



Willaston Parish Council.

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Minutes

of the meeting of the Council held at
Saint Lukes Church, Coppice Rd, Willaston. CW5 6QA
on

Tuesday 31st of March 2026 at 7:00 PM

Present: Cllrs Cutts, Angier, Newton. Bailey, Salisbury (Chair), Barrow, Jones, Morris, Gough (from item 4)

In Attendance: C Coventry - Clerk to the Council
2 members of the public

Before the formal agenda, the Chair acknowledged the passing of John Flackett, a long-standing member of the Willaston community and former councillor, serving 15 years, and expressed condolences on behalf of the council to his friends and family.

- 1. Apologies:** Cllr Kirby, no apologies have been received from Cllr Brazier

Change to Order of Business.

RESOLVED: To bring forward item number 7 to item 2 on the agenda.

- 2. Public participation.**

A member of the public representing the owners of land at the Spinney gave an account of the issues with the discharge of surface water that causes repeated flooding at the site. He explained what investigations had taken place and the measures undertaken in trying to resolve the matter which is ongoing. He will email an explanatory note from United Utilities to the Clerk for information purposes. There have been complaints and there is an action under Sect 82 of the Environmental Protection Act, as a Statutory Nuisance being brought. He believes the liability for drainage lies with the Parish Council. The council entered into a Dedication Agreement in 1975 in relation to the green space at the Spinney. The Chair thanked him for attending and advised the matter would be investigated and discussed at a future meeting.

3. Co-Option

The Chair invited the candidate to provide any further information, and members were invited to ask the candidate any questions.

RESOLVED: Christopher Gough was Co-Opted as a member of Willaston Parish Council.

Cllr Gough signed the declaration of acceptance of office in the presence of the proper officer and joined the meeting.

4. Declaration of Interests and Dispensation Considerations

- a. None.
- b. Councillor Jones declared an interest in Item 15. Allotments, as an allotment holder.
- c. Cllr Jones was granted a standing dispensation until May 2027 in respect of his interest declared under 4b.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on Tuesday the 24th of February are a true and correct record.

Matters arising, Cllr Bailey asked if it should be recorded in the minutes which ward members had been co-opted to. The Clerk is to check with Cheshire East Electoral Services as to where our current vacancies are.

Cllr Cutts raised the issue under Item 1 (Apologies) regarding Cllr. Braziers continued absence due to ill health, that after 30 years of service to the council it would be inappropriate for her to lose her seat because repeat apologies had not been received. It was suggested consideration be given to amending the Standing Orders to make allowances for a member known to be ill. Cllr Bailey proposed that a resolution for leave of absence could be placed on a future agenda.

6. Points of Order

The Chair provided context for the item. He noted that points of order may be raised at any point during a meeting, but in this instance, members had requested the matters through the Clerk, resulting in their inclusion as a formal agenda item. The Chair stated that discussion under this item would be kept specifically to the two stated points, with any wider discussion on the police liaison role to follow under item 7.

The Chair referred members to the relevant Standing Orders:

- Standing Order 29(b), that all councillors shall observe the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.
- Standing Order 33(b), that all email correspondence between members and the Clerk, and between members, shall be deemed confidential business unless otherwise declared by the Clerk, Chair of the Council, or Chair of the relevant committee.
- Standing Order 33(c), that any member in breach of paragraphs (a) and (b) of that Standing Order shall be removed from any committee or sub-committee of the Council by the Council.

- a) To consider whether a breach of Standing Order 33(b) and section 4(e) of the delegated police liaison role Terms of Reference had occurred in relation to the circulation of internal member correspondence to a third party external to the Council

Cllr Bailey set out the background to the item. He advised that on 19th March 2026 members had received an email thread showing that on 10th March 2026 internal communications between members had been shared directly with Cheshire Constabulary officers, being a third party external to the Council. Cllr Bailey stated that, in his view, this represented a clear breach of Standing Order 33(b), and he asked the Chair to rule on whether a breach had occurred.

The Chair raised that whilst communication with the police was necessary in the course of the delegated police liaison role, he did not consider it appropriate for internal member email correspondence to be forwarded directly to the police. The Chair stated that Standing Orders are in place for a reason and should be followed at all times.

Members discussed the matter further. Concern was expressed that internal communications had been circulated externally rather than being summarised or formally presented in an appropriate way. Members also raised concern regarding the wider handling of police liaison communications, including that one of the appointed representatives had not been kept fully informed, had not been copied into all relevant emails, and had not been consulted regarding meetings arranged with the police. Members considered that this had contributed to a lack of continuity, clarity and confidence in the way the role had operated.

It was further noted that a number of matters had been repeatedly raised by Council over several months, but without clear or timely responses being brought back. Members expressed frustration that questions raised by Council appeared not to have been consistently conveyed or progressed, which in turn had caused avoidable concern and repeated discussion at meetings.

