

**Minutes of Croston Parish Council Meeting held on Wed 13th November 2024,
at Croston Old School.**

In attendance: Cllrs P Sloan, K Almond, C Turner, C Baines, D O’Kane and P Fenemore. Mr P Cafferkey (previous Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer), locum Clerk Miss A. Evans. Five members of the public were also in attendance.

1. Election of Chair

It was resolved that Cllr C. Turner be elected as the Chair for Croston Parish Council until the annual meeting in May 2025. Proposed by Cllr D. O’Kane, seconded by Cllr P. Sloan and unanimously agreed.

2. Apologies for Absence

Cllrs P. Strachan, C.Titherington-Teale,

3. Declarations of Interests.

Cllr P. Fenemore (non-pecuniary interest) – item 17

4. To confirm arrangements for Locum Clerk

A vote of thanks was recorded to Locum Clerk Miss A. Evans by Cllr D. O’Kane and a vote of thanks to the previous Clerk Mr P. Cafferkey by Cllr P. Sloan. It was proposed by Cllr P. Sloane, seconded Cllr C Turner, that the locum clerk minute the meeting, this was agreed unanimously. It was made clear that Miss A Evans would only be minuting this meeting and preparing the draft minutes; other arrangements would need to be made for the December meeting onwards.

5. Minutes of the Last Parish Council Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th Oct 2024 had been previously distributed and were presented to the Parish Councillors. However, they were not agreed as Cllr P. Fenemore requested an objection to item 5. Council to defer to the next meeting and to include, if agreed, Cllr P. Fenemore’s concerns regarding the lights on The Green being condemned as unsafe.

6. Public Participation: to invite and listen to issues raised by members of the public.

A representative from Croft Field was in attendance with regards to item 17 of agenda. He briefly outlined how the Croft Field volunteer group could make use of the annual biodiversity grant that is given to the Parish Council by Lancashire County Council. If the Parish Council could agree to passport this grant to the Croft Field volunteer group this would ensure the grant is spent on biodiversity projects such as the wild farm meadow and the planting of trees to replace trees lost to the ash dieback disease. The Croft Field is a public space, managed by a voluntary organisation that has no access to public funds, but has managed to be very successful over the years through the work of its volunteers. The organisation finds it very difficult to fund general maintenance costs such as the servicing and fuelling of the mower. The Parish Council has kindly offered grants in the past but ideally the Croft Field group would like a greater degree of financial security through the addition of a line in the annual



Parish budget, in the region of £300, for the maintenance of the mower. Cllr .K. Almond asked if the church contribute to the required funding as they own the Croft Field. The Croft Field representative advised that the church does not contribute, possibly because it too may well be struggling to fund its own priorities. Cllr D. O'Kane kindly offered to privately give funds to The Croft Field volunteer group in the region of £100 to £200.

Mr Neville Norcross (Croston Together) was present to represent the interests of the Recreation Park which is owned by Croston Parish Council. Both himself and another volunteer undertake volunteer work on the park virtually every week and they hear lots of positive comments from residents. The park is used regularly, and as such the park is an important feature/space in the village. The volunteers liaise regularly with the contractor (Countrywide) who undertake the larger maintenance jobs on the park and there is an extremely good relationship between the volunteers and the contractor. One of the larger items of work still to be done on the park is the pruning back of a large hedge. A quote is presented to the Parish Council at item 16 of this agenda. In the event that the Parish Council feel this quote is too expensive then Mr Norcross explained that two of the four contractual winter visits could be combined to get the hedge cut, with the help of volunteers, within the current maintenance contract price. However, this would still leave the pruning of the willow unresolved, although it was felt that this work could be done for approximately £250.00. Mr Norcross highlighted a longer-term issue regarding drainage in the young children's natural play area which regularly floods when there is any rain and presenting a potential drowning hazard to very young children. Mr Norcross does "tape-off" the play area when it is flooded but the risk remains. It was considered that the solving of this drainage issue at a potential cost of £5,000 could be considered as a medium to long term aim of the Parish Council. Cllr P. Fenemore felt that this hazard was not the responsibility of the Parish Council, but that of parents adequately supervising their children. Cllr P Fenemore agreed to consult with the Health & Safety Executive. Mr Norcross thanked the Parish Council for their continued financial support with regard to the Recreation Park.

Another member of the public expressed the view that the Parish Council should be doing what it can to reduce any known hazards on the park, such as the flooding of the young children's play area, as the park should be a safe environment for young children.

