LOWER WITHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held

Monday 20th May, 2024 at 7:40p.m.

at Lower Withington Parish Hall

Present Councillors P. Duffy (Chairman), A. Brocklehurst, P. Chrisp, C. Hamilton, H. Lewis.
Members of the public (4).
Cheshire East Council Ward Member: Councillor L. Smetham.
Dr. E. M. Maddock – Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer.

1. Election of Chairman – The retiring Chairman invited nominations for the position of Chairman for the 2024/25 civic year. One nomination was received in respect of Councillor P. Duffy.

118/24 RESOLVED (a) That Councillor P. Duffy be elected as Chairman to Lower Withington Parish Council for the 2024/25 civic year.
(b) That the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office be received. (All in favour)

2. Apologies for absence
Councillor J. Blackburn – Personal reason.
Councillor J. Bradley – No reason provided.

119/24 RESOLVED (a) To receive and approve the above apologies for absence. (All in favour)

3. Declarations of interest: None.

120/24 RESOLVED (a) To note that no declarations of interest were made. (All in favour)

4. Election of Vice Chairman – The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Vice Chairman for the 2024/25 civic year. One nomination was received in respect of Councillor H. Lewis.

121/24 RESOLVED (a) That Councillor H. Lewis be elected as Vice Chairman to Lower Withington Parish Council for the 2024/25 civic year. (All in favour)

5. Minutes

(a) The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 29th April, 2024 had been previously circulated to all Members.

122/24 RESOLVED (a) That the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 29th April, 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (All in favour)

6. Public forum for questions – A resident raised concerns about the safety of highway junctions, many of which are obstructed by hedges, signs and/or utility poles. It was noted that agricultural hedge cutting is often hindered by utility poles and it was suggested that utility companies should have a responsibility to ensure vegetation around the poles is trimmed.

A resident requested an update regarding local feedback in respect of the proposed village gateways. It was noted that an article had been included within the recent newsletter and that feedback from residents was now awaited. It was suggested that, should the project proceed, consideration should be given to installing gateways at all entrances to the Parish, rather than just for a section of Salters Lane. A resident expressed an opinion that installation of village gateways was unnecessary and added to an existing abundance of road signage. It was noted that the original rationale for the project was to alert drivers to the residential section of the 30mph area where there is

an increasing number of children living and playing.

A resident requested that consideration be given to making increased used of local Facebook groups to share information.

A resident requested that consideration be given to reviewing the method and timing for distributing the newsletters as some residents had missed events due to delays in receiving the newsletter. It was noted that a range of options are available to deliver the newsletter.

A representative of Lower Withington Parish Hall reported that work is continuing to refurbish the venue with electrical work and internal decorating taking place following the installation of the new windows. It was requested that the Parish Council consider providing financial support to the Parish Hall.

123/24 RESOLVED **(a) To receive the questions and comments from members of the public. (All in favour)**

7:47p.m. - One resident joined the meeting during item 6.

7. Cheshire East Ward Member Cllr. L. Smetham – Borough Councillor L. Smetham reported that she had received approaches regarding hiring Lower Withington Parish Hall and was pleased to hear that these had resulted in bookings for the venue.

Cheshire East Council continues to experience financial challenges with increasing pressure across many services. Special educational needs and social care costs have significantly increased in recent years creating additional challenges.

The new Chief Executive of Cheshire East Council is now in post and has overseen adjustments to working practices at the Council. The frequency of meetings has been amended and more meetings are taking place online. In addition, further cuts to services are being proposed including changes to school meal provision.

Cheshire East Council has received a number of grants to support highways activities, household support grants and decarbonisation grants.

124/24 RESOLVED **(a) To receive and note the report of Borough Councillor L. Smetham. (All in favour)**

8:13p.m. - Three members of the public and Borough Councillor L. Smetham excused themselves from the meeting and left.

