

# HATHERTON AND WALGHERTON PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025 AT HANKELOW METHODIST CHAPEL

**Present:** Cllr James Du Pavey, Cllr Chris Knibbs, Cllr Steve Mitchell, Cllr Nigel Dibben, Cllr Joy Sansom, Cllr Ian Bennion, Cllr Gerald Laxton

### **In attendance**

Abbi Miller (Clerk), Janet Clowes (Ward Councillor)

### **1.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Cllr Rob Tindall, Cllr Katie Clinton

### **2.0 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

It was proposed by Cllr Dibben and seconded by Cllr Laxton and agreed that the minutes from 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024 are approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **3.0 MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising

### **4.0 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman presented his annual statement which outlined the Council's activities in 2024/25. The Chairman noted that it had been an active year for the Parish Council, with 9 volunteer councillors with one paid employee. The Parish Council had successfully completed the Parish Councils official business over the year in a timely and professional manner. The Chairman thanked the councillors for having the Parishes interests at heart and for giving countless hours of their time to support, improve and represent the Parish in the wider Cheshire Community.

The Chairman highlighted the worthiness and support of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish and its aspirations for improved accessibility for our Public Right of Way network, oversight and improvement to woodland, trees, hedgerows and boundary fencing and maintenance of landscape quality, adding that this last year the Council have been active in all these areas.

On the subject of planning, the Parish Council has spent considerable time and effort considering 19 planning applications compared to 14 last year, and thanks to Cllrs Bennion and Dibben for allowing us to host the necessary Planning Committee meetings at Dagfields and Kiln Cottages. The Planning Committee was called upon on 4 occasions this last year outside of normal Parish Council meetings. We had a particularly complex one for a Solar Farm, commencing with a consultation in August, the application itself, meeting with the developers and culminating in the Chairman and Ward Councillor representing Hatherton and Walgherton at Cheshire Easts Strategic Planning Committee in April. The application was granted with a monetary contribution negotiated to offset potential inconvenience to H&W residents during its construction phase.

With regards to Highways matters, potholes continue to be the scourge of the road network, and the Council continues to report them on Fix my Street. Crewe Road has been the centre of attention again this year, its road surface is breaking up in several places and making it dangerous to navigate around the obstructions. Patching has taken place with many potholes filled in, but then with some opening up again with the heavy traffic flow this road sees. The Ward Councillor, Clerk, and other individual councillors have focussed on detailed reporting of the issues along the road, meticulously identifying each safety concern. We have campaigned for Level 2 patching which may happen this Summer. Much filling of potholes on Hatherton Bends Audlem Road took place in the Winter months, necessitating temporary road closures after a Road Traffic Accident and significant repairs taking place. Thanks to Councillors Dibben and Du- Pavey for their work and persistence in getting this done.

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Flood prevention work has been completed this year outside the entrance to Lodge Farms Drive and further along Audlem Road by Kiln Cottages. The Council continue to monitor road flooding issues.

There has been no progress with a Cheshire East Highways solution to the Bridgemere Lane triangle HGV restricted access problem. Property damage is still taking place by HGVs turning at the junction of Bridgemere Lane and Audlem Road. A solution was formally proposed in 2023. The Council continues to pressurise Cheshire East Highways for its completion.

On financial matters, the Chairman commented that the Council has changed auditors again this year after an exhaustive search for a good and recommended one by our clerk. It is excellent to report that the accounts and internal controls of the Parish Council have been examined by the Auditors and found to be better than satisfactory. We have received small amounts of Community Infrastructure Levy money from Cheshire East which is being well spent on village improvements. The Council's Balance sheet and Receipts and Payments report are available for inspection upon request.

With regards to Health, Local health initiatives continue to be advertised via our noticeboards. Regarding the support for older people in the community, local charity ADCA, has been successful in obtaining more funds from the National Lottery, ourselves and Audlem Charity Shop and has enabled more local activities to be started for ADCA. In addition to the 3 weekly community lunch activities for local residents, there is a fully trained up Dementia support group on Thursdays, and Carers support groups on Fridays, drop in Coffee Mornings on a Friday. The Friday Coffee Afternoon Hankelow Methodist Church (2-4pm) has just ceased for the Summer and was ably supported by the Parish Council, its Chairman and Cllr Sansum. This is due to start again in the autumn.

ADCA is always looking for more volunteers, including drivers, to work alongside ADCA staff in running community health groups. This has been in service ferrying Hatherton and Walgherton residents to and from ADCA events. Cllr Laxton is thanked for his great support.

Sadly, we parted company with Cllr Williams who was Chair of the Improvements Group early on in the Council year. Thanks goes to her earlier efforts in this role. The Group continues to thrive with much on their plate and many ideas and village improvement activities coming forward. We have a tidier parish with the roadsides emptied of litter several times over the winter months. Special thanks to those residents who go that one step further and clean up the verges around their properties and others who take a litter bag with them on their parish walks. This message was re-enforced by a parish flyer ably put together by Cllr Du-Pavey and his team.

Big changes took place this year in the way our parish looks. The Council has installed new parish entrance signs for Hatherton and Walgherton, and the new road name signs which include the name of the parish where they are placed. There are more road sign improvements to come this next year. The Council installed Lest we forget signs and poppy symbols, and the council received compliments from residents and visitors. Cllr Dibben has been the star of the show and done much of the work on these projects. Also, a big thanks to Cllr Laxton in refurbishing the paintwork on the Park Lane finger post.

Discussions continue with Cheshire East in re-opening Hatherton Footpath No1 Bridge over the River Weaver. It is now passable and usable, but is still at risk from further flood damage due to the floating debris stuck under and around the bridge and other obstructions. The improvements group have this in their sights for this next Parish Year.

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Our local PSCO Nick Jervis gives us monthly updates and we are grateful for his speed checks. Homewatch continues to operate in some areas of the parish giving early warning of anti- social activities, scams etc. This should be encouraged in other Parish locations.

The Parish Council continue to respond to all relevant Cheshire East policy and strategy consultations, and encourage residents to do the same and make their voices heard. Our Facebook continues to be a favourite with 128 followers with thanks to Cllr Clowes and Clinton for their posts and administration.

Lastly, the Annual General meeting gives me the opportunity to publicly thank all the Parish Council members for their time and contributions during the last twelve months and not least to our hard-working Clerk who has sent me 196 emails over the last 12 months.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Clerk presented a Receipts and Payment Summary and Balance Sheet for the financial year ended 31st March 2025. The end of financial year bank balance was £5,075.34.

## **6.0 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

There were no questions or comments.

The Chairman thanked those present for their attendance and the meeting closed at 7:35 pm.