



# Appleton Parish Council

---

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

Telephone 01925 268153 Email clerk@appletonpc.org.uk

**Minutes of the monthly Parish meeting of Appleton Parish Council held on  
Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019 at 7.30pm at Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green  
Road Appleton WA4 5EQ**

**Present:** - Councillor J Wheeler (Chairman)

Councillor K Arnett, Councillor B Axcell, Councillor I Axcell, Councillor S Bengler,  
Councillor G Skentelbery, Councillor T Stansfield, Councillor P Walker, Councillor J  
Walker.

Mrs. I Derbyshire (Assistant Clerk).

**Part One – This part of the meeting was open to the press and members of the  
public.**

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Councillor J Wheeler welcomed everyone to the Parish Council meeting. Councillor J  
Price sent his apology for the meeting.

**2. Members Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

**3. PCSO / Police report**

The PCSO was not in attendance and the Assistant Clerk was asked to contact him  
for an update.

**4. Public Participation.**

None Present.

**5. Minutes of last Parish Council meeting and matters arising**

**RESOLVED** that;

The Minutes of the Parish Council's monthly meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November  
2019 (copies of which had been circulated to each Member) were approved and  
signed by the Chairman.

Councillor J Walker asked about the donation to Warrington Foodbank and whether this was a one-off payment or would be a continuing donation. Several councillors thought it should be ongoing but this will need to be considered in the next financial year.

Councillor Wheeler advised that the Lantern Walk had been a success and more children had attended this year. A photo had been shown on the facebook page of Appleton Parish Council. Councillor Skentelbery advised that it is not illegal to post any photos of people and children that are attending a public event. The Assistant Clerk was asked to send a letter to the Church thanking them for all their hard work they put into this event. It was a good collaborative effort and we look forward to working with them again in the future.

## **6. Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting and matters arising.**

**RESOLVED** that;

The Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 (copies of which had been circulated to each Member) were approved and signed by the Chairman.

## **7. Budget and Precept 2020/2021**

The clerk had received a letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 from Warrington Borough Council with regards to the arrangements for the parish precepts for 2020/2021.

Warrington Borough Council has confirmed that the number of Band D equivalent properties for 2020/2021 is 4743. This compares to 4866 for 2019/2020.

The figures were discussed at length. In order to achieve the same level of income as 2019/2020 the Parish Council would have to increase the precept.

The precept for 2019/2020 was £150,359.40. The band D payable was £30.90. The band D payable for 2018/2019 was £28.75.

**RESOLVED** that;

The precept for 2020/2021 is £150,955 and this would result in a 3% increase and mean that the Band D payable would be £31.83.

The reasons for the increase are the following;

- 1) Increased costs, including salary increases for staff.
- 2) Local Plan Expenditure
- 3) Reserves would be used in order to reduce the precept increase.
- 4) More money would be used to benefit the local community in 2020/2021

The Precept in similar parishes for example Lymm Parish Council, Stockton Heath and Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Council are all higher charges per Band D property.

Earmarked Reserves will be discussed after 31 March 2020 at a future Finance & General Purposes meeting.

**RESOLVED** that;

The budget for 2020/2021 was set accordingly and the breakdown of Parish expenditure would be sent to Warrington Borough Council as requested as the precept is over £140,000.

## **8. Interim Audit Report**

The Interim Audit Report had been undertaken on the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> September 2019. The Interim Audit report stated the following;

The internal audit of Appleton Parish Council is carried out by undertaking the following tests as specified in the Annual Return for Local Councils in England:

- Checking that books of account have been properly kept throughout the year
- Checking a sample of payments to ensure that the Council's financial regulations have been met, payments are supported by invoices, expenditure is approved, and VAT is correctly accounted for
- Reviewing the Council's risk assessment and ensuring that adequate arrangements are in place to manage all identified risks
- Verifying that the annual precept request is the result of a proper budgetary process; that budget progress has been regularly monitored and that the council's reserves are appropriate
- Checking income records to ensure that the correct price has been charged, income has been received, recorded and promptly banked and VAT is correctly accounted for
- Reviewing petty cash records to ensure payments are supported by receipts, expenditure is approved, and VAT is correctly accounted for
- Checking that salaries to employees have been paid in accordance with Council approvals and that PAYE and NI requirements have been properly applied
- Checking the accuracy of the asset and investments registers
- Testing the accuracy and timeliness of periodic and year-end bank account reconciliation(s)
- Yearend testing on the accuracy and completeness of the financial statements.