Reference was made during discussion to the wider standards expected of councillors through the Code of Conduct and the Nolan Principles. Concern was also expressed that the tone and wording used in some correspondence had been divisive and unhelpful.

Cllr Bailey asked that Standing Order 33(c) be invoked and that the councillor concerned be removed from the police liaison role. The Chair raised that Standing Order 33(c) specifically refers to committees and sub-committees and does not include delegated roles.

On that basis, the Chair did not believe that the provision applied to the delegated police liaison role at this time. It was noted that, when the Standing Orders are next reviewed, the wording could be amended to include delegated roles if the Council wished.

Following discussion, Cllr Bailey withdrew that element of his request, and the matter before Council was confined to whether a breach of Standing Order 33(b) had occurred.

A named vote was requested by Cllr Bailey.

RESOLVED: That a breach of Standing Order 33(b) has occurred in relation to the circulation of internal member correspondence to a third party external to the Council.

Named vote

Cllr Salisbury, For
Cllr Cutts, For
Cllr Bailey, For

Cllr Angier, For
Cllr Barrow, For
Cllr Jones, For

Cllr Morris, For
Cllr Newton, For
Cllr Gough, Abstained

- b) To consider adherence to the Terms of Reference for the delegated police liaison role

Members then considered whether the Terms of Reference for the delegated police liaison role were being adhered to, with particular reference to the requirement for the two representatives to coordinate with each other and with the Clerk to ensure continuity.

Cllr Morris stated that concerns regarding the operation of the role had been raised previously. She referred to meetings with police officers having taken place without her involvement, despite her availability being known, and stated that this was contrary to the expectation that the two representatives should coordinate with one another. She also noted that no detailed reports of meetings had been provided to the Clerk, despite this being expected under the Terms of Reference.

The Clerk confirmed that she had not received notes of meetings and was not routinely copied into general correspondence between the liaison representative and the police. Members considered that this demonstrated that the role had not been operating in the coordinated way originally intended by Council.

During discussion, members also reflected on the purpose of the role, namely to improve consistency of communication with the police and to ensure matters raised by Council were followed through effectively. Members considered that, in practice, the role had not been functioning in line with that intention and that the Terms of Reference had not been adhered to sufficiently.

A named vote was requested by Cllr Bailey.

RESOLVED: That the Terms of Reference for the delegated police liaison role have not been adhered to.

Named vote

Cllr Salisbury, For
Cllr Cutts, For
Cllr Bailey, For

Cllr Angier, For
Cllr Barrow, For
Cllr Jones, For

Cllr Morris, For
Cllr Newton, For
Cllr Gough, Abstained

7. Police

- a) No police were present at the meeting and no report has been received.
- b) Cllr Morris stated that she did not understand the current need for a full Council meeting with the police, as had been suggested in recent correspondence. She noted that the

Council had been raising the same matters repeatedly over a number of months, without satisfactory responses being returned, and questioned what benefit such a meeting would now provide.

The Chair stated that the purpose of appointing police liaison representatives was for them to liaise with the police on behalf of the Council and then report back in a clear and structured way. He considered that this should remain the primary means of engagement, rather than having a meeting of the full Council with the police.

Members reflected on the operation of the role over the past year and on the Council's longer-standing relationship with Cheshire Constabulary. Concern was expressed that statements made in recent correspondence, characterising the Council as difficult for the police to work with, appeared inconsistent with the Council's established relationship with the police and with the positive work previously undertaken over a number of years.

Members also discussed the history of matters raised through the liaison role and expressed frustration that a number of issues had been brought forward repeatedly at Council meetings, but without clear answers being returned. Particular reference was made to the community resolution order, which members noted had been raised on numerous occasions over several months. Concern was expressed that when a response was eventually received from the police, it appeared to treat the matter as though it had only recently been raised. Members considered that this suggested a disconnect between matters raised by the Council and matters progressed with the police.

It was noted that one written report had been provided following a liaison meeting with the police. Members considered that more regular and consistent written reports would have provided greater transparency and helped avoid repeated discussion of the same issues.

The Chair also addressed a suggestion made in correspondence that it was regrettable that he had not agreed to a separate face to face meeting. The Chair stated that it would have been inappropriate to hold individual meetings with members in relation to matters requiring formal consideration by the Council. He emphasised that such matters should properly be discussed through the Council's formal meeting process.

The Chair stated that the Terms of Reference for the police liaison role should now be reviewed and updated, with a revised version to be brought to the April meeting for consideration ahead of the Annual Meeting in May. Members agreed that this would be beneficial. It was also noted that the Council's Standing Orders may need amendment in due course to better reflect delegated liaison roles, although this would form part of a wider future review.

