Appleton Parish Council

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Appleton Parish Council held on Tuesday 21st April 2026 at 7pm in Appleton Parish Hall

Present: - Councillors R Bett (Vice Chair), E Manson-Sawko, L Chapman, P Lewenz, Helen Speed and K Critchley.

Attendees: - Clerk – Karen Newton

1. <u>**Welcome and apologies for absence**</u>

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.
An apology for absence was received from
Cllr L Booth – Devolution Meeting WBC – arrived later
Cllr G Chapman – Devolution Meeting WBC – arrived later
Cllr J Wheeler – Devolution Meeting WBC – arrived later

Cllr P Walker Due to Health
which were accepted.

2. <u>**Members Code of Conduct**</u>

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/Traffic Calming Committee

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 in attendance.

4. **Minutes**

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

Full Council – Tuesday 17th March 2026
Proposed: Cllr L Chapman
Seconded: Cllr K Critchley
Resolved: All agreed

Discussion: *It was agreed that, going forward, all amendments to policies will be clearly noted on the agenda at the point where they are to be discussed.*

Full Council – Tuesday 17th February 2026
Proposed: Cllr L Chapman
Seconded: Cllr K Critchley
Resolved: All agreed

Finance and General Purposes Committee – Thursday 2nd April 2026
Proposed: Cllr L Chapman
Seconded: Cllr K Critchley
Resolved: All agreed

Noted *that an incorrect document for the Terms of Reference had been included.*

Planning Committee – Thursday 2nd April 2026
Proposed: Cllr L Chapman
Seconded: Cllr P Lewenz
Resolved: All agreed

Further Resolved: *That the date of the next meeting be changed to 21st April 2026.*

Environmental Committee – Thursday 2nd April 2026
Proposed: Cllr P Lewenz
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: All agreed

Further Resolved: *That the date of the next meeting be TBC*

Employment Committee – Thursday 2nd April 2026
Proposed: Cllr L Chapman
Seconded: Cllr K Critchley
Resolved: All agreed

Noted: Under Item 4, the Committee recognised the updated draft revision to the unsigned employment contract originally received by the Clerk.

Proposed: Cllr Laurence Chapman
Seconded: Cllr Richard Bett
Resolved: All agreed

5. **Finance**

5.1 To approve the Payment Schedule for April 2026
Resolved: That the Payment Schedule for April 2026 be approved as presented, noting that the schedule may be incomplete.
Proposed: Cllr L Chapman
Seconded: Cllr K Critchley
Resolved: all agreed

5.2 To approve the Receipt Schedule for April 2026
Resolved: Deferred

5.3 To approve the bank reconciliations for April 2026
Resolved: Deferred

5.4 To approve the Affiliation Fee for 2026–2027 payable to The Cheshire Association of Local Councils (£1,631.80) and to agree membership renewal
Resolved: That the Affiliation Fee for 2026–2027 in the sum of £1,631.80 be approved and that membership be renewed.
Proposed: Cllr L Chapman
Seconded: Cllr P Lewenz
Voting: Majority in favour; Cllr J Wheeler abstained

6. **Parking on the A49 at the Beehive Post Office – Impact on Local Businesses**

Discussion: Members considered concerns regarding proposed yellow lines on the A49 outside the Beehive Post Office and Cheshire Natural Health, which would remove long-standing roadside parking.

It was noted that business owners have raised serious concerns that the proposed restrictions may reduce customer access, impact the viability of local services, and negatively affect the community. Over 1,800 petition signatures have been collected in objection.

It was further noted that alternative options have been suggested, including a 2-hour parking restriction along the affected stretch and the possibility of widening the road using the grass verge to retain parking provision while maintaining traffic flow.

Members agreed that the businesses are used by Appleton residents and therefore felt it appropriate for the Parish Council to express support, whilst acknowledging that this is a Borough Council matter.

It was noted that Cllr Booth, as a Borough Councillor, has been dealing with the issue and has spoken with Stephen Hunter at Warrington Borough Council Highways, and that discussions remain ongoing. It was also noted that Cllr Booth had been approached by a resident and she has raised concerns on their behalf.

Members agreed that support for local businesses should be communicated. It was further noted that Homes England own the land at the back of the car park behind Cheshire Natural Health and may be able to offer additional land to improve parking provision and improve the carpark as a good will gesture.

Resolved:

- That a letter be sent expressing the Parish Council's support for the affected businesses.
- That correspondence be sent to the Beehive Post Office and Cheshire Natural Health outlining the Council's position and awareness of the issues.
- That business owners from the Post Office and Cheshire Natural Health be invited to a future Council meeting.
- That contact continues to be made to arrange a meeting with Stephen Hunter (WBC Highways).