The interim internal audit provide evidence to support the annual internal audit conclusion on the AGAR Annual Return for Local Councils.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the internal audit work carried out, which was limited to the tests indicated above, in our view the council's system of internal controls is in place, adequate for the purpose intended and effective, subject to the recommendations reported in the action plan overleaf.

As part of the internal audit work for the next financial year we will follow up all recommendations included in the action plan.

**RESOLVED** that;

The interim Audit report was accepted by the Parish Council.

The following issues were on the interim audit report;

1. The financial regulations include an authority to spend for the clerk of up to £500 but the same regulations also authorise the clerk to spend up to £1,000 on a debit card.  
Recommended that the financial regulations are updated to read the Clerk and Assistant Clerk can spend up to £1,000. The Ranger is authorised to spend up to £500 on a debit card.
2. The Financial Regulations require that 'a programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed'. In order to carry out this check the details of supplier bank account numbers paid should be available. We note that this information is available in the form of a payments status report but these were not on file for all payments made.

We could not identify evidence that a programme of regular checks of standing data had been carried out by Parish Councillors for example bank account data with invoices paid.

It was;

**RESOLVED** that;

A Parish Councillors on the Finance & General Purposes Committee would make random checks of say 4 invoices per month and identify that they have been paid according to the bank data. The parish Councillor will sign each one as evidence.

The clerks were congratulated on a successful interim audit report.

## **9. Financial Regulations**

In light of the interim audit report the Financial Regulations were to be amended. It was;

**RESOLVED** that;

that the financial regulations are updated to read the Clerk and Assistant Clerk can spend up to £1,000. The Ranger is authorised to spend up to £500 on a debit card.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee need the ability to approve expenditure as such the Financial Regulations needs to be amended. However, Grant Applications (any amount) can only be **recommended** by the Finance & General Purposes Committee and **approved** by full Council.

**RESOLVED** that;

The Financial Regulations are amended so that the Finance and General Purposes Committee can approve expenditure.

The Financial Regulations therefore will be amended as follows;

#### **4. BUDGETARY CONTROL AND AUTHORITY TO SPEND**

4.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by:

- the council for all items over £5,000;
- a duly delegated committee of the council for items over £500; or
- the Finance and General Purposes Committee any revenue items with no limit on the amount or for capital items up to the value of £5,000.
- the Clerk, in conjunction with Chairman of Council or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items below £500. For any items below £1,000 for the Clerk and Assistant Clerk and for the Parish Ranger for any items below £500.00
- where neither the Clerk or Chairman of the appropriate committee is available, the Chairman of the Parish Council having consulted with another Parish Councillor has delegated authority make a decision for items up to and including £500 for urgent matters.
- Any grant applications can only be recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Only the full Parish Council can approve grant applications.
- Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman.
- Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.

6.18

- Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk and Assistant Clerk in order to carry out their duties and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £1,000 unless authorised by council or finance committee in writing before any order is placed. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Parish Ranger in order to carry out their duties and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by council or finance committee in writing before any order is placed.

The clerk will update the Financial Regulations accordingly.

## **10. Terms of Reference for the Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The terms of reference adopted by the Parish Council on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019, for the Finance and General Purposes Committee as follows;

### **Finance and General Purposes Committee - Terms of Reference**

#### **Adopted by the Parish Council on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

the following terms of reference were adopted for the Finance and General Purposes Committee;

