

PRESTON BROOK PARISH COUNCIL

To: **Members of Preston Brook Parish Council**

Dear Councillor,

You are hereby summoned to attend a Ordinary Meeting of Preston Brook Parish Council to be held at 20.30 on the twenty-second day of September 2026 to transact business on the agenda.

The meeting will be held in Preston Brook Village Hall, Sandy Lane, Preston Brook, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 3AW.

Note to Councillors:

If you are unable to attend the meeting, please notify the Proper Officer of your apologies.

Note to Public:

Members of the public wishing to address the Council are advised to notify the Proper Officer before 10:00 on the day of the meeting outlining the representation they wish to make. Permission to speak at the meeting will be at the discretion of the Council. Public participation session at a meeting shall not require response or debate and should focus on matters relating to items on the agenda. All participants are restricted to a maximum of three minutes. Please note that the Council may not be able to answer any questions on a particular topic if the council has not considered or resolved the matter at a prior meeting. Should this be the case, the Council will advise correspondence with the Proper Officer to request the item be debated at a future meeting. If the question is considered outside the remit of Preston Brook Parish Council, residents will be referred to Halton Borough Council or another appropriate body.

Yours sincerely,



Luke Trevaskis
Proper Officer

TO CONTACT THE PROPER OFFICER, PLEASE EMAIL
clerk@prestonbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk

AGENDA

1. **Apologies** - to receive apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations** - to record declarations of members' interests of a pecuniary or non-pecuniary nature in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 (Sections 26-34 and Schedule 4) relating to the business of the meeting and note any dispensation requests received by the Proper Officer.
3. **Police** - to receive and note a report on local crime statistics.
4. **Borough Councillor Report** - to receive a report from ward councillors regarding issues affecting residents within the boundary of Preston Brook PC.
5. **Minutes** - to receive and accept the minutes of the last meeting as a true and accurate record.
6. **Public Forum** - to consider representations from members of the public which have been submitted to the Proper Officer by 10:00 on the day of the meeting and to note each representation is restricted to three minutes.
7. **Public Realm** - to receive an update on public realm projects and agree actions.
 - i) to consider and agree the estimate for the tree works at Bridgewater Grange as detailed in works schedule - £1,500.00
 - ii) to note that the contractor for the railings project will be attending site in October to provide quote for work.
 - iii) to consider the feedback from residents regarding Bridgewater Grange maintenance schedule and agree a proposed maintenance schedule for FY27/28, taking into consider the below report.

Historically, the maintenance of Bridgewater Grange was undertaken by a group of local volunteers who maintained the public realm to a high standard. This work was supported by occasional funding, drawn from a historic earmarked reserve. By FY2526, this reserve had depleted, and the Council included a new budget line for ongoing maintenance. At the same time, the group of volunteers no longer felt able (for various reasons) to continue to undertake the maintenance work on what is a relatively large area of local greenspace.

In FY2526 the Council allocated a budget of **£2,500.00**. It actually spent **£3,878.00** (including tree works and installation of additional sandstone boulders). This sum does not include the installation of the planter at the entrance to Bridgewater Grange.

For FY2627, the Council approved a budget provision of **£2,500** for Bridgewater Grange. Expenditure incurred to date is **£1,500**, comprising grounds maintenance works and the commissioning of a tree inspection report. A further quotation of approximately **£1,500** has been received for tree works identified as requiring completion before winter. Subject to approval and completion of these works, expenditure will therefore reach approximately **£3,000**, exceeding the original annual budget provision by £500. Further expenditure is also anticipated during the remainder of the financial year. In particular, residents have requested an increased frequency of grounds maintenance visits, and additional routine or responsive works may be required before 31 March 2027. On the information presently available, it is considered prudent to forecast total expenditure on Bridgewater Grange of approximately **£4,000-£5,000 for 2026/27**.

This would represent a projected adverse variance against the approved £2,500 budget of approximately **£1,500-£2,500**. The variance principally reflects the combination of necessary tree inspection and associated remedial works, together with the level of grounds maintenance required at the site. The projected additional expenditure can presently be accommodated through anticipated underspends elsewhere within the Council's overall 2026/27 revenue budget. The position will continue to be monitored through the Council's normal budget monitoring arrangements.