8. Finance

(a) Financial Statement 2024/25 as at 20th May, 2024 – Members considered the financial statement 2024/25 which was unanimously accepted. (Appendix A)

(b) Receipts – The Chairman noted the receipts since the last meeting. (Appendix B)

(c) Payments – The Chairman outlined the payments listed at Appendix C.

125/24 RESOLVED **(a) That the Statement of Account as at 20th May, 2024 be received and the Chairman's observations duly noted. (Appendix A)**
(b) That the report on receipts at Appendix B be received and duly noted.
(c) That the schedule of payments listed at Appendix C be approved. (All in favour)

(d) Banking arrangements

i. Authorised signatories

126/24 RESOLVED **(a) That no changes to authorised signatories be made at this time. (All in favour)**

ii. Direct Debit payments

127/24 RESOLVED **(a) That approval be re-confirmed for current direct debit payments to aql Ltd. and the Information Commissioner's Office to continue. (All in favour)**

iii. Standing Order payments

128/24 RESOLVED **(a) That no standing order payments are currently made by the Council. (All in favour)**

(e) Financial Risk Assessment – The financial risk assessment 2024/25 had been previously circulated to all Members.

129/24 RESOLVED **(a) That the risk assessment 2024/25 be approved and adopted as presented. (Appendix D) (All in favour)**

(f) Community Infrastructure Levy – Members noted the actions of the Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer in submitting the Community Infrastructure Levy Monitoring Report 2023/24 to Cheshire East Council.

130/24 RESOLVED **(a) That the actions of the Clerk & Responsible Financial officer in submitting the Community Infrastructure Levy Monitoring Report to Cheshire East Council be confirmed. (All in favour)**

(g) Grant application from Lower Withington Parish Hall – Item deferred.

9. Annual Review of Parish Council administrative matters

(a) Scheme of delegated authority – Members considered the merits of retaining the scheme of delegated authority for implementation during periods when holding meetings would present a risk to those attending.

131/24 RESOLVED **(a) That the scheme of delegated authority be approved as existing. (All in favour)**

(b) Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

132/24 RESOLVED **(a) That the review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be deferred to a future meeting. (All in favour)**

(c) General Power of Competence – Members considered the eligibility criteria to exercise the General Power of Competence. It was noted that the Parish Council did currently meet the criteria.

133/24 RESOLVED **(a) To record that Lower Withington Parish Council is currently eligible to exercise the General Power of Competence. (All in favour)**

(d) Asset management – The asset register had been previously circulated to all Members.

134/24 RESOLVED **(a) That the list of assets be confirmed as a correct record.**
(b) That the insurance cover relating to the asset inventory be confirmed. (All in favour)

(e) Insurance cover – Members noted that insurance covers had been reviewed during the recent policy renewal process.

135/24 RESOLVED **(a) To confirm that existing insurance covers meet the needs of the Parish Council. (All in favour)**

(f) Subscriptions to other bodies – Members reviewed current subscriptions.

136/24 RESOLVED **(a) That subscription be continued with the Cheshire Association of Local Councils. (All in favour)**

(g) Complaints Procedure

137/24 RESOLVED **(a) That the existing complaints procedure be re-approved. (All in favour)**

(h) Payments made under s.137 and General Power of Competence 2023/24

138/24 RESOLVED **(a) That no payments were made under s.137 provisions during 2023/24.**
(b) That no payments were made under General Power of Competence provisions during 2023/24. (All in favour)

(i) Calendar of meetings 2024/25 – Members reviewed the scheduled meeting dates for 2024/25.

139/24 RESOLVED **(a) That meetings for the 2024/25 civic year be held on:**
Monday 24th June, 2024
Monday 29th July, 2024
Monday 30th September, 2024
Monday 28th October, 2024
Monday 25th November, 2024
Monday 27th January, 2025
Monday 24th February, 2025
Monday 31st March, 2025
Monday 28th April, 2025
Monday 19th May, 2025 (including Annual Parish Meeting)
(All in favour)

10. Planning Applications

(a) Recent planning decisions – Members noted recent planning decisions which had been issued by Cheshire East Council in respect of development within the Parish. (Appendix E)

(b) Planning applications

i. **24/1129M**: The Coppice, Lowndes Farm, Messuage Lane, Lower Withington. SK11 9HT
One and two storey rear extension to kitchen/living and bedroom.