7. <u>Speed Warning Signs for Appleton Thorn</u>

Consideration of provision and funding of additional speed warning signage

Discussion:

Confirmation was sought regarding the proposed locations of the speed warning signs. It was confirmed that the cameras would be placed between the junction of New Lane and Grappenhall Lane, and on the bend near the bungalows on Thornton Green Close.

Members noted that Section 106 funding secured by Warrington Borough Council from the David Wilson Homes Orchard Meadows development has allocated £13,798.01 for the installation of speed warning signs. It was further noted that Orchard Meadows has provided an estimated cost of £4,000 per camera.

Cllr Speed outlined a funding shortfall in relation to the proposed fourth camera and requested Parish Council support of £3,000 to enable its purchase. Cllr Judith Wheeler queried why all cameras were being placed in the same area. Cllr Speed confirmed that the Orchard Meadows funded scheme had already been agreed and that the additional Parish Council contribution would ensure both sides of the roads are covered appropriately.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr Ghazala Chapman
Voting: Majority in favour; Cllr Judith Wheeler and Cllr Booth abstained

8. <u>Policies and Procedures – Finance & General Purposes Committee</u>

The Council received and considered the recommendations and comments of the Finance & General Purposes Committee regarding the review of policies and procedures.

The Council **RESOLVED** as follows:

Employment Committee Terms of Reference (TOR)

The Council noted that the Employment Committee Terms of Reference had been approved in October 2025 but were not formally minuted.

It was **resolved to formally approve and ratify** the Terms of Reference as previously agreed.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Data Protection Policy

The Council considered the Data Protection Policy as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Following discussion, the Council agreed that paragraph 2.3 (Data Controller) be set out as follows:

Data Controller

The Parish Council is the Data Controller. The Council determines what personal information it will hold and the duration for which it will be used or retained. It is the responsibility of the Data Controller to establish practices and policies in accordance with the requirements of the Act. The Proper Officer (the Clerk) shall act as the nominated officer for data protection.

There were no further amendments, and the policy was duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Equality and Diversity Policy

The Council considered the Equality and Diversity Policy, including the inclusion of an accessibility statement and proposed amendments to the section on "Dealing with Complaints and Grievances," as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Following discussion, the Council agreed that the "Accessibility" section be included in the Policy as follows:

Accessibility

This policy can be made available in alternative languages or formats upon request.

The Council further agreed that the section "Dealing with Complaints and Grievances" be amended to read as follows:

Dealing with Complaints and Grievances
Breaches of this Equality and Diversity Policy will be treated seriously and may lead to disciplinary action. Anyone who believes that they have been subjected to discrimination or harassment may raise the matter using the appropriate Council procedures as set out below:

- *Employees: The Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures.*
- *Volunteers: The Council's Complaints Procedure.*
- *Councillors: The Council's Code of Conduct document.*

There were no further amendments, and the policy was duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Retention Policy
The Council considered the Retention Policy as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

There were no amendments, and the policy was duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Complaints Procedure
The Council considered the Complaints Procedure as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Following discussion, it was agreed that consideration of this item be deferred to the next meeting.

Deferred: To next meeting

Income and Debtors Policy
The Council considered the Income and Debtors Policy as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

There were no amendments, and the policy was duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Expenses Policy
The Council considered the Expenses Policy as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

There were no amendments, and the policy was duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Finance & General Purposes Committee Terms of Reference
The Council considered the Terms of Reference for the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Following discussion, the Council agreed that paragraph 3 be amended to read as follows:

The Parish Council shall determine the number and timing of ordinary meetings of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The Committee will generally not meet during the month of August. For the remainder of the year, the Committee shall meet monthly. In the event that the Chair of the Committee, or other members, consider that additional meetings are required, these will be called in compliance with Standing Orders.

There were no further amendments, and the Terms of Reference were duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Grants Awarding Policy
The Council considered the Grants Awarding Policy as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Following discussion, it was agreed that consideration of this item be deferred to the next meeting.

Deferred: To next meeting

Reserves Policy
The Council considered the Reserves Policy as recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
There were no amendments, and the policy was duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Planning Committee Terms of Reference
The Council considered the Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee.

There were no amendments, and the Terms of Reference were duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

Investment Policy and Investment Strategy
The Council reviewed the Investment Policy and Investment Strategy.

There were no amendments, and both the Policy and Strategy were duly approved.

Proposed: Cllr K Critchley
Seconded: Cllr L Chapman
Resolved: Unanimously agreed

9. Parish Hall Working Group
The Council considered the establishment of a Parish Hall Working Group, including its membership and remit.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a vote be taken on whether to proceed with the formation of the Working Group and its proposed membership.