The Council is asked to note expenditure of £1,500 incurred to date against the approved 2026/27 Bridgewater Grange budget of £2,500; note the further estimated expenditure of £1,500 for tree works required before

winter; approve a projected overspend against the Bridgewater Grange budget line for 2026/27, with total expenditure authorised up to a maximum of £5,000, subject to expenditure being necessary and incurred in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and procurement requirements; note that the resulting adverse variance of up to £2,500 is expected to be offset by underspends elsewhere within the Council's overall revenue budget, with the overall financial position continuing to be reported through budget monitoring; and consider and determine the desired frequency and standard of grounds maintenance at Bridgewater Grange for 2027/28, to enable officers to obtain appropriate quotations and put in place a defined service specification or service level agreement before the commencement of the 2027 maintenance season. The FY2728 budget will subsequently be prepared having regard to the agreed maintenance standard, anticipated tree-management requirements and the actual cost of maintaining the site. This will provide a more reliable recurring budget provision and reduce reliance on in-year budget variations.

7. Finance

- i) To review and approve Q1 financial accounts summary, bank reconciliation, and note any significant variances, or project variances, as described above.
- ii) To review and approve the updated Asset Register, which has been revised to accommodate updated asset valuations for insurance.
- iii) To accept the Council's insurance policy at a cost of £394.61, for a fixed three-year term with Zurich.
- iv) The Council's Internal Audit Report for FY2526 financial year is currently being finalised and will be presented to the Council upon completion. The anticipated completion date is 22 September 2026. As part of the audit work undertaken to date, consideration has been given to the Council's governance framework and, in particular, the frequency with which policies are formally reviewed and reaffirmed by the Council. While a number of the Council's existing policies remain operational, it is considered good governance for the Council to be able to demonstrate through its minutes that policies are subject to periodic review and that members have satisfied themselves that they remain current, proportionate and fit for purpose. Accordingly, a programme of policy reviews will be brought forward over forthcoming meetings. This will provide a clear audit trail of member oversight, enable any necessary amendments to be identified and ensure that the Council's published governance framework remains up to date. The Council is asked to note the position and the forthcoming programme of policy reviews.

8. Policies

Trees, Canopy and Treescape Policy

- To consider and adopt the Council's Trees, Canopy and Treescape Policy. The policy establishes a risk-based inspection regime and appropriate record keeping for trees within the Council's responsibility. Particular strategic focus is placed on enhancing canopy and ecological connectivity along the Bridgewater Canal corridor and around Windmill Lane, Summer Lane and Barkers Hollow Road. The Policy also considers how canopy mapping, areas of canopy deficiency, important trees and hedgerows, and opportunities for future canopy creation can inform the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and its evidence base.

Investment and Treasury Management Policy

- To consider and adopt the Investment and Treasury Management Policy, establishing a formal framework for the prudent management of cash balances, reserves, deposits and investments. The policy establishes the hierarchy of security, liquidity and then yield, ensuring that the protection and availability of public funds take precedence over investment returns. The policy will strengthen the Council's financial governance and provide a clear framework against which future investment options can be considered and approved.

5. Planning

- i) To note that the Council has written to Halton Borough Council regarding its outstanding planning matters and requested a response.
 - ii) **Halebank Cycle Lane** - to note that a recent issue has arose regarding a cycle lane in Hale Bank that falls outside of the 'red boundary line' for which permission was obtained. To note that the Parish Clerk is currently examining all parts of the cycle lane proposed for Chester Road, and to approve this matter to be pursued with solicitors if a material planning weakness is identified.
 - iii) **CIL Funding** - to note that there is currently no consistent S106 or CIL scheme operated by Halton Borough Council, making it consistently difficult for parish councils to ensure develop contributions are retained for the benefits of their parish. The Parish Clerk has approached a new member of Halton BC's Development Committee to seek guidance on how local parishes could work together to bring a motion forward to Halton BC.
 - iv) **Neighbourhood Planning** - to note that the first meeting of the Steering Group took place just prior to Summer. Three further meetings are being scheduled before Christmas and additional members of the Steering Group are sought.
4. **Council Resource** - to note recent discussions regarding the resourcing and operational capacity of the Council, recognising that current officer capacity is insufficient to sustainably deliver the volume and breadth of work within the Council's agreed list of resolutions. Appropriate additional capacity will support service continuity, timely delivery of Council decisions and the maintenance of effective governance and administrative controls.
Recommendation: to approve provision for locum support at a rate of up to £25 per hour, to be commissioned by the Parish Clerk on a flexible month-to-month basis where operationally necessary and within the approved budget. Use of the provision, including expenditure and the continuing requirement for additional capacity, will be reported to Council through its regular meetings, to be funded by the budget lines to which the work relates.

5. Next Meetings - to confirm the date of the next meetings as follows:

24 November 2026
26 January 2026
23 March 2026