

Forton Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting

Held at 7.00pm

at

Forton Cricket Club

Wednesday 13th May 2026

Present:

Councillors: A Hawkins (Chair), D Carver (RFO), P Hammond, O Thomas, P White.

Borough Councillors: None present

Clerk: W Brookfield

Public Open Forum: No members of the public present

26/013 Apologies Councillor C Tait

26/014 Declarations of Interest None declared

26/015 Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record.
Proposed: A Hawkins Seconded: O Thomas

26/016 Parish Council Vacant Positions:
No updates at this point, Parish Councillors to continue to promote the vacant position within the local community. Item to remain on the agenda whilst the position is vacant.

26/017 LA Bronze Award scheme discussed.
Councillors recognise that it helps create a structure by which Parish Councils can measure their compliance with standards of delivery required. The onerous nature of the award would create significant cost increases on the Parish. As such Councillors will continue to ensure that all standards are achieved and all Council Policies are regularly reviewed. Decision not to proceed with the award at this stage.
Proposed: A Hawkins Seconded: D Carver all agreed

26/018 Standing Orders
Councillor Carver outlined the requirement to update and where necessary develop several policies and procedures to ensure the Council are compliant in all areas, as required of all Parishes. The policy areas include; Finance, IT and an Accessibility Statement.
Accessibility of the website had been previously audited and was found to be fully compliant, Councillor Carver suggested that the Council look to have this reviewed and that the Council review and update policies on an annual basis.
Proposed: D Carver Seconded; O Thomas

26/019 Financial Regulations
Additional requirements have been in place for the audit of the last financial year; these have been completed. D Carver as RFO outlined these additional steps and requirements with all steps completed for the audit to be successfully concluded. D Carver outlined the proposed Financial Policy.

Proposed: D Carver Seconded: A Hawkins
 Policy to be posted on Parish Council Website

26/020 Councillor Thomas introduced the requirements for an updated IT policy and outlined policy areas covered, explaining that the Council are compliant with the requirements of Assertion 10.

Proposed: O Thomas Seconded: A Hawkins
 Policy to be posted on Parish Council Website

26/021 Financial Quarter 1, 2026/2027

/1 2025/2026 Year-End - 31 March

The financial statement for the year ended 31 March 2026 was examined. It balanced to the bank statements covering the year-end with a closing balance of £1,070.76. This statement provided the information for the annual return (AGAR).

The 2025/2026 Year End financial statement was accepted as a true record and the Chair signed it.

/2 2026/2027 Quarter One

The Quarter 1 financial statement dated 06 May 2026 was examined. It balanced to the latest bank statements received with a closing balance of £2,218.71, the first tranche of £733.35, Precept, Council Tax Grant and Concurrent monies having been received from Stafford Borough Council on 16 April.

The 2026/2027 Quarter 1 financial statement was accepted as a true record and the Chair signed it.

/3 Insured Risks

The Council undertook its annual risk assessment and reviewed the schedule of insurance offered by Zurich Municipal. Councillors were satisfied that the renewal, on the same terms as last year and at the same cost of £196.00, will meet the risks the Council might face during the forthcoming year. (Insurance cover runs from 01 June to 31 May).

It was agreed to continue insurance with Zurich Municipal on the terms offered for 01 June 2026 to 31 May 2027 at the premium of £196.00 (budget £204.04).

/4 Payments For Approval

Precept Payments	Budget £.p	Agreed £.p
Clerk's Salary (gross) – 1 st quarter	134.84	108.04
PAYE	nil	26.80
Clerk's expenses	15.00	nil
*SPCA subscription 2026/27	118.69	169.87
VAT on SPCA invoice SI-2109	nil	8.00
Zurich Municipal insurance premium 2026/27	204.04	196.00
Forton Cricket Club room hire	37.50	37.50
TOTALS	510.07	546.21

*SPCA has expanded its offer, particularly for training and has substantially increased its subscription rates. This had been notified to the RFO by email but regretfully it was not included in the budget. Following negotiation with SPCA, it agreed to provide 2 free training slots this year, (value £96.00 inc. VAT). These have already been utilised: the first, an end of year package for the RFO and the second, an introduction to chairing for the Chair.

All the above payments were approved by the Council and the RFO was authorised to make them.

/5 Annual Audit 2025/2026

The RFO informed the council that the audit papers needed to be submitted by 30 June this year. The necessary notices for the exercise of electors' right to inspect accounts and records dated 02 June 2026 would be posted with the period allowing examination from 03 June 2026 to 14 July 2026 (30 working days).

He also informed the council that he had undertaken the internal audit with accountant Hannah Follows ACA who had made no charge for the service. (see page 4 of the AGAR). The audit was clean and had no recommendations.

The council then proceeded to: -

/6.1 Approve the Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2025/26 (Page 3) which had been agreed at the last meeting on 11 March 2026 (minute ref: 26/008-4). This page was already signed by the RFO and the Chair added his signature.

/6.2 Note receipt of the clean Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26 (Page 4).

/6.3 Address the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26, questions Nos 1 – 8 & 10 (Page 5) after which the Chairman & Clerk each signed.

/6.4 Approve the Accounting Statements 2025/26 (Page 6) this was already signed by the RFO and now the Chair signed it too.

/6.5 Record a vote of thanks to Hannah Follows for conducting the internal audit, without charge.

26/022

External Reports

Forton Village Hall: Councillor Hammond updated the Council on the village hall; the committee continue to work towards the restoration of the building; there are no additional actions to report at this stage.

Red Lion Support Group: Written Report received from David Frost;

“The Red Lion Pub remains empty, unsecured and a danger to the passing (and more inquisitive) public. There is no current planning application. The Council has given the owners until July to put in a planning application, or they have promised to start Compulsory Purchase Order proceedings.

Action to start the CPO process by formally requesting a CPO of the council as a qualifying non-profit community body have commenced

and work is underway with the Enforcement team to get the building properly secured and the windows fixed - The developer is dragging his heels in this matter. We are sending the owner regular emails offering to purchase.”

26/023 Items Requiring Attention

A letter of thanks has been received from All Saints Church for the Grant received. The memorial to the fallen of the Parish in WWII is now in place and can be seen in the church.

26/024 Items for the Agenda of the Next Meeting

Councillors to discuss the precept for the year 2027/28 and start to look at the actions the Parish Council may want to achieve going forwards.

Meeting closed at 8:10pm.