7. Planning Matters:

- a. 24/00865/FUL. Bishop Rawstone C Of E Academy Highfield Road Croston PR26 9HH. Construction of a new single storey classroom extension to the science block.
- b. 24/00893/FULHH. Aveyan House Out Lane Croston PR26 9HJ. Single storey front (porch/bootroom) extension.
- c. 24/00873/LBC. 6 Church Street Croston PR26 9HA. Application for listed building consent for replacement front and rear doors and windows, and associated internal alterations (retrospective)



- d. 24/00872/FULHH. 6 Church Street Croston PR26 9HA. Replacement front and rear doors and windows, and associated internal alterations (retrospective).
- e. 24/00937/FUL. The Grapes Hotel 67 Town Road Croston PR26 9RA. Temporary site/welfare cabin for the duration of the works approved under planning application 24/00405/FUL for the refurbishment to the Grapes Hotel.

Council noted the above planning applications (a-e) and there were no objections.

8. Financial Matters

- a. **It was resolved** that the Financial Statement as at 31st Oct 2024 be approved. This was proposed by Cllr C. Baines, seconded by Cllr K. Almond, also agreed by Cllr P. Sloan and Chair, Cllr C. Turner. Cllr P. Fenemore and Cllr D. O’Kane abstained. The motion was therefore carried.
- b. Council noted that the VAT claim for 2023-24 had been submitted and monies received in the sum of £2,699.04.
- c. **It was resolved** to approve the Clerk’s pay award and backpay, proposed by Chair Cllr, C. Turner, seconded by Cllr, P. Sloan and agreed by Cllrs K. Almond and C. Baines. Cllr P. Fenemore and Cllr D. O’Kane abstained. The motion was therefore carried.
- d. Council noted the CIL income of £550.90
- e. **It was resolved** to approve the following transactions processed through the Parish Council bank account in Oct 2024.

Date	£	Payee	Description
01-Oct-24	36.96	Direct Debit (GOCARDLESS)	Website monthly subscription
07-Oct-24	-65.00	Croston PT LTD	Newsletter advert income
15-Oct-24	19.99	B/P to: RBL Poppy Appeal	Remembrance Sunday Wreath
16-Oct-24	45.00	B/P to: Croston Old School	Rental of Hall
16-Oct-24	1,380.00	B/P to: Countrywide Mntnce	Grounds Mntnce
16-Oct-24	24.85	B/P to: Employee 2	Tax Mth 7 expenses
16-Oct-24	21.60	B/P to: Employee 2	Tax Mth 7 Mileage
16-Oct-24	315.72	B/P to: Employee 1	Salary Tax Mth 7
16-Oct-24	491.25	B/P to: Employee 2	Salary Tax Mth 7
16-Oct-24	252.00	B/P to: PKF Littlejohn	External Audit Fee
21-Oct-24	2,379.00	B/P to: Signs of Cheshire	New Noticeboards
24-Oct-24	282.60	Direct Debit (HMRC SDDS)	Employees Tax to HMRC
25-Oct-24	142.80	B/P to: Highfield Nursery	Winter Plants



28-Oct-24	-	HMRC VTR	VAT Claim 2023-24
29-Oct-24	2,699.04	B/P to: Rufford Printing	Road Closure Signs
30-Oct-24	15.00	B/P to: A Wade	War Memorial Re-lay Flags

The proposal was by made by Cllr C. Baines, seconded by Cllr P. Sloan and agreed by Cllrs K. Almond, D. O'Kane, Chair C. Turner. Cllr P. Fenemore abstained. The motion was therefore carried

9. **Payments approved by email or pre-approved and retrospectively noted:** There were no payments approved by email or pre-approved and retrospectively noted.

10. **Clerk's claim for Oct 2024**

It was resolved to approve the Clerks claim for Oct 2024 for 36.62 hours, mileage of 24 miles and expenses of £22.35. The proposal was made by Cllr P. Sloan, seconded by Chair, Cllr C. Turner and agreed by Cllrs K. Almond and C. Baines. Cllr P. Fenemore and D. O'Kane abstained.

11. **Parish Councillor Vacancy: Update.**

Council noted that a public notice for the Parish Councillor vacancy, following the resignation of Parish Councillor Anne Double, has been sent to Chorley Council, put on the noticeboards and website. Only after the 28th November 2024 will the Parish Council know whether a formal election will need to be held or the Parish Council can advertise the vacancy with a view to co-opting a suitable person to fill the vacancy.

12. **To agree procedures for the appointment of a new Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer,** to include agreeing interview dates.

Council noted that 5 applicants have contacted the previous Clerk regarding the role of Clerk & Responsible Financial officer and that these have been circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr P. Fenemore suggested we consider the concern for mileage expenses for applicants who aren't local. Cllr D. O'Kane considered that the applicant who made an admin error is not interviewed. However, Cllr P. Sloan suggested the Parish Council reserve any discussions on capability until after the applicants have been interviewed. A proposal was made by Cllr P. Sloan and seconded by Cllr P. Fenemore, that **it was resolved** to interview the applicants before the next Parish Council meeting on the 11th December 2024 and to book the room from 6pm onwards to allow for interviewing times. Previous Clerk P. Cafferkey agreed to send an email out to the applicants to advise of the date and time. This was unanimously agreed.