The Chair further proposed that Neighbourhood Alert emails should no longer be forwarded to members by the liaison representative, and that any member wishing to receive such alerts should sign up to the service directly. Members agreed. During discussion it was noted that care must be taken when forwarding emails, particularly where personal email addresses may be visible, as this could give rise to data protection concerns.

Cllr Morris apologised to the Council and stated that, being new both as a councillor and as one of the members appointed to the police liaison role, she felt that aspects of the matter could have been handled better. She welcomed any support, advice or guidance from colleagues going forward.

8. Borough Councillors' Report.

No reports have been received from the Cheshire East Councillors. Councillor Coiley had sent apologies. Cllr Bailey requested it be recorded that Cllr Coiley has missed 21 consecutive meetings, Cllr Gage 23 and Councillor Simon 27.

9. Planning Applications.

- a. Planning applications to be considered.

RESOLVED: 26/0908/VOC 36 Eastern Road, Willaston, Nantwich, CW5 7HT to submit the following comment to Cheshire East Planning Authority. Willaston Parish Council has no comments to make on this application

- b. To consider planning applications received since the publication of the agenda.

RESOLVED: 26/0927/FUL Land behind 57 Eastern Road. Object. Willaston Parish Council objects to this application or the reasons below.

It is contrary to the Willaston Neighbourhood Development Plan, specifically the following policies

Policy D4 Design of New Housing In particular, it is contrary to the following design guidance 9.15 a) as the proposal is over dominant for the location. 9.15 c) as the proposal provides insufficient landscaping which does not compliment the local area. 9.15 d) as the proposal does not provide garden space, commensurate with the size of the proposed dwelling.

Also, there is an error in the planning statement provided. **Section 9. Design and Character Scale of Massing**, This section incorrectly states that the proposed dwelling is 2 storeys when it's in fact three storeys.

GG1 Green Gap The proposal undermines the core objective of the Neighborhood Development Plan to maintain the green gap by permitting development in this sensitive location on the very edge of the neighborhood development area. The application would contradict one of the plan's key aims and the priorities clearly expressed by the community. The proposed development is contrary to policy GG1 because it would erode the physical extent of the green Gap, harm the local landscape character, and contribute to the visual and physical coalescence of settlements. This would undermine the Neighbourhood Plans objective of maintaining separation and openness.

H1 Scale of Housing Developments H1.1 Infill Developments and H4 Willaston Settlement Boundary. The proposed development does not meet the criteria of H1 as it lies outside the defined settlement boundary. It fails to comply with Policy H1.1 because it does not constitute the infilling of a small gap within an otherwise built-up frontage. The proposal also conflicts with the settlement boundary provisions of H4 as it lies outside the defined Willaston

settlement boundary. In addition, the proposal is contrary to the principles of sustainable development (par. 8 and 1.74) set out in the National Planning Framework (2025) Sustainable development requires the integration of economic, social and development, By eroding the green gap and conflicting with an up-to-date neighbourhood plan, the development fails to support the environmental objective of protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. As such, it does not represent sustainable development and should not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

10. Playing Field and Open Spaces

- a. Cllr Gough raised the question about the cost of security, noting that it was approximately £8000 per year. It was explained that the security company closes the field seven days a week, conducting a full circuit to ensure no one remains on site, and opens it on weekends, The police cannot currently advise that we leave the playing field open 24/7.

Cllr Barrow raised the issue of the playground repairs. The Chair confirmed that the Work had not been ordered as the clerk had identified that the quotations did not accurately reflect the work that was expected. Cllr Jones will look at repairing the gate. Discussions took place regarding the situation at the Spinney regarding matters raised during the public participation item. The clerk will share the dedication agreement with members and the matter will be discussed further at a future meeting. There is nothing to report for the Mike Heyward Green or War Memorial.

- b. **RESOLVED:** To accept the quotation from Mike Webster for grass cutting for 2026/2027, at a cost of £430.00 inc VAT per cut for all areas. Itemised as The Spinney £50.00, Allotments £65.00, Mike Heywood Green £65.00 and Lettie Spencer Playing Field £250.00 per cut

Next year a market test will be undertaken for further quotations.

11. Chair's Report.

The Chair highlighted that today is the end of the financial year and that the new municipal year begins tomorrow, 1st of April 2026. Statutory obligations are now our number one priority.

Governance and Assertion 10: The internal and external audit process begins in April. Items on this agenda relating to the Accessibility Statement, Privacy Policy, and Website Upgrade were required to be determined at this meeting to satisfy governance obligations. The Chair noted that the website upgrade decision has been outstanding since November 2024.

Allotments. The Chair expressed significant appreciation for the work carried out by Cllr Angier. He noted the positive atmosphere on site and stated that the decisions being made tonight would future proof the allotments and deliver a proportionate income for the Council.

Audit: The internal and external audit process will be the Clerks primary focus for the next couple of months. The chair and clerk will hold regular working sessions to work through the process. Members were asked to be mindful that statutory obligations take priority and offer practical support to the clerk where possible.

