

FORTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting

held at

Forton Cricket Club

at 7.00 p.m. on

Wednesday 12th March 2025

Present: Councillors: S Spencer (Chair), D Carver (RFO), P Hammond (V Chair),
O Thomas, Z Young, A Hawkins

Borough Councillor: Scott Spencer

Clerk: C Little

Public Open Forum – No members of the public attended the meeting

25/001 Apologies: none

25/002 Chris Tait, prospective councillor: Chris Tait sent his apology as he was unexpectedly unable to attend. He hoped to be able to attend the next meeting. This agenda item will be brought forward to the next meeting.

25/003 Declarations of councillors' personal interest:

Councillor Hammond is a member of Forton Parochial Church Council and would therefore refrain from voting on later agenda items regarding the Church.

25/004 Minutes of Meeting 13th November 2024 and matters arising not on this Agenda

Minutes of Meeting for 13th November 2024 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair queried whether any progress had been made in looking for someone from Sutton to join the Council, however the Clerk confirmed that no-one had expressed an interest.

25/005 Finance related matters:

- 1. Financial Statement Quarter Four** dated 04 March 2025 had been circulated, it balanced to the latest bank statements as shown in the table below.

Account	£ p
Current @ 03 March 2025 (on-line)	250.00
Reserve @ 03 March 2025 (on-line)	1,510.02
TOTAL	£1,760.02

The Council approved the statement and the Chairman signed a copy.

2. Precept payments for approval

Precept Payments	Budget	For Approval
Clerk's Salary – quarter 4	(gross) £126.61	£101.21
PAYE as calculated by the payroll provider	nil	£25.40
Clerk's Expenses – quarter 4 - TBA	£15.00	nil
Cricket Club Rent - Jul & Nov '24 & Mar '25	£141.75	£150.00
SPCA training?	£150.00	nil
Website Bronze Subscription D/D 13/03/2025	125.91	143.86
*SPCA Subscription 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026	£109.14	tba

The Council authorised all of the above payments. It was noted that all three cheque signatories had approved the website subscription payment to HugoFox which will be made by annual Direct Debit, the first, as shown above, to be collected the day following the meeting, 13 March 2025.

Councillor Carver confirmed the invoice from Forton Cricket Club had been received in the sum of £50 per meeting, (3 meetings - £150.00). Although the Council approved payment of this invoice the Clerk was asked to liaise with Forton Cricket Club to negotiate an on-going room hire fee.

Post Meeting Note: *Immediately after the Council meeting closed, the Clerk met with the Cricket Club Secretary, Ashley Gillum and agreed the hire fee would in future be reduced to £40.00 per meeting.*

The SPCA subscription for 2025/26 has not yet been invoiced but the Council approved its payment once the invoice is received (provided it is close to the budgeted amount).

3. Consider requests for concurrent grants

The Chair confirmed that one application had been received, and shared ahead of the meeting, this was from Forton Parochial Church Council and though it had not requested a specific amount, it had said it was, amongst other things, providing a WC in the knave of the church for the benefit of both church-users and visitors to the churchyard. Additionally there was the on-going cost of churchyard maintenance. Any contribution to these costs would be gratefully received.

The Council discussed the matter and then unanimously (other than Cllr Hammond, who abstained) agreed to provide the full amount of the Council's concurrent grant, £270.00, to Forton Parochial Church Council.

Action: RFO to make the above payment

4. Exemption from Limited Assurance Review (External Audit)

Ahead of receipt of the papers for the annual audit the Council took the opportunity to declare itself exempt from the need for an External Audit by virtue of the fact that its gross income and expenditure is beneath £25,000. It is in fact circa £1,300.

25/006 To receive the following reports:

1. Reports from Parish Councillors on meetings/ courses attended

None.

2. Reports from Borough and County Councillors

Borough Councillor Scott Spencer gave updates on the following:

1. Unitary Authorities

Borough Councillor Spencer explained the move to unitary authorities and explained that Stafford Borough Council was currently in discussion on how the county will be split. The decision would not be made until 2026.

It would be likely to have an impact due to the fact that each councillor would be managing an area originally covered by around 4 councillors. It means that it is possible that Parish Councils will be given more powers.

It was agreed between Councillors, to wait to hear the plans before formulating responses.

2. Local Plan

Borough Councillor Spencer confirmed that the Local Plan in its current form was being curtailed and would be re-written. The new Local Plan would not be available until 2027. This causes concerns, as it essentially opens the door to developers.

The updated Local Plan requirement was a result of new environment, biodiversity and home requirements put forward by the new Government and means that the current Local Plan and policies were out of date.