140/24 RESOLVED **(a) That no comments be submitted to Cheshire East Council in respect of application 24/1129M. (All in favour)**

ii. Further applications received following issue of agenda: None.

141/24 RESOLVED **(a) To note that no further planning applications had been received. (All in favour)**

11. Reports from meetings of external organisations

(a) Jodrell Bank Observatory World Heritage Site Steering Group – There was nothing to report.

142/24 RESOLVED **(a) To note the update. (All in favour)**

(b) Cheshire East Council Network Meeting (14/05/24) – It was reported that there had been three presentations: an introduction to the new Cheshire East Local Plan process; an update on efforts by Cheshire East Council to become carbon neutral and an introduction to schemes being developed to encourage healthy lifestyle choices to reduce the need for medical treatment of common conditions.

143/24 RESOLVED **(a) To note the report from the meeting. (All in favour)**

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12. Correspondence

(a) To consider specific correspondence received by the Parish Council since the date of the last ordinary meeting and determine such actions as Members consider appropriate thereto –

i. Cheshire East Council: Household Waste Recycling Centre Consultation 2024.

144/24 RESOLVED (a) That no response be submitted to the consultation. (All in favour)

ii. Police & Crime Commissioner's Office: Notification of the election of Dan Price as the new Police & Crime Commissioner effective from 9th May, 2024.

145/24 RESOLVED (a) To receive and note the information. (All in favour)

iii. Cheshire East Council: Road closure at Chelford Road, Siddington from junction with Moss Lane to junction with Woodside on 9th July, 2024

146/24 RESOLVED (a) To receive and note the information. (All in favour)

iv. Cheshire East Council: Road closure at Whisterfield Lane, Siddington from junction with Chapel Lane to junction with Moss Lane on 9th July, 2024

147/24 RESOLVED (a) To receive and note the information. (All in favour)

13. Highway maintenance and enhancements

(a) Updates on highway matters – Members noted that the pothole on Holmes Chapel Road, opposite the junction with Bomish Lane, had been repaired. The pothole on Whitecroft Heath Lane had also been repaired.

148/24 RESOLVED (a) That the Clerk continue to pursue updates in respect of outstanding highway matters. (All in favour)

(b) Highway matters for attention – It was noted that some potholes at Trap Street had been marked for repair by Cheshire East Council. It was also reported that a resident had reported overgrown hedges at Congleton Lane.

149/24 RESOLVED (a) To note the report. (All in favour)

(c) Speed review of A535 – It was noted that no further updates had been received regarding the speed review of A535.

150/24 RESOLVED (a) To receive and note the update. (All in favour)

(d) Village gateways – Members noted the comments made at item 6 and confirmed that an invitation to residents to make comments on the proposal had been included within the recent newsletter.

151/24 RESOLVED (a) To defer the item to the next meeting. (All in favour)

(e) Footbridge at Lower Withington FP5 – It was reported that a response from the second landowner was still awaited.

152/24 RESOLVED (a) To receive and note the update. (All in favour)

14. Parish Matters

(a) Gawsworth Ward Policing Team – It was reported that no crime report had been received from the Policing Team. It was noted, however, that there had been a recent vehicle accident at Trap Street.

153/24 RESOLVED (a) To receive and note the information. (All in favour)

(b) Community Newsletter – It was reported that the latest newsletter had been recently issued. Preparations are being made for the next newsletter, including review of delivery arrangements.

154/24 RESOLVED (a) To receive and note the update. (All in favour)

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15. Parish Councillor Vacancies – Item deferred.

