

PRESTON BROOK PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PRESTON BROOK PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 8:30PM ON TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2026 AT PRESTON BROOK VILLAGE HALL, SANDY LANE, PRESTON BROOK, CHESHIRE, WA7 3AW.

Members Present:

C Murray, A Price, K Dainty, L Hewlett.

Also Present:

Luke Trevaskis - Proper Officer, and 11 members of the public.

1. Apologies

Cllr P Bolton

2. Declarations

Cllr Kerry Dainty and Cllr Liam Hewlett noted an interest in the Chester Road Development (Planning Application 22/00203/FUL) for 136 Homes.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the prior meeting were approved.

5. Police

Members are advised of concerns raised following a Police Surgery held at Preston Brook Village Hall in January 2026, attended by a Cllr Cathy Murray and local residents.

Key issues identified included:

- Excessive speeding along Chester Road (A56), particularly in the direction from the M56 junction through the village.
- A significant volume of HGV traffic, with concerns that the route is being used as a cut-through, despite being unsuitable for heavy vehicles.
- Observations from Trucam speed enforcement indicate speeds recorded up to 46mph in a 40mph zone. Multiple vehicles travelling between 35-38mph in a 30mph zone, with indications that compliance with the 30mph limit is low.
- The existing static speed camera (south-to-east approach) appears to reduce speeds in one direction; however, the opposite approach (east-to-south) remains problematic.

- Road layout, multiple junctions, and ongoing residential development increase risks for pedestrians, children, cyclists, and elderly residents, particularly near the Spar and crossing points.
- Wider impacts noted include road safety risks, noise, air quality concerns, and road surface deterioration.

It was also noted that due to Police resource changes and relocation of officers, future local speed enforcement capacity may reduce. Suggested actions for consideration included the introduction of speed reduction measures, exploration of weight restrictions for HGVs, and longer-term consideration of a potential bypass/ring road link connecting the M56 to the Whitehouse Industrial Estate.

6. Borough Councillor Report

None.

7. Public Forum

A resident made reference to a derelict car and advised it belonged to a boat. It has been vandalised and it is waiting to be towed.

A resident noted long waits on Runcorn Road due to number of cars, and the priority given to cars from the A49. It was noted that road is within the jurisdiction of Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Resident enquired about totem pole advertisement outside the SPAR. It was clarified that planning permission had been approved. It was suggested a protest may raise some awareness.

A resident requested contact details for Halton BC be put on the Parish Council's website.

It was confirmed that not all PCSO's are being made redundant.

It was noted that there has been a considerable increase in HGV's and it was asked if the Parish Council could explore a prohibition order.

Discussions took place at length regarding the FY2627 budget and precept. Residents advised of concern regarding the lack of reserves that had been built historically and it was noted that current residents were shouldering much of the costs to defend the village against several planning applications and objections that appear to be relentless.

8. Village Hall

The Council considered a request for funding from the Village Hall to support improvement works including:

- Replacing the front and internal double doors and both fire exit doors (est. £7K)
- Replace the heater system guards and rails (est. £3K)
- Replace all curtains with blinds (est. £3K)
- Internal panelling to the walls and corridor (est. £5K)

It was clarified that the VH was seeking a contribution of approximately £12K. It was clarified that there are three trustees - one is the treasurer, and two are residents.

A member advised that the PC was not involved in the VH enough. It was confirmed there was not sufficient room in the FY2526 budget. It was resolved to introduce a new budget line of £2,500 in

the forthcoming FY2627 budget. Members noted they would be keen for the PC to realise more stewardship and involvement with the VH.

9. Planning

Members noted the below updates regarding planning.

- SPAR TOTEM (25/00252/ADV) - to note that the planning application for the illuminated totem outside Preston Brook Spar was granted permission on 21 November 2025. PO has written to Halton BC to request a full officer report detailing reasons.
- Hilltop Development (25/00107/OUT) - to note that three further documents have been added to the application since it was withdrawn from the Development Management Committee meeting on 2.12.25. These comprise a draft heads of terms, a heritage statement, and a mains drainage strategy. The Parish Council has requested clarification from Halton to understand whether any further documentation is expected. The Parish Council has submitted a Corporate Complaint to Halton Borough Council regarding this as, to date, no response has been received to the Parish Council's email dated 10.2.26. It was agreed to undertake a further canal water runoff test when appropriate.
- Canalside Tree Corridor - requests for a TRO alongside the Canal have been submitted by the Parish Council to Halton Borough Council on 25 September 2025, and 28 October 2025. To date, no response has been received. The Parish Council has submitted a Corporate Complaint to Halton Borough Council regarding this as, to date, no response has been received to the Parish Council's emails. Further, a FOI has been submitted to obtain a copy of the TEMPO assessment undertaken by Halton Borough Council.
- To note updates regarding the Morris Homes development (22/00203/FUL). To note there has been damage to kerbs and roads caused due to the development. The Parish Council is in the process of drafting further representations to Halton BC.
- Members considered the planning required for the NP, noting ongoing and existing commitments to current planning issues.