1. The Finance and General Purposes Committee will consist of the Parish Council Chair, Deputy Chair, Clerk (in his/her capacity as Responsible Financial Officer) and a minimum of two other Parish Councillors.
2. The Committee will be elected annually at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.
3. The Chair will be elected annually by the Committee at the first meeting.
4. The quorum of the Committee will be three members.
5. Only those appointed may vote at a meeting. In the case of an equal vote, the Chair shall have a second or casting vote.
6. The Clerk/Assistant Clerk will call a meeting of the Committee and send out the agenda (to the Committee only) after discussion with the Chair of the Committee and in accordance with the Parish Council Standing Orders.
7. The Clerk/Assistant Clerk will take Minutes of all meetings and the Minutes must be agreed by the Committee before publication. These Minutes are a public document and will be published.
8. The main areas under the remit of the Finance and General Purposes Committee are as follows:
  - a) to monitor the budget and review the Finances of the Parish Council with the Responsible Financial Officer/Assistant Clerk once a month;
  - b) to make recommendations on expenditure to the Parish Council;
  - c) to approve the banking reconciliation statements prior to submission to the Chair of the Parish Council and the Parish Council;
  - d) to review the budget annually in respect of budget setting for the following year and to make recommendations to the Parish Council;
  - e) to consider the parish precept annually;
  - f) to examine the internal and external auditors reports and make recommendations as appropriate;
  - g) to consider all financial requests to the Parish Council (including grant requests);

- h) to consider ad hoc financial requests throughout the year;
- g) to consider all matters relating to the Parish Hall maintenance;
- i) to review the overall management of the Parish Hall and make appropriate recommendations;
- j) to review the Parish Assets, register annually and make recommendations as appropriate.

9) The Responsible Financial Officer and Assistant Clerk will ensure that all records relating to item 8 are kept up to date and are available for inspection by any resident and internal/external auditor.

10. The Parish Clerk will be responsible for bringing any changes in legislation/good working practices to the attention of the Committee for consideration thus ensuring that the Parish Council procedures are up to date and relevant.

The clerk was asked to schedule meeting dates for the Finance and General Purposes Committee and to circulate this accordingly.

**RESOLVED** that;

Point 3 should state that; The Chair will be elected annually by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

Point 8 b) should be replaced with;

Finance and General Purposes Committee members can approve expenditure as follows;

Revenue Items (any amount)

Capital Items (up to the value of £5,000).

All expenditure authorised by the Finance & General Purposes Committee will be advised to the full parish council meeting each month.

## **11. Local Plan Expenditure**

This had been discussed in detail at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019. It was;

**RESOLVED** that;

£1638.37 is paid (28.37% of £5775) when the invoice is received.

**RESOLVED** that;

the Parish Council approve a maximum spend of £15,875 for 2020/2021

## **12. Planning**

**RESOLVED** that;

The minutes and recommendations of the Planning Committee meetings held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 (copies of which had been circulated to each member) were approved and signed by the Chairman.

The next Planning Committee meeting is Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at 9.30am at Appleton Parish Hall.

## **13. Clerk's Report and Accounts**

The November 2019 statement of accounts for the Financial Year 2019/2020 was noted, and the Members noted the Bank Statements as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

**RESOLVED** that;

Payments were to be made in accordance with the payment schedule for December 2019. The bank reconciliation and bank statements were both signed by the Chairman.

The clerk and assistant clerk will be attending the next SLCC meeting on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

The clerk had received a complaint regarding the closure of both Broomfields Leisure centre and Stockton Heath library over the Christmas period.

**RESOLVED** that;

The clerk was to send a letter of complaint to LiveWire on behalf of the closures over the Christmas period.

## **14. Events update**

Councillor J Wheeler reported that the Lantern Parade had taken place on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and that the Parish Hall users' event had taken place on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2019. She advised that the Church is keen to do something at Easter on the Millennium Green. The Parish Hall is reserved for 8 May 2020 (VE Day). The WI and the Flower Club are both keen to do something and work with the Parish Council. The Assistant Clerk mentioned that some Parish Councils were doing something for VJ Day also and the Parish Council will consider commemorating this day also.

## **15. Co-option Procedures**

The advert for the three vacant seats has been circulated and the closing date for applications is 12 midnight on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019. The clerk had booked the Parish hall for 7pm on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020 in order for the Parish Council to consider the applications received and to interview any candidates.