16. Matters for inclusion on next/future meeting agenda

(a) Christmas lights 2024.

(b) Planting of fruit trees at Dicklow Cob Village Green.

(c) Condition of shrubs in island at entrance to Lower Withington Parish Hall.

17. Date of next meeting: Monday 24th June, 2024 at 7:30p.m.

To consider passing a resolution under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

155/24 RESOLVED **(a) That a resolution to exclude the public and press from the following item of business on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information is not required as there are no items to discuss. (All in favour)**

18. Matters for consideration including those transferred from above items – None.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8:50p.m.

Signed:..... Date: 24th June, 2024

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APPENDIX A

Financial Statement – 2024/25 as at 20th May, 2024					
Actual 2023/24 £	**Details**	**2024/25 Budget £**	**Actual to Apr. 24 £**	**Agenda May 24 £**	**Budget Balance £**
	Receipts				
10,892.00	Precept	11,142.00	5,571.00		5,571.00
0.00	Balances	3,000.00	0.00		0.00
228.09	Investment interest		0.00	73.84	0.00
0.00	Sale of assets		0.00		0.00
500.00	Grants, donations & refunds		0.00		0.00
519.96	VAT refund		0.00		45.00
12,140.05	**Total receipts**	**14,142.00**	**5,571.00**	**73.84**	**5,616.00**
	Payments				
4,334.22	Salary (Clerk)	4,722.00	371.80	371.80	3,978.40
0.00	National Insurance (Employer)	0.00	0.00		0.00
300.00	Allowances (Clerk)	350.00	0.00		350.00
136.41	Administration	300.00	0.00		300.00
0.00	Chairman/Member allowances	0.00	0.00		0.00
185.00	Audit fees (internal & external)	200.00	220.00		-20.00
300.00	Insurance	350.00	0.00	300.00	50.00
2,114.96	Grants/Donations (inc. s.137)	2,600.00	0.00		2,600.00
345.00	Website	345.00	5.00		340.00
201.50	Subscriptions/affiliation fees	290.00	0.00	174.04	115.96
190.00	Room hire	325.00	0.00		325.00
0.00	Training	210.00	0.00		210.00
0.00	Professional Services	750.00	0.00		750.00
35.98	Assets – purchase	1,000.00	0.00		1,000.00
9.99	Assets – maintenance	1,600.00	0.00		1,600.00
771.49	Newsletter	600.00	0.00	146.94	453.06
0.00	Contingency	500.00	0.00		500.00
95.75	VAT		45.00		
9,020.30	**Total payments**	**14,142.00**	**641.80**	**992.78**	**12,552.42**

Cash/Bank reconciliation	**01/04/24**	**29/04/24**	**20/05/24**	**31/03/25**
Balance B/Fwd	34,515.57	34,515.57	39,444.77	38,525.83
Add total receipts	14,142.00	5,571.00	73.84	5,616.00
Less total payments	14,142.00	641.80	992.78	12,552.42
Balance C/Fwd	34,515.57	39,444.77	38,525.83	31,589.41
Cumulative balances	**Balance**	**Balance**	**Balance**	**Balance**
	01/04/24	**29/04/24**	**20/05/24**	**31/03/25**
General funds	8,091.91	13,021.11	12,102.17	5,165.75
Earmarked reserves	26,423.66	26,423.66	26,423.66	26,423.66
	34,515.57	39,444.77	38,525.83	31,589.41

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Cash/Bank Reconciliation as at 20th May, 2024

