

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Terms of Reference – Environment Committee
- Standing Orders

The equality and Diversity Policy, Data Protection Policy and Standing Orders documents are drafts for information only and remain under internal review.

The proposed terms of reference for the Environment Committee were adopted subject to:

- amending the proposed amount of approved Environment expenditure at each meeting from £500 to £2,000
- The transition from a Working Party to a Committee, including the start date for the new terms of reference, will be postponed until Council approval at the AGM and follow on Parish meeting in May. Meanwhile, the Environment group will continue to operate as a Working Party under current terms of reference

10. Reports from Parish Councillors

To consider reports from parish councillors on committees, working groups, and outside bodies.

Cllr H Speed reported that:

- Three solar powered speed indicators are to be erected in Appleton Thorn
- A planned meeting to discuss Broomfield's Leisure Centre with Sarah Hall MP was cancelled
- Residents were concerned about access to the new development on Appleton Cross and recent works to pavements on site which was dealt with
- Discussions were being progressed regarding the proposed site of the new recycling centre with WBC and Homes England
- A programme of actions to be undertaken by Stretton GP Surgery, to consult with patients regarding the potential closure of the Dudlow's Green Medical Centre after the new Appleton Cross one was completed, had been received from the ICB and a timeline for this had been requested
- Following an absconion from Thorn Cross a meeting was held with the Governor
- There has been no response yet regarding the request to WBC for yellow lines close to HMP thorn Cross to prevent inappropriate parking
- Successful action has been taken in response to complaints about parking opposite the nursery car park in Appleton Thorn

Cllr J Wheeler reported that:

- Vicar Alan David John Jewell of St Matthew's (Stretton with Appleton Thorn) will retire on 31 May 2026; no official farewell event has been confirmed yet.
- The existing one-way system on Quarry Lane, Appleton, remains in place. Temporary suspensions have occurred to allow road resurfacing and closures on nearby roads. No new permanent changes to the one-way system have been announced by Warrington Borough Council.

11. **PCSO / Police report/Update**
Members noted that, at the time of agenda publication, no report had been received from the local PCSO.
Resolved:
 - That no report was received.
 - That the Clerk be requested to contact the Police to enquire as to the absence of the report.
 - Members noted correspondence received from Rob McLoughlin regarding the concerns raised by the Parish Council in relation to local policing and PCSO provision.
 - That the Clerk also seek clarification on when a meeting will be arranged regarding the withdrawal of the PCSO service.
12. **Bridge Lane Playing Fields – Dog Fouling (Update)**
Resolved: That no update was available, and the matter be noted.
13. **Part 2 – Confidential**
In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public are excluded from the meeting for this item due to the confidential nature of staffing and financial information.
14. **Clerk/RFO Job Evaluation**
Members considered the recommendation of the Employment Committee to reclassify the position of Clerk/RFO to LC3 below the substantive range (SCP 33–36), with the position commencing at SCP 33, backdated to the Clerk's start date.

Members were advised that, if approved, the adjustment would be applied in the March payroll due to the financial year end. If not agreed, a payroll adjustment would be made to rectify the payroll cost breakdown, as outlined in Part 2 of the agenda.
Resolved: That the recommendation of the Employment Committee be approved.
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ken Critchley. All Members agreed.
15. **Deputy Clerk – Salary Scale**
Members considered the recommendation of the Employment Committee to amend the Deputy Clerk salary scale to LC2 SCP 24–28.
Resolved: That the recommendation of the Employment Committee be approved.
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Helen Speed. All Members agreed.
16. **Deputy Clerk Recruitment**
Members considered the recommendation of the Employment Committee to revise the Deputy Clerk job advertisement and re-advertise the vacancy, including on Indeed, to encourage additional applications.

Resolved: That the recommendation of the Employment Committee be approved.

Proposed by Cllr Laurence Chapman, seconded by Cllr Helen Speed. All Members agreed.

17. **Bookings Secretary and Ranger – Benchmarking of Roles and Pay**

Members **noted** the Employment Committee's decision to seek benchmarking information from CHALC and Cheshire Community Action regarding job descriptions, responsibilities, and salary scales, with a report to be brought back to Council for further consideration.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

18. **Payroll Costs Nov to Mar 2026**

Members **considered** the payroll costs for the period November 2025 to February 2026. Members were advised that payroll for March 2026 would follow and be presented prior to the meeting.

Resolved:

- That payroll costs for December 2025 to February 2026 be approved.
- That the payroll costs for November 2025 be deferred pending clarification of a query.
- That March 2026 payroll costs be presented separately prior to consideration.
- *Proposed by Cllr Peter Lewenz, seconded by Cllr Helen Speed. All Members agreed.*

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

Noted: Upcoming Meeting Schedule

- **Thursday 2 April**
 - 9.15am – Planning Committee
 - 9.45am – Finance and General Purposes Committee
 - 11.00am – Employment Committee
 - 12:15pm – Environmental Working Party
- **Tuesday 21 April**
 - 6.30pm – Planning Committee
 - 7.00pm – Parish Council
- **Thursday 14 May**
 - 9.15am – Planning Committee
 - 9.45am – Finance and General Purposes Committee
- **Friday 15 May**
 - 12.30pm – Employment Committee
- **Tuesday 19 May**
 - 6.30pm – Planning Committee

20. **Agenda items were addressed as scheduled.**

The meeting was officially closed at: 9:30

Signed.....*Laura Booth*.....

Dated.....*21.4.26*.....