3. Red Lion, Sutton

Borough Councillor Spencer had met with Anthony Reed to discuss what more can be done in relation to the compulsory purchase of the Red Lion. Information had been collated regarding anti-social behaviour, and police reports to help support the application for compulsory purchase. It was hoped this would be dealt with as soon as possible.

4. Update on Forton Village Hall

Councillor Hammond read out an update on the works to Forton Village Hall from Barbara Greateorex. The update confirmed that unfortunately very little progress had been made since the last Parish Council meeting. There are a number of factors: poor weather had postponed the laying of the new concrete floor which, in turn meant refurbished windows could not be replaced and internal repairs could not be carried out. In addition, the companies that had been giving their time and materials for free had found themselves with unprecedented demand.

It was hoped that work would re-commence within the next week.

The Village Hall was grateful to the Cricket Club for allowing Tiggy's Nursery to continue to use its premises. However; this would become more difficult with the cricket season fast approaching.

The Just Giving page had raised over £10,000 and offline donations reached £30,000 meaning 83% of the total cost had now been received in donations. There are promises of further donations and the Village Hall was waiting to hear from Garfield Weston Foundation regarding a bid for funding.

Councillor Hammond confirmed he was meeting with Barbara Greateorex tomorrow for further updates.

Action: Clerk to thank Barbara for her update and request whether the presentation can be put on the Parish Council website

25/007 To report on Diane Firkins, Staffs CC, visit re. A519

The meeting and the report highlighted the fact that there were additional considerations around the installation of welcome gates and planters. It showed we would also have factor in the cost of health and safety considerations during the installation. This would include costs for temporary traffic lights to protect the workforce. The report did not demonstrate the level of support the parish council had hoped for which, the clerk explained, was a crucial consideration for funding by The National Lottery Community Fund. Borough Councillor Spencer indicated his willingness to provide such an endorsement and was thanked by the chair. The details of a council approved provider had not been shared however the clerk stated that she regularly received literature and emails and would be able to make enquiries. After much discussion it was agreed that the parish council would do a

costing for all the works, gain assurance that highways would be able to work within the charities time frame and proceed with the bid.

Action: Clerk to contact Councillor Mark Winnington to request funding for speed survey

Action: Clerk to contact the Highways Agency to request fee estimates for safety measures during roadside improvements

Action: Clerk to secure quotations for the total cost for the whole project

Action: Borough Councillor Scott Spencer to provide the Parish with a letter to support application for grant

25/008 To discuss matters submitted for inclusion in this agenda

1. Defibrillator update

Councillor Young provided an update on efforts made to obtain a defibrillator for the village. Following the previous meeting, Councillor Young had made an application to British Heart Foundation and despite Councillors providing their support, this application had been unsuccessful. It was therefore a case of taking it back to a public meeting.

Councillor Young confirmed that a defibrillator would cost around £1,400 and then £300 every three years for maintenance.

Borough Councillor Spencer confirmed two potential avenues for funding: we could begin to build up a fund out of the parish council's own reserves and the concurrent grant, and/or we could look at public funding/fundraising. Councillor Young was supportive of the idea of fundraising, and confirmed she would be happy to help, but would need other support.

Councillor Thomas explained that following a quick Google search, he'd seen an option to rent a defibrillator. This was around £14.95 for a few first months and then increased to £29.95 a month.

2. Website update

The Chair extended his thanks to Councillor Carver for his recent updating of the website to a .gov.uk address. Councillor Thomas agreed to support in terms of updating the website to make it have greater appeal to the public.

Action: Inform the Borough Council of the new website address

Action: Display new website address in the Parish noticeboards

3. Forton Charity Trustees

Councillor Hammond explained that he was part of a modest charity, Forton Charity. It allowed for a Trustee to be nominated by the Parish Council (not necessarily a councillor) and that nomination was now vacant, a trustee was required. Councillor Hawkins nominated Carol Little and Councillor Young seconded this.

4. Litter picking

Councillors agreed the date of Sunday 6 April at 08:30 a.m. for a community litter pick morning. Litter picks and binbags could be collected from opposite the Village Hall on the morning of the litter pick. Councillors were encouraged to attend.

25/009 Items requested for listing next agenda

Councillor Young hoped to provide an update on the provision of a defibrillator from the public meeting.

25/010 To confirm date and time of next meeting

14th May 2025 at 7.00 p.m. for the Annual Meeting to be immediately followed by the Parish Council Meeting. Venue to be confirmed but expected to be the Cricket Club.

Meeting closed at 8.33pm