10. Public Realm

- Issues continue to arise with HGVs accessing Bridgewater Grange, despite the Parish Council's attempts to mitigate these with the sandstone boulders. Consideration may be appropriate for signage limiting HGVs.
- Christmas Tree - the Council noted that low stock supplies made it difficult to source a Christmas tree for delivery in time for December 2025. A supplier had been identified who can supply mature live Scots Pine trees (native to the UK) and provided various quotes. The Council was asked to consider which of the options to approve. The Council resolved not to purchase a Christmas tree.
- The Council noted it is still awaiting a response from Halton BC regarding the TRO for the canal. The Council has identified a supplier for the three mature oak trees which it is to plant to replace the Horse Chestnut Tree. Once it is determined whether all of these should be solely sited on Bridgewater Grange, or also on Canalside, the planting can continue. This will need to take place by end of March in order to catch optimum planting conditions. Alternatively the work will be scheduled from October onwards.
- The Council agreed the 2026 garden maintenance schedule for Bridgewater Grange and noted that works would commence from March onwards. Cllr Cathy Murray agreed to help coordinate.

- The Council agreed a planting budget of £100 for each of the Village Planters per season (four schemes per year).
- It was approved that if any further trees are removed at the Morris Homes development, that the PC would make representations to Halton BC to request enforcement.

11. Internal Audit

The Council reviewed the Internal Audit for FY2425 report which tested approximately 150 control points of the parish council's finance, legal, governance, and transparency functions, providing the following recommendations:

- A list of direct debits should be provided to the Council at least annually.
- To increase the sum of insured assets.
- To produce a risk assessment for any activities undertaken on Bridgewater Grange by the community.
- To produce a training matrix to ensure training needs are identified and delivered.
- To consider including budget variances in minutes.
- To consider the adoption of a Reserves Policy.

12. Mid-Term Internal Audit FY2526

The Council reviewed the FY2526 mid-term Assertion 10 internal audit, which provided the following recommendations:

- Implement a Policy regarding email and acceptable use, retention, forwarding, and access controls.
- Clarify domain provider is registered with government.
- Commission accessibility compliance review of website.
- Ensure compliance with Transparency Code 2015.
- Adoption of GDPR Policy in addition to Data Breach Policy.
- Adoption of IT Policy and Cyber Security Policy covering device use, password/account protocols, data storage, and remote access.
- To consider the creation of an Investment Strategy.
- To introduce an Employee Handbook, Expenses Policy, and Training Policy.
- Adjust payroll to provide for new SCP and pension provision.
- Consideration of a Chairperson / Councillor allowance.

13. Direct Debits

The Council approved, as per the recommendations of the internal auditor, that the following direct debits be fulfilled:

- Google Ireland (Email Account Hosting) - Monthly
- Unity Trust Bank (Service Fee) - Monthly

14. Councillor Allowance

Members noted the recommendation of the IA to consider allowances. The Council resolved that the allowance would be set at £0.00, and any expenses could be reclaimed via an improved Expenses Policy.

15. Website

The Council noted that the internal auditor has highlighted recommendations regarding the governance and accessibility of the website, advising that focus be given to the website to ensure it meets the The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. The Council noted that Cllr Hewlett has agreed to support this area of work.

16. Next Meetings

The Council noted the date of the next meeting was 24 March 2026.

17. Exclusion of Press and Public

The Council approved to exclude the press and public.

18. Staffing Report

Members considered and approved the confidential staffing report and agreed actions.

19. Meeting Re-Opened

The meeting was re-opened to the press and public.

20. Budget FY2627

Members considered the draft budget and precept report for FY2627.

The Council resolved to set its FY2627 budget at £116,075.00

The Council resolved to set its FY2627 precept at £113,575.00

Signed as a true record

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Chairperson