Playground repairs: The quotes obtained were not accepted as they did not accurately reflect the work the council expected. New quotes will be sought. Members were invited to assist with identifying contractors.

Municipal Year: The April meeting will be the last meeting of the current municipal year. The annual meeting will take place on the 12th of May 2026 at which all roles, committee memberships and delegations will be re-elected. 2026/27 is the final year of the current electoral cycle, with parish elections due the following year.

12. Clerk's Report.

The clerk submitted a report to the council in advance of the meeting. No issues were raised.

13. Authorization of payments.

RESOLVED: The schedule of payments for March correctly states that the invoice presented and that £1495.99 is approved to be paid (as detailed on page 5064) and £1892 was paid to avoid late payment.

14. Clerk IT Equipment Provision

RESOLVED: To proceed with the purchase of a replacement laptop for the clerk with a budget of up to £950.

15. Allotments

- a) Councillor Angier provided an update on the allotments and reported that feedback from allotment holders regarding the improvements to previously overgrown vacant plots has been very positive. The delegation to the Clerk to grant permission for structures is working well.

The next step will be to measure the plots. New tenancies are being let on the new pricing structure. For future consideration is the charging for water, per sq meter.

The farmer, by not renewing his tenancy, will provide the opportunity to consider enlarging the allotments in that area.

Cllr Newton formally expressed appreciation to Cllr Angier for her work. Cllr Bailey noted the voluntary nature of the role and the significant time required. He suggested that the council may, in future, consider formally funding the management role.

- b) **RESOLVED:** To accept the quotes from Street Solutions, R and R Landscapes and the additional padlock supplier for the supply and installation of entry gates at a total cost of £1998.75 exc VAT.
- c) **RESOLVED:** To accept the quote from the Parish Board Notice Company for the supply of a noticeboard for £740 exc VAT, inc delivery.
The notice board is to be positioned inside the allotment gates.
- d) **RESOLVED:** To adopt the new tenancy agreement and supporting documents and to issue them to tenants with effect from the 1st of April 2026.
Tenancy Agreement – Accepted
Allotment Tenancy Schedule – Accepted
Measurement Register – Accepted

Rent and Charges Schedule – Accepted
Allotment Rules and Procedures – Accepted
Bee Keeping Policy – Accepted
Livestock Policy – Accepted
Allotment Cultivation Standards – Accepted
Allotment Plot Condition Classification - Accepted

16. Website Upgrade

RESOLVED: To proceed with Aubergine as the website provider at a year one cost of £559.00, to register the gov.uk domain and to host all council e-mail addresses on the new domain.

17. Accessibility Statement.

RESOLVED: To approve the council's Accessibility Statement as presented.

18. Data Protection Policy. (Privacy Policy)

RESOLVED: To approve the updated Protection Policy (Privacy Policy), subject to the agreed amendments being incorporated.

19. Next Meeting.

Tuesday 28th April.

Signed as a true record by the authority of the Council.

Chair

Date 28th April 2026

Willaston Parish Council

Schedule of Payments

31st March 2026

Date of Debit	Recipient	Purpose	£	£	Power of expenditure	Scribe	Rebursal
1	Holdfast Secure Ltd	Key cutting for allotments	156.00		Smallholding and Allotments Act 1908 S23		
2	GiffGaff	CCTV Data Bill - March 2026	15.00		Crime and Disorder Act 1998 S17		Claire Coventry
3	St Marys Church Office	Church Yard Grant 2026	300.00		LGA 1972 S137		
4	Claire Coventry	Clerks Salary March	691.44		LGA 1972 S112		
5	Claire Coventry (Clerk)	Clerks working from home Expenses (Jan too March)	78.00		LGA 1972 S112		
6	Unity Trust Bank	Service charge due 31.3.2026 for Feb	7.00		LGA 1972 S111		
7	Post Office Ltd	Postage Stamps	8.66		LGA 1972 S111		Claire Coventry
8	HMRC	Employer Tax and NICs Nov	239.89		LGA 1972 S112		
	Total		1495.99				

Payments made as authorised by the Approved Payments List, Meeting Resolution, and to avoid late payment							Rebursal
Date of Debit	Recipient	Purpose	£	£	Power of expenditure	Scribe	N/A
9	24.3.2026	Alpha Omega Securities	Security Lock at Playingfield (Feb)	630.00		LGA 1972 S111	
10	24.3.2026	Alpha Omega Securities	Security Lock at Playingfield (Feb)	18.00		LGA 1972 S111	
11	24.2.2026	Hibberts LLP	Legal Service - Farm Tenancy	1244.00		LGA 1972 S111	
		Total	1892.00				

 Cllr - Proposer - Sign & Date

 Cllr - Seconder - Sign & Date