Cash				
Balance brought forward 01/04/24				
Current Account		2,500.00		
Business Reserve Account		6,492.38		
Liquidity Manager Account		25,523.19		
		34,515.57		
Plus receipts		5,644.84		
Less payments		1,634.58		
Balance carried forward 20/05/24:		38,525.83		
Bank (NatWest)				
Current Account		8,071.00		05/04/24
Add receipts/transfer since above statement				
	0.00			
		0.00		
Less unpresented cheques				
Approved	-641.80			
For approval	-992.78			
		-1,634.58		
			6,436.42	20/05/24
Business Reserve Account		6,492.38		05/04/24
Add receipts/transfer since above statement				
	0.00			
		0.00		
Less unpresented cheques				
	0.00			
		0.00		
			6,492.38	20/05/24
Liquidity Manager Account		25,597.03		03/05/24
Add receipts/transfer since above statement				
	0.00			
		0.00		
Less unpresented cheques				
	0.00			
		0.00		
			25,597.03	20/05/24
Total bank balances 20/05/24			38,525.83	

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APPENDIX B

Receipts

NatWest Bank plc	£73.84	Gross interest – April 2024 (LM)

APPENDIX C

Payments for approval

Cheque No 000583	E. M. Maddock	£297.40	Salary: May 2024
Cheque No 000584	HM Revenue & Customs	£74.40	Employee income tax
Cheque No 000585	Zurich Municipal	£300.00	Insurance premium 2024/25
Cheque No 000586	P. Chrisp	£146.94	Newsletter printing
Cheque No 000587	Cheshire Association of Local Councils	£174.04	Affiliation fee 2024/25

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APPENDIX D

LOWER WITHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT - 2024/25

Subject	Risk(s) Identified	H/M/L	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess/Revise
Business continuity	Risk of Council not being able to continue its business due to an unexpected or tragic circumstance.	L	In the event of the Clerk being indisposed the Chairman (or other nominated Member) may perform the necessary duties.	Existing procedure adequate. Review when necessary.
	Loss of paper/electronic records.	M	Files and records kept at the Clerk's home. Regular backup of electronic files is made. Paper documents stored in metal filing cabinets. Approved Minutes scanned. Electronic minutes published on website.	Existing procedure adequate.
Precept	Adequacy of precept for Council to carry out its Statutory duties.	H	Budgetary Control statement presented to Council at each meeting.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Requirements not submitted to CEC.	L	Full Minute - RFO to follow up.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Amount not received from CEC.	L	RFO to confirm receipt and Minute at next Meeting of Council.	Existing procedure adequate.
Financial records	Inadequate records.	L	Financial Regulations specify requirements of Council.	Existing procedure adequate. Review Financial Regulations 2024.
	Financial irregularities.	L	Internal Audit of accounts by competent, independent person. Periodic financial reports are presented to Council. Cheque signatories are separate from person raising the cheque.	Existing procedure adequate. Review bank signatories when change of Councillors/circumstances.
Bank and banking	Inadequate checks.	L	Bank reconciliation produced at each meeting.	Existing procedure adequate. Review Financial Regulations 2024.
	Bank mistakes.	L	RFO check all bank statements against Council records and query errors immediately.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Loss.	L	RFO check all bank statements against Council records and query inconsistencies immediately.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Charges.	L	RFO check adequate funds prior to issuing cheques. RFO challenge charges where errors made by bank.	Existing procedure adequate.
Cash	Loss through theft or dishonesty.	L	Cash handling is not encouraged but where cash received - banked within 7 days.	Existing procedure adequate.
Reserves - General	Adequacy.	L	Consider at Budget setting.	Existing procedure adequate.
Reserves - Earmarked	Adequacy.	L	Consider at Budget and review of final accounts.	Existing procedure adequate.