It was **resolved to establish the Parish Hall Working Group**, with membership to comprise:

Cllr J Wheeler, Cllr L Chapman, Cllr G Chapman, Cllr R Bett, Cllr P Lewenze, Cllr L Booth and relevant staff members (Catrin and David), together with volunteers as appropriate.

The remit of the Working Group will include:

- Review of the Parish Hall building condition
- Consideration of renovation works, including the kitchen
- Exploration of possible extension options
- Assessment of accessibility improvements
- Identification of maintenance priorities and long-term requirements
- Liaison with contractors, architects, or consultants as appropriate
- Reporting back to Full Council with recommendations and costings

It was noted that the Terms of Reference will be discussed and agreed at the Group's first meeting, and that the Working Group will operate under terms agreed by Full Council.

Resolved: Working Group established and membership agreed.

10. Environmental Committee – Key Matters and Actions
The Council **received** and **noted** the report of the Environmental Committee, including updates on bulb planting locations, wildflower proposals, planter maintenance, signage cleaning, tree-related matters, community engagement initiatives, liaison with

Warrington Borough Council, Green Lane verge improvements, and measures to address dog fouling.

The report was noted.

11. Unauthorised Fence on Parish Council Land

The Council considered the installation of a fence on Parish Council land without prior permission.

It was **resolved that the item be deferred** to a future meeting to allow further investigation, including confirmation of land ownership and consideration of any liability implications.

The Council also noted that correspondence will be issued to the resident confirming the Council's position.

Resolved: Deferred to a future meeting.

12. Reports from Parish Councillors

The Council received reports from Parish Councillors on committees, working groups, and outside bodies.

- **Cllr E Manson-Sawko** reported that the manager of Kids Planet Nursery will leave at the end of May, and any bulb planting with the children would need to take place prior to this date.
- **Cllr J Wheeler** requested that an item be added to a future agenda regarding the Pewter spear Green Trust AGM (to be held on 2 June 2026 at Warrington Golf Club) and the appointment of Council representatives. It was noted that Cllr Wheeler is already a Trustee of the Pewter spear Green Trust Limited.
- **Cllr H Speed** provided an update on the following matters:
    - Broomfield's Leisure Centre: discussions held with Sarah Hall and Nathan Sudworth; no government update currently available. Suggestion made to form a "Friends of" group, with several interested residents identified.
    - Appleton Cross: development appears delayed, with ongoing discussions regarding access arrangements and future road links; no site visit update received.
    - Orchard Meadows: ongoing issues with bin provision and play area works, with concerns raised to developers and Warrington Borough Council.
    - Dudlow's Green Medical Centre and Pharmacy: no update received regarding consultation plans linked to Appleton Cross development.
    - SEWUE Development Framework: delay reported; request made for meeting with Homes England and South Warrington SEWUE Working Group.
    - Waste Recycling Centre: formal objection submitted and response awaited from Planning.
    - HMP Thorn Cross: no update received.

    - Thorn Inn and Nursery parking: no further complaints reported; remediation of verge damage remains outstanding, with proposals for planters being explored.

- **Cllr K Critchley** reported on Stockton Heath Walking Day and noted that it is coming under threat. It was suggested that Appleton Parish Council may wish to consider becoming involved or offering support.
- **Cllr L Booth** reported that the Vicar of St Matthew's Church is due to retire in May after many years of service and suggested that the Parish Council may wish to consider a card and gift in recognition of his service upon his retirement. Cllr Booth also noted the Walking Day held in Stretton and suggested that consideration could be given to a possible donation or support for similar events.
- **Cllr P. Lewenz** reported that budget cuts have impacted on library services, resulting in only one major library remaining at Stockton Heath. Further details will be discussed during the consultation process. He also noted that services will be further affected by the closure of the Sandy Lane Community Centre.
- **Cllr Laura Booth** commented that Warrington Borough Council (WBC)rent Sandy Lane Community Centre. She added that The Bridge Group has recently signed a 12-month agreement to use the center; however, this arrangement is not in line with what has been previously discussed with WBC. She also reported that the dance school has been issued notice and will be required to vacate the premises by the end of July.
- **Cllr Lewenz** further updated the meeting, stating that the Sandy Lane Community Centre site has been sold for housing development.

It was noted that all requests for donations should be referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for consideration.

All reports were **received** and **noted**

13. <u>PCSO / Police report/Update</u>

At the time of agenda publication, no report had been received.

Cllr J. Wheeler had circulated notes from the neighbourhood briefing meeting. It was noted that there is no opportunity for a parish council to fund a PCSO directly; therefore, the £24,000 set aside in reserves would need to be reviewed considering this information. It was further reported that PCSOs have indicated they will attend Parish Council meetings when shifts allow and will provide updates and reports where possible.