13. **To agree handover procedure from outgoing Clerk to new Clerk.**

It was resolved that the previous Clerk P. Cafferkey will volunteer his help at no cost to Croston Parish Council for the next meeting surrounding the precept and budget,



but that any assistance relating to financial matters, (paying invoices etc) be paid at the Clerk's normal rate. This is to allow the council to secure a locum Clerk for the December meeting and complete interviews. This was proposed by Cllr P. Sloan, seconded by Cllr C. Baines and agreed by Cllrs K. Almond, P. Fenemore and the Chair, Cllr C. Turner. Cllr D. O'Kane abstained. The motion was therefore carried.

14. To discuss the budget and precept for 2025-26

It was proposed by Cllr P. Sloan and seconded by Cllr P. Fenemore to extend the meeting by 30 minutes in accordance with the standing orders. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

The Parish Council noted the previous Clerk P. Cafferkey's budget and precept options paper for 2025-26, which provided options for essential budget items, desirable budget items and a wish list. The council agreed to defer the matter to the next meeting, to allow a thorough consideration and review of the document.

15. Chorley Operational Making Space for Water Meetings:

Cllrs P. Sloan, K. Almond and P. Fenemore are attending this meeting at Chorley Council on the 26th November 2024. Cllr P. Fenemore distributed a draft report, it was agreed that if possible, additional questions raised by Cllrs P Sloan and K Almond would be included in Cllr Fenemore's report; if they could not be included then these questions would be submitted in addition to the report. **It was resolved** that there would be an email vote prior to the Chorley Operational Making Space for Water meeting to agree the report as prepared by Cllr Fenemore. If the email vote was in favour of the report, then it was agreed that Cllr Fenemore's report would be submitted from and on the behalf of Croston Parish Council. This was proposed by Cllr P. Fenemore, seconded Cllr C. Turner (Chair) and unanimously agreed.

16. Winter Maintenance - Recreation Park

It was resolved to reject the Countrywide quote for hedge cutting. This was proposed by Cllr C. Baines, seconded by Cllr D. O'Kane and unanimously agreed. The Parish Council agreed that if it can be arranged, the contractor (Countrywide) would be asked to combine two of the four scheduled winter visits, to cut the hedge, with the help of the volunteers from Croston Together, as per the discussion during public participation. The Parish Council expressed their thanks for the volunteer work undertaken by Croston Together.

17. The Croft Field:

It was resolved to agree to passport historic bio-diversity grant of £300 to the Croft Field. This was proposed by Cllr P. Sloan, seconded by the Chair, Cllr C. Turner and agreed by Cllrs K. Almond, C. Baines, D. O' Kane. Cllr P. Fenemore abstained. Therefore, the motion was carried.

- a. **It was resolved** to agree to passport 2024-25 bio-diversity grant to the Croft Field, if and when, it is awarded to the Parish Council. Proposed by Cllr P. Sloan, seconded by the Chair, Cllr C. Turner and unanimously agreed.

- b. The Parish Council discussed the possibility of the Parish Council agreeing to an ongoing commitment to support basic maintenance costs of the Croft Field. It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting with an agenda item stating of amount of £250 plus inflation.

18. Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2024-25 accounts

It was resolved to approve quote from existing internal auditor (Amanda Partington) in the amount of £175. This was proposed by Cllr P. Sloan, seconded by Cllr C. Baines and unanimously agreed.

19. To discuss adopting .gov.uk email addresses.

Proposed by Cllr D. O’Kane but objected by the remaining councillors and therefore was not carried.

20 Parish Newsletter for Spring 2025

It was resolved that Cllr K. Almond complete the January newsletter and a vote of thanks be recorded to Cllr Almond for volunteering herself to do the newsletter. This was proposed by Cllr C. Baines, seconded by Cllr P. Sloan and unanimously agreed.

21 Reports from outside bodies (if applicable).

Council noted that Chair Cllr C. Turner will distribute report out to councillors regarding her attendance at the Chorley Area of LALC meeting held at Chorley Council on 4th November 2024.

Council noted that Cllr D. O’Kane will email Councillors his conference report for the Lancashire County Council conference with Parish Councils, that he attended on the 2nd November 2024.

22 Correspondence:

- a. Council noted that a report had been made from a member of the public re dilapidated bench
- b. Council noted that there an email had been received regarding Chorley Council Housing Strategy consultation and that this had been distributed to all Parish Councillors.

23 Date of Next Meeting: Wed 11th December 2024, 7.30pm, Croston Old School.

Proposed by Cllr, D O’Kane, seconded by Cllr P. Fenemore, unanimously agreed.

Prepared & approved by Amy Evans, Locum Clerk to Croston Parish Council
16th Nov 2024.

Approved as a correct record – Caroline Turner – Chair – 11 Dec 2024

