

Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 5th May 2026

Members: Cllr. S Waltho (Chair), Cllr. S. Cook (Vice Chair), Cllr. C Harrison, Cllr. I Goodwin, Cllr. N Thorpe, Cllr. R Garton, Cllr. C Van Weerdenburg

Clerk of the Council: Elizabeth Worrall

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APM2601

Cllr. Goodwin had sent apologies in advance of the meeting.

APM2602

There were no declarations of interest.

APM2603

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 6th May 2025.

APM2604

Cllr. Waltho shared his annual report.

It has been a great privilege to once again serve as Chairman of the Parish Council for the past year.

The year has once again provided many challenges, and my thanks go to all members of the council and our hard-working clerk, who, I believe have all dealt with each of these challenges in a professional and impartial way.

Back in July of last year, we were sorry to hear that Mike Cohen would be stepping down from his role as a Parish Councillor and following a short period of searching for a replacement, I was delighted to report that Richard Garton had agreed to join us. I am sure that Richard will be a great addition to the team and will hopefully be an asset to the Parish Council for many years to come.

Planning

Planning issues have at times been challenging, and at times confusion over the decision-making process at Cheshire East Council has not helped. Not least the recent refusal of the application at White House farm (Currently the subject of an appeal) and the granting of permission for a similar development at Brick bank farm.

We are aware that national and local planning policies are being, or have already been revised, and that historical policies that were once designed to provide some degree of protection from unwelcome development may no longer provide the protections that I feel are required for a small rural community such as ours.

Our current Neighbourhood Plan expires in 2030, and it is my intention to seek clarification from Cheshire East planning department that the policies detailed therein are still valid and will still be taken into consideration when decisions on planning applications are made. Although I suspect that we may well need to revise our plan before the expiry date of 2030 to ensure compliance with the revised national policies.

Environment

The land adjacent to Hillmoor Farm continues to cause great concern among residents and the Parish Council alike, with the current development of the land into what is perceived to be a caravan site being of particular concern.

Following the recent increase in activity on this site the Parish Council have not only reported this to once again to the local authority but have now sought the help from our local MP Tim Roca.

Following this latest exchange of correspondence, I am delighted to report that the LPA have now issued a "Temporary Stop Notice" on the site. This notice lasts for a period of 56 Days to allow the Authority time to assess if further action can be taken. The Parish Council have also suggested that the Environment Agency be involved during this period to assess the possible health and pollution risks that may be present on site following the previous illegal tipping of waste.

Residents need to remain vigilant regarding activities on site and are encouraged to report any activities that breach the stop notice immediately to the Police.

The Parish Council are also extremely concerned about the reported tipping of large amounts of effluent waste into the local drainage system within the village. We have reported incidents of this to the Police, Environment Agency, Cheshire East Council and United Utilities. At the time of writing, we are yet to receive a response from any of the above. The Parish Council, along with residents are to remain vigilant and report any further occurrences immediately.

On a brighter note, the village greens and surrounds are again looking magnificent, and the Parish Council wish to express their sincere thanks to all the volunteers for the work they do to maintain these areas. It is very much appreciated by the Council, and I am sure by all the residents.

The Parish Council would also like to express our thanks to the quarry (Tarmac) for the work they do to help maintain the appearance of the millennium park and the grounds around the Church and Community Hall.

Our Five Boundary signs were installed last year. I personally think they are a great addition to the Parish. The signs not only look impressive, but I feel they also give us a real sense of identity. Thanks must go to all the volunteers who gave up their time on what was a lovely Sunday morning to carry out the installation of the signs.

Millennium Park

The Millennium Park, and particularly the children's play area remains our largest asset with the maintenance of equipment and grounds being a constant challenge.

The equipment in the park has now been in place for approximately 25 years and at some stage in the coming years will inevitably need to be replaced. Whilst we will look to carry out as many repairs as possible ourselves, the costs involved with the replacement of equipment would, in some cases, be quite significant, and I feel could not be realistically achieved without the support and sponsorship from our local businesses.

This has been further highlighted by the recent ROSPA Report, whereby some of the equipment, in their view, is already in need of either immediate repair or replacement. This is something that the Parish Council will need to give serious consideration to over the coming weeks and months. This year we have replaced the Two benches within the children's play area, and our thanks go out to both the Quarry (Tarmac) and the Plough Inn for the very kind donations of these benches. Thanks, must also go once again to the team of volunteers who gave up their time to carry out the installation of these benches.

Parking

Parking in the village continues to be a problem, particularly in the vicinity of the Plough Inn. The Parish Council and residents are especially concerned about the parking of vehicles close to the junctions of School Lane and the main A536, where the potential for a possible accident is most likely to occur.

In view of the above the Parish Council have agreed with the local police on the wording of suitable signs that we intend to place on the green, to remind motorists of the legal position regarding parking, and hopefully act as a deterrent against future parking.

As a matter of courtesy and to maintain our good relations with the Plough, Councillor Cook has met with the Plough to advise them of our proposals, and I am delighted to report that they were both understanding and amenable to our proposals, and as such we now need to organise a small working party to erect these signs.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust

It is the intention of the Parish Council to engage with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust to see how best we can improve wildlife habitats within our Parish. An initial "mapping" of our area has already been carried out by the Trust and a presentation of their findings, together with advice as to how we can take this forward will be presented by them later in the year.

The Quarry (Tarmac) already works closely with the wildlife trust in this regard, and it is also the intention of Parish Council to look to other landowners and residents to hopefully develop this further once the plans are known.

Finances and Procedures

Our financial situation remains stable and procedures regarding the management of these have been updated by our extremely professional clerk, Lizzie, to ensure compliance with our legal obligations.

The latest AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) is an example of the financial and procedural hoops that a local Parish Council must go through on an annual basis. These procedures and the completed AGAR are then subject to a thorough internal audit by an

independent auditor to ensure our compliance, and for the auditor to advise where improvements, if any, could be made.

I am delighted to report and following many emails between the auditor and Lizzie that the latest AGAR for our past financial year has finally been completed, and although a couple of procedural recommendations have been made by the auditor, our accounts and procedures have been generally given a clean bill of health.

Thanks

To conclude I would just like to go back to the beginning of this report and reiterate my thanks to all members of the Parish Council for their continued support and hard work. All councillors give up their time voluntarily to ensure that the Parish Council functions to the best of its ability for the benefit of the residents of Eaton.

My thanks also go to our Local CE Ward Councillor, Lesley Smetham. Lesley continues to give her support and help on matters that not only affect our village but also provides us with advice and assistance on issues from further afield that she feels may have implications for us. Thank you Lesley.

Finally, my thanks once again go to Lizzie, our extremely hard working and professional clerk. Lizzie has not only been a source of great support and invaluable help to me over the past year but has also been responsible for compiling new documents and procedures to ensure that we as a Parish Council are as professional and accountable as we need to be. – Thanks Lizzie.