14. <u>Grant Application – Bawming of the Thorn</u>

The Council noted a grant application received from Appleton Thorn Primary School for the sum of £2,000 in support of the Bawming of the Thorn event. After a short discussion, it was:
Resolved: That the application be referred to the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee for consideration and determination.

Resolved: *That Standing Orders be suspended until 9.30pm as the time was 9.10pm.*
Proposed by: *Cllr K Critchley*
Seconded by: *Cllr L Chapman*
Carried.

15. Fire Safety and Drill Arrangements for Group Users

To consider fire safety procedures for groups using parish facilities, including the organisation and frequency of fire drills.

Council to discuss and agree:

- responsibilities for conducting fire drills
- guidance to be issued to group users
- compliance with fire safety regulations
- any required signage or equipment updates

The Clerk advised that this item had been placed on the agenda following an incident in which the fire alarm was accidentally activated, resulting in group users evacuating to the rear of the building.

The item was **not discussed.**

Resolved: That the matter be deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

16. *Part 2 – Confidential*

Resolved: That, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the staffing and financial information to be considered.

17. Employment Committee Recommendations and Matters for Approval

The Council received and considered the minutes and recommendations of the Employment Committee in respect of staffing matters.
The Council considered the matters as follows:

Clerk/RFO – Contract of Employment

The Council considered the updated Contract of Employment for the Clerk/RFO, including three further amendments relating to annual leave entitlement and the Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) paragraph.

It was **proposed** by Cllr R. Bett that the annual leave entitlement be set at 31 days in recognition of continuous service. This was seconded by Cllr L. Booth.

Resolved:

- That the annual leave entitlement be set at 31 days.
- That the SSP paragraph be reviewed by the Clerk and amended if appropriate.
- Staff reviews to be undertaken quarterly not monthly
- That the updated Contract of Employment be approved subject to the above amendments.

it was further **Resolved** that the updated Contract of Employment for the Clerk/RFO, reflecting the revised pay scale at SCP 33 (LC3 "below substantive range"), be approved. It was **proposed** by Cllr L. Chapman and **seconded** by Cllr G Chapman

All Agreed

<u>Deputy Clerk – Appointment</u>
The Council considered the recommendation to appoint a Deputy Clerk within the LC2 substantive range (SCP 24–28, commencing at SCP 26).

Resolved: That the appointment of the recommended candidate as Deputy Clerk be ratified; that a formal offer letter be issued; and that the Deputy Clerk's Contract of Employment mirror the agreed contract of the Clerk/RFO.

<u>Temporary Assistant Clerk – Contract of Employment</u>
The current position of the Temporary Assistant Clerk was considered. Members discussed whether to:

- extend the duration of the temporary contract, or
- refer the matter to the Employment Committee to consider progression to a permanent contract.

Cllr H Speed **proposed** that the temporary contract be extended for a further six months on current terms from the date of this meeting. This proposal was **seconded** by Cllr K Critchley.

<u>Staff Performance Reviews 2025–26</u>
Members considered the proposed timetable for staff appraisals to be undertaken in May 2026, including the setting of objectives. It was noted that further details would be reported back to Council.

Resolved: That the proposed timetable be noted.

<u>Pay Scales and Employment Guidance</u>
Members noted that further information is awaited from CHALC and Community Action regarding pay scales, and that this will be reported to Council for further consideration.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk will chase up the outstanding information with CHALC and Community Action.

<u>Staff Review Documentation</u>
Members noted that the Clerk will prepare updated performance review forms for all employees.

Resolved: That this be noted.

18. Payroll Costs Mar/April 2026

Members considered the payroll costs for the period March/April 2026.
Resolved: That the payroll costs for March/April 2026 be approved.

19. Purchase of IT Equipment for Clerk/Officer Setup

Members considered the purchase of a laptop and mobile phone to enable setup and operational readiness prior to the proposed start date Thursday 7th May.

The Council was asked to agree:

- the budget allocation for the equipment,
- the specification requirements, and
- the purchasing arrangements.

Following discussion, it was agreed that this item be deferred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting for a decision on how much to spend.

Resolved: *That Standing Orders be reinstated at 9.30pm following their earlier suspension.*

20. Dates and time of next meetings

Noted: The upcoming Meeting Schedule

- **Thursday 7 May**
  - 9.15am – Planning Committee – (**Deputy Clerk Tracey Noble**)
  - 9.45am – Finance and General Purposes Committee (**Deputy Clerk Tracey Noble**)
- **Friday 15th May**
  - 10:00 am – Employment Committee - **Cancelled**
- **Tuesday 19 May**
  - 6.00pm – Planning Committee - **Clerk**
  - 630 pm – Annual Parish Meeting -**Clerk**
  - 7:00 pm – Full Council - **Clerk**

21. The meeting was officially closed at: 9:50PM

Signed...Laura Booth...

Dated...19.5.26...