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Subject	Risk(s) Identified	H/M/L	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess/Revise
Reporting and auditing	Information communication.	L	A monitoring statement is produced regularly before each Council meeting and approved at the meeting. This statement includes bank reconciliation and budget update.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Compliance.	L	An independent internal auditor has been appointed. Annual reports detailing compliance with audit regulations are presented to Council.	Existing procedure adequate.
Direct costs & overhead expenses	Goods not supplied but billed.	L	Procurement undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance. RFO to follow up on all orders.	Existing procedure adequate. Review Financial Regulations 2024.
	Invoice incorrectly calculated or recorded.	L	RFO to check arithmetic on all invoices and perform regular bank reconciliations.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Cheque payable incorrect (excessive or to wrong party).	L	Signatories initial Stub and Voucher to confirm accuracy.	Existing procedure adequate.
Salaries and associated costs.	Salary paid incorrectly.	M	Check salary to Minute, check hours and rate to contract. Salary analysis is detailed on the payment vouchers issued.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Wrong deduction of NI and Tax.	M	NI and Tax deductions are calculated using the HMRC PAYE RTI System which is regularly updated. Check PAYE calculations.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Unpaid Tax and NI contributions to Inland Revenue.	L	Payments are made to HMRC by cheque and detailed in the financial statements presented to Council.	Existing procedure adequate.
Employees.	Loss of clerk.	L	Hours, health, stress, training, long term sick, early departure - risk monitored and managed as appropriate.	Existing procedure adequate. Review annually.
	Fraud by employee.	L	Fidelity Guarantee value reviewed annually and insurance cover arranged.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Actions taken by staff.	L	Relevant training, resources and access to professional advice made available to Clerk.	Existing procedure adequate.
VAT	VAT analysis.	L	All items analysed in cash book. Analysis presented to Council at each meeting.	Existing procedure adequate.
	Claimed within time limits.	L	VAT reclaim submitted annually at year end.	Existing procedure adequate.
Legal powers	Illegal activity or payments.	M	All activity and payments within the powers of the Parish Council to be resolved and minuted at Parish Council Meetings. Relevant procedures set out in Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.	Existing procedure adequate. Review Standing Orders and Financial Regulations 2024.

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Subject	Risk(s) Identified	H/M/L	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess/Revise
Supplier (procurement) fraud	Loss through supplier fraud	L	Training for staff to alert them to potential risks of providing sensitive company information, by telephone or other means, especially contract and account information. All supplier detail changes to be verified using contact details held by Parish Council. Periodic review of supplier accounts to remove any dormant accounts. Periodic review of supplier address and financial health details with Companies House. Review insurance provision.	Review training needs 2024/25. Existing procedure adequate. Existing procedure adequate. Existing procedure adequate. Review 2024/25.

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APPENDIX E

Outstanding planning applications & recent planning decisions

22/4550M Lakeside Cottage, Holmes Chapel Road, Lower Withington. SK11 9AE
Replacement dwelling and garage.
DECISION STATUS – Undecided

23/1613M Foden Bank Barn, Lapwing Lane, Lower Withington. SK11 9AD
Conversion of existing gym/office/storage outbuilding to residential annexe.
DECISION STATUS – Undecided

23/2723M Briarfield, Long Shoot Road, Lower Withington. SK11 9DX
Certificate of lawful proposed development for construction of new incidental building within the grounds of Briarfield.
DECISION STATUS – Undecided

23/2794M Mallerstang, Congleton Lane, Lower Withington. SK11 9LD
Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling with detached garage, re-routing of driveway and associated hard and soft landscaping.
DECISION STATUS – Undecided

23/4813M: Black Swan, Trap Street, Lower Withington. SK11 9EQ
Proposed change of use of external covered dining area (formerly a stable building) to a single unit of self-catering accommodation.
DECISION STATUS – Undecided

24/0252M: 1 Thorntree Bungalows, Salters Lane, Lower Withington. SK11 9FY
New disabled parking bay, turning facility and dropped kerb.
DECISION STATUS – Undecided

24/1216M: Oaklyn, Lapwing Lane, Lower Withington. SK11 9AD
Side/rear and first-floor extensions which have already been approved or deemed lawful with a pitched roof to the single storey extension and closing of two gaps between approved extensions.
DECISION STATUS – Undecided

24/1276M: Bank View Farm, Hodgehill Lane, Lower Withington. SK11 9LU
Demolition of existing building and construction of new dwelling using existing footprint.
DECISION STATUS – Undecided