

# FORTON PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of Meeting

held at 7:00pm

at

Forton Cricket Clubhouse

on

Wednesday 19 November 2025

### **Present:**

#### **Councillors:**

A Hawkins (Acting Chair), P Hammond, D Carver (RFO), C Tait, O Thomas, S Spencer

#### **Borough Councillors:**

None present

#### **Clerk:**

post vacant

#### **Prospective Councillor:**

P White

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

### **25/021 Apologies:**

None received

### **25/022 Declarations of Councillors' personal interests**

None declared

### **25/023 Minutes of Previous Meeting and matters arising not on this Agenda**

Minutes of Meeting for 14 May 2025 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Acting Chair. There were no matters arising that are not covered by the agenda.

### **25/024 Forton Parish Council Future**

#### **-1 Chair Vacancy**

Cllr Hawkins agreed to chair this meeting and after some discussion it was agreed that the Acting Chair role would be accepted by all councillors in turn until a longer term was agreed with one of them. (With the exception of the RFO who is excused ex officio). Cllr Hammond agreed to take minutes.

#### **-2 Councillor vacancy**

A full complement of councillors is seven. At the beginning of this meeting there were six but Cllr Spencer had previously said that this was to be his last meeting, having served for several years and a number of those years as Chair. So now there were five. Fortunately, this evening, Prospective Councillor Philip White attended and was welcomed to the meeting. He had previously shared his interest in becoming a parish councillor via David Frost (chair of The Red Lion Support Group). He now reiterated his desire to help the community and was voted unanimously onto the Parish Council. In the absence of a clerk, his acceptance of office and declarations of pecuniary interest will require completion at a later date. But now the Council is again running at six out of seven councillors.

A further expression of interest had been provided to Cllr Carver by David Frost; Mr Robert Sessford who had been invited to the meeting. Unfortunately, Mr Sessford was not present, so Cllr Carver undertook to contact him to discover if he was still available. Cllr White said he was aware Mr Sessford had recently undergone surgery which could account for his non-attendance but he also thought that he was perhaps more interested in the Clerk position than that of Councillor.

**Action: Cllr Carver**

### **-3 Gnosall response**

As a consequence of discussions at the May meeting, the Council had agreed to see if some of the neighbouring parish councils might be interested in amalgamation with Forton. Cllr Spencer, in his capacity as Chair at the time, had written to similarly sized neighbouring councils, High Offley and Norbury to ask if either of them were interested. They had each replied in the negative and so he then wrote to Gnosall, a substantially larger council. Gnosall, quite recently, also declined. Now faced with no willing partner organisation but (as of today) with one new Councillor and the prospect of perhaps another, the Council believes it should renew its endeavours to get back up to strength and face up to the future. The alternative is to approach Stafford Borough and declare the Council unable to operate and this did not find favour at this juncture.

It was recalled that there had been one other expression of interest with regard to the Clerk vacancy which had not been followed up. It was agreed that Cllr Hammond would contact the person in question to establish whether they were still interested in applying for the post.

**Action: Cllr Hammond**

## **25/025 Finance related matters**

### **-1 Financial Statement 2025/2026 Quarter 3**

The financial statement for the year 2025/2026 Quarter 3 had been circulated. It balanced to the bank statements dated 05 November 2025 with the sum of **£2,126.46**. The Council accepted the above statement as a true record and the Acting Chair signed a copy.

### **-2 Payments for approval**

Following the resignation of our Clerk, effective 31 July 2025, no further salary is due. Consequently, there are no payments required at present.

### **-3 Budget 2026/2027**

The RFO had made a Forecast to the year end, to establish the starting point for the new budget. This had been previously circulated and produced a **£1,070.76** precept to carry forward to the new year. This statement was approved by Councillors and signed by the Acting Chair.

The RFO then presented a draft budget which had been previously circulated to councillors. It had been based on the carried forward precept mentioned above. The budget was then constructed by applying the latest inflation figures available, i.e. CPIH All Items September 2025 +4.1% or in the case of salary payments, the September CPI figure, +3.8%.

This budget included an uplift of reserves from £300 to £500 funded from some of the unspent Clerk's salary from the current year.

There ensued considerable discussion around 2 points:

- The Council had not been in a financial position in the recent past to fund any initiatives of consequence in the Parish. Attempts to provide speed awareness signs or a defibrillator being two frustrated initiatives.
- The Council has, thus far, been unsuccessful in finding a new Clerk. It was felt that the job has grown significantly over recent years and that the salary increases over the years may not have reflected the additional hours that the Clerk is now required to spend to keep affairs in order.

There was now the opportunity, without raising the cost of the council to residents, to take more to reserves, which might assist in dealing with both the above issues in future.

The RFO tabled an amendment to transfer a further £400 to reserves to make a total reserve of £900. This would still allow for a small saving in precept compared to last year. This amendment was carried unanimously. The budget, as now amended, was unanimously approved and signed by the Acting Chair. The RFO undertook to produce a fair copy.

**Action: Cllr Carver**

Stafford Borough has not yet announced its concurrent grant rate for 2026/2027. But it has remained at £270 for Forton for many years and is not expected to change. Councillors agreed that the RFO should request the maximum amount available at the same time as requesting the £1,196.70 precept.

**Action: Cllr Carver**

### **-4 Concurrent Grants**

The RFO reminded councillors that our concurrent monies have not yet been distributed this year. We must do this prior to the year's end or risk the money being forfeit back to the Borough Council. Councillors are encouraged to contact worthy

organisations in the locality, to put in their bids well before our next meeting in March 2026.

**Action: All Cllrs**

**25/026 Items requested for listing next agenda**

- Receive a report from The Red Lion Support Group regarding its ACV status
- Receive a report on Forton Village Hall from its committee

**25/027 Next meeting**

**Wednesday 11 March 2026 at 7pm at Forton Cricket Clubhouse (TBC)**

**Meeting closed at 7:55pm**