The Assistant Clerk advised that there had been one applicant to date and if there are less applicants to positions, they will still be interviewed. Councillor Wheeler had sent out suggested interview questions and it was agreed that a maximum of three questions would be asked. Councillor B Axcell also suggested that all applicants are interviewed on their own.

#### **16. Safeguarding policy**

**RESOLVED** that;

The safeguarding policy as drafted by the clerk was adopted by the Parish Council.

#### **17. Cheshire Association of Local Councils Membership**

The cost of being a member of Cheshire Association of Local Council is £612.00 for the rest of the financial year up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. This motion was **resolved by 6 councillors in favour, 2 objections and 1 abstaining.**

**RESOLVED** that;

The Parish Council becomes a member of Cheshire Association of Local Councils at the cost of £612.00 for the remainder of the financial year 2019/2020. The costs will be taken from the Annual Subscription budget.

Membership for 2020/21 will be considered again when renewal is due.

#### **18. Youth Worker**

Councillor J Wheeler reported that she had a meeting with a representative from Broomfields Youth Project and that they would be applying for a grant for the funding of a part time youth worker. The clerk will put this on the agenda when a grant application has been received. Councillor Wheeler will invite the representative from Broomfields Youth Project to the next meeting.

#### **19. Xmas Decorations**

**RESOLVED** that;

To retrospectively approve the expenditure of £9.95 for Christmas decorations for the office.

#### **20. Fire Extinguishers**

The clerk informed the Parish Council that three Fire Extinguishers required replacing due to their age following a routine safety inspection.

**RESOLVED** that;

To replace three Fire Extinguishers at the cost not exceeding £90.00 plus VAT.

## **21. Website**

The clerk will look at producing a specification document in order to establish a cost for a new website to be discussed at the next Finance & General Purposes meeting. Councillor Wheeler suggested that three companies are invited to do a pitch to the parish council. Councillor Skentelbery advised that Appleton Thorn Village Hall had recently had a new website and encouraged members to have a look at it.

## **22. Update for Environment working party**

The clerk reported that the new noticeboard at Bridge Lane shops had now been installed. Councillor J Walker reported that bulbs had been planted around the village by Warrington Borough Council.

## **23. Parish and Borough Councillors Reports**

Councillor I Axcell reported that Appleton Thorn has been put on Google maps instead of Appleton which gives the wrong impression that Appleton does not exist. The clerk has written to Google Maps and the clerk will update the Parish Council if she has had any response.

Councillor Stansfield suggested offering the Parish Council Christmas lights to Appleton Thorn at Christmas to decorate the area. However, the Appleton Thorn area deal with this themselves.

Councillor J Walker advised that rubbish has been dumped on Barleycastle Lane, opposite the cattery and asked that the Ranger remove the rubbish.

Councillor J Walker also asked the Ranger to check all the grit bins in Appleton to ensure they are not damaged and that there is plenty of grit in them. Assistant Clerk will liaise with the Ranger.

Councillor Skentelbery raised the Local Plan issue. Apparently, the new Government (Tories) was totally opposed to any development on green belt. He suggested the Parish Council write to the new MP for the area (Andy Carter) congratulating him on his appointment and that the Parish Council look forward to the protection of the green belt areas in the future. Clerk/Asst Clerk will write to the new MP.

Councillor Skentelbery had also been advised that there was no night bus service after 7pm in the Appleton Thorn area. Suggested we write to the Bus Company inviting them to the next meeting regarding local bus services. Clerk/Asst Clerk will write to the Bus Company.

Councillor Wheeler had been talking to the Scouts who are keen to work on the maintenance of local footpaths. She had a meeting with the Public Rights of Way officer on 18 December 2019.

There will be an office spring clean on the 15 January 2020.

**24. Date and time of next meeting**

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020, Planning Committee meeting 7pm followed by the Monthly Parish Council meeting 7.30pm.

Meeting Part One closed at 9.10pm

**Part Two – This contains confidential information and only Parish Councillors were present, the Assistant Clerk left the meeting.**

**25. Official Grievance against the Parish Council**

*This item was confidential as such the details have been removed.*