

Forton Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting

Held at 7.00pm

at

Forton Cricket Club

Wednesday 11th March 2026

Present:

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

Borough Councillors: None present

Clerk: W Brookfield

Public Open Forum: No members of the public present

26/001 Apologies

P Hammond

26/002 Declarations of Councillors Personal Interest

None Declared

26/003 Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising not on the agenda

Minutes of previous meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Acting Chair.

Action points from 25/11; Mr Sessford is not going to take up a role of Councillor.

Chair Vacancy; The Role of Chair remains vacant, P White suggested that the role could be on a yearly basis and be time limited. All agreed with this and D Carver asked that members consider this with the idea of becoming Chair from the next meeting with it being the first meeting of the Parish Year.

Clerk appointed: W Brookfield has agreed to act for us on a pay rate taken from the smaller councils' section of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) 25/26 Pay Agreement. It is presently uncertain whether the previous arrangement of 10 hours per quarter will remain an adequate estimate of hours required. We have therefore agreed to keep this under review for a few months. The Clerk has already received some basic training from SPCA. This meeting was her first and the councillors all welcomed her.

26/004 Remaining Councillor Vacancy:

Action; All Councillors to continue to raise awareness of the vacancy within the Parish

26/005 Assertion 10: Discussion regarding the requirement of Parish Councils to take up the use of **.gov.uk** form of email addresses by end of March 2026. D Carver has previously looked at the cost this would incur: a number of providers had been researched – see the table below. The prices are all per annum and include VAT @ 20%.

Company	1 address £	5 addresses £	10 addresses £	gb per address
Hugo Fox	36	144	252	15
Parish Online	free	260	260	5
Cloud Next	60	60	60	2
Netwise	29	144	230	10

There have been some negative reviews for Cloud Next, mentioning poor support experiences, technical issues, and difficulty with service cancellations. Of the others there is little difference in cost, Hugo Fox provides the largest mailboxes and we deal with them already for our website. Councillors agreed that we should proceed with Hugo Fox at whatever level is determined.

Action: The Clerk will determine whether it is necessary to acquire **.gov.uk** email addresses for all councillors or just the clerk. The RFO will then place the appropriate order with Hugo Fox.

- 26/006 Local Authority Reorganisation Consultation: The current options put forward are;
1. North/South – Stoke-on-Trent/Newcastle/Moorlands and Stafford/Cannock/South Staffs/Lichfield/Tamworth/Utttoxeter
 2. North/South as above but with Lichfield and Utttoxeter to be with the North group
 3. East/West – Stoke-on-Trent/Staffs Moorlands/Lichfield/Tamworth and Newcastle/Stafford/Cannock/South Staffs

Councillors agreed that the preferred option is option 1.

Action: Clerk to report on behalf of the Chair.

- 26/007 NALC Awards Scheme: Councillor Carver outlined the scheme. It was agreed that the Bronze Award is something that the Parish would like to look to achieve, initially to look at the actions associated with the award to ensure that as a Parish Council, Forton can be confident that it meets the standards.

Action: Clerk to research

- 26/008 Finance Report:
1 2025/2026 Quarter Four
The financial statement dated 02 March 2026 had been circulated. It balanced to the latest bank statements received.

Account	£ p
Current @ 03 March 2025 (on-line)	250.00
Reserve @ 03 March 2025 (on-line)	1,882.28
TOTAL	£2,132.28

The council approved and the chairman signed the financial statement.

2 Precept Payments Approved

	Budget	Approved
Clerk's Salary – Quarter 4 (Budget gross)	£136.90	£109.70
PAYE as calculated by the payroll provider	nil	£27.20

Clerk's Expenses – Quarter 4 - TBA	£15.00	nil
Forton Cricket Club Rent (Budget for Parish Hall)	£145.44	£37.50
SPCA training. Clerk basics	£150.00	£48.00
Hugo Fox Website Bronze Subs D/D 15 Mar 2026	143.86	143.86
*8 .gov.uk email addresses via HugoFox	nil	*251.86
**SPCA Subscription 01/04/2026 – 31/03/2027	£118.69	tba

*The necessity for this is still being researched.

**This payment will fall into the new year (2026-27).

Councillors approved the payments and authorised the RFO to make them.

Action: RFO

3 Concurrent Grants

All Saints Church Forton request a grant towards a memorial for the Parish to the 7 men of WWII who lost their lives. The memorial cost is £1,250 and a grant would contribute to this. £270 is available for grants, no other applications have been received. Following discussion, it was agreed to award the memorial £270.

Action: Clerk to respond to the grant request letter.

4 Accountability and Governance

Councillors agreed that the council could certify itself as being exempt from a limited assurance review (external audit) due to our gross income and expenditure being circa £1,200 which is well below the £25,000 limit for self-certification.

The deadline for completion and approval of the AGAR is expected to be in early July 2026 although the documentation has yet to be provided. In practice this will mean that the council must be in a position to approve the AGAR at its next meeting in May. The RFO expects to be able to complete the AGAR and arrange an internal audit within the required timescale.

Action: RFO

26/009

External Reports Received:

Written report received from Barbara Greatorex as Chair of the Trustees. The Committee are pleased to say that negotiations with the builder are progressing and are close to agreement. The Committee are working with Stafford Planning department regarding a BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) and a Heritage statement, which are currently required for a planning application. The trustees of the Village Hall are conscious that the site requires some tidying-up and now that a resolution with the builder is close, this will be addressed shortly.

Red Lion Support Group: In the absence of a report Councillor P White reported that the Red Lion is falling into a degree of disrepair, the developer states they are looking to take action to stop the deterioration of the premises, there has been a planning proposal expected, this has not yet been submitted. The Support Group have met with the Local Authority to raise concerns and there may be an opportunity for the LA to consider a compulsory purchase. Signs have been put up in the village Save out Pub. The issue is being raised in Parliament by the local MP, and an item has been written in the Shropshire

Star highlighting the issues. The Support Group are pushing for the premises to be returned to being a Public House. The Red Lion is listed as an Asset of Community Value.

Parish Councillors individually in favour of the Support Groups aims

26/010 Items Requiring Attention in the Parish

Potholes: There are some bad potholes on the local roads that need to be reported.

Action: Clerk to find out how these are reported.

26/011 Meeting dates for 2026/27

Two meetings are held in May, the Annual Meeting and the Parish Meeting. These will be held on May 13 from 7pm.

Followed by July 15th 2026

November 18th 2026

And March 17th 2027

Meeting Closed at 8pm.