



19th September 2024

Commenced: 7.30 pm

Terminated: 9.30 pm

**Present: Councillor Wells (Chair)
Councillors Brassington and Crowe**

Councillor Simon Eardley - Cheshire West and Chester Councillor

There was 1 member of the public in attendance.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Jack Jones and Mike Jones submitted their apologies for absence.

2. PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Paul Wilcox, a member of the public attended the meeting to report on flooding issues. The Chair agreed to take the Public Forum, at this stage of the meeting.

Members heard how Mr Wilcox had been working tirelessly to ensure road drains, gullies and ditches were fit for purpose, to avoid flooding, and in doing so had liaised with the relevant public bodies, arranged for landowners to dredge ditches, and had personally assisted residents in the physical manual work required to clear blocked drains and ditches. Mr Wilcox had also worked closely with Councillor Eardley who too, had been actively involved in resolving these issues.

The Parish Council was concerned to hear that Cheshire West and Chester Council was signing off as completed, reports to clear blocked gullies, when they hadn't even been inspected. Councillor Eardley confirmed that the Risk Based Strategy was flawed.

The Chair and Members thanked Mr Wilcox for his commitment to resolving the causes to the flooding, and his significant contributions would be recognised in the Newsletter.

Councillor Brassington agreed to create and display posters with links to the Cheshire West and Chester Council REPORT IT page.

Members then discussed other projects, such as preventing parking on grass verges, the clearing of the cycle path, and planting of bulbs (another resident had offered assistance to plant bulbs).

RESOLVED

- (i) That Councillor Brassington creates and displays posters with links to the Cheshire West and Chester Council REPORT IT page;**
- (ii) That Councillor Eardley provide the Parish Council with some Spring bulbs in red and white.**

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Brassington declared her interest in Minute 11(i) Weed spraying.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 18th July 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. FINANCE AND BUDGET 2024-2025

The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer presented a report on the following:-

(i) Transactions Since 5th July 2024

RESOLVED

That the following transactions be approved:-

Payer/Payee	Details	Receipts	Payments
Information Commissioner	Annual Fee		£35.00
Grasshopper Services	Lengthsman May 2024		£80.00
Grasshopper Services	Lengthsman June 2024		£85.00
Grasshopper Services	Lengthsman July 2024		£80.00
J Davies	July 2024 Salary (Payslip states £113.52)		£113.36
M Clough	July 2024 Salary (Payslip states £211.00)		£210.92
J Davies	August 2024 Salary		£113.36
M Clough	August 2024 Salary		£210.92
NALC	Training 2022		£38.93
Cheshire West and Chester Council	Hire of Playing Field		£300.00
Cheshire West and Chester Council	Reimbursement for Website	£115.00	

(ii) Approval of Payments

RESOLVED

That the following payments be approved:-

Payer	Details	£
Grasshopper	August and September 2024	The Chair to confirm before payment made
J Davies	Amenity Cleaner – September 2024	£113.36
M Clough	Clerk - September 2024 Salary	£210.92
J Davies	Amenity Cleaner – October 2024 Salary	£113.36
M Clough	Clerk - October 2024 Salary	£210.92

(iii) Budget Expenditure to 12th September 2024

RESOLVED

That the following Budget Expenditure to 12th September, be approved:-

Budget Head	Total	Budget Allocated	£ Difference
Staff Costs	£1,492.24	£3,500.00	£2,007.76
Monthly Payments to Clerk for Home Office	£60.00	£120.00	£60.00
Travel	£81.36	£110.00	£28.64
Payroll	£360.00	£144.00	-£216.00
Administrative Costs	£91.93	£150.00	£58.07
Room Hire	£0.00	£140.00	£140.00
Insurance	£300.00	£350.00	£50.00
Subscriptions	£204.44	£320.00	£115.56
Information Commissioner	£0.00	£40.00	£40.00
Audit Fees	£130.00	£180.00	£50.00
St Oswald's School Field Licence	£300.00	£300.00	£0.00

Website	£249.50	£250.00	£0.50
Training	£0.00	£105.00	£105.00
Community Projects	£0.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Amenity Cleaner	£340.08	£2,000.00	£1,659.92
Gardener	£442.00	£725.00	£283.00
Remembrance Wreath	£0.00	£40.00	£40.00
Unity Trust Service Charges	£0.00	£72.00	£72.00
Repayment of PWLB Loan	£1,117.35	£2,235.00	£1,117.65
Contingency/Planters (160524)	£0.00	£600.00	£600.00
	£5,168.90	£14,381.00	£9,212.10

(iv) Explanation of Variances

Members noted that the Clerk was continuing to attempt to remove the former Clerk from the Bank Statement.

The Clerk requested the following:-

- A transfer of funds from the Community Projects Budget Head to the Payroll Budget Head in the sum of £500.00;
- The merging of the Amenity Cleaner Budget Head into Staff Costs.

RESOLVED

- (a) That a transfer of funds from the Community Projects Budget Head to the Payroll Budget Head in the sum of £500.00, be approved;
- (b) That the Amenity Cleaner Budget Head be deleted and the costs involved be placed into the Staff Costs Budget Head
- (c) That the Clerk completes the forms to include Councillors Jack and Mike Jones as Members who have authority to authorise payments.

(v) Bank Reconciliation

RESOLVED

That the Bank Reconciliation at 9th September 2024, as detailed below, be approved:-

Bank Reconciliation 12th September 2024	
MOLLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL	
Financial year ending 31 March 2025	
Prepared by: Muna Clough, Parish Clerk & RFO	
Balance per bank statements as at 12th September 2024	£
Current Account (07572433)	£21,709.02
Less: any unrepresented cheques	£0.00
Add: any unbanked cash	£0.00
Net bank balances as at 12th September 2024	£21,709.02
The net balances reconcile to the Cash Book (receipts and payments account) for the year, as follows	

CASH BOOK	
Opening Balance	£11,971.66
Add: Receipts in the year	£14,906.26
Less: Payments in the year	£5,168.90
Closing balance per cash book [receipts and payments book] must equal net bank balances above	£21,709.02

At this juncture, the Chair asked the Clerk to leave the room, as he wished to discuss a Salary Review.

The Clerk was invited to return to the meeting when the decision had been made.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk's salary be increased from SCP 18 to SCP 24, from October 2024.

(vi) Bank Statements

RESOLVED

That the Bank Statements 28th July 2024, 28th August 2024 and 3rd September 2024, as circulated, be received.

6. GOVERNANCE 2024-2025

RESOLVED

(i) That the following Policies be approved and uploaded onto the website:-

- **Standing Orders 2024**
- **GDPR Policy 2024**
- **Retention of Documents Policy 2024**
- **Publication Scheme 2024**
- **Financial Regulations 2024**
- **Code of Conduct 2024**

(ii) That the Clerk enquires about the provision of a backup for the documents on the website.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT 2024-2025

RESOLVED

That the Risk Assessment for 2024-2025, as appended to these Minutes, be approved. To approve the attached Risk Assessment.

8. ASSET REGISTER 2024-2025

RESOLVED

That Councillor Brassington inspects the Assets detailed on the Asset Register, signs and dates the Register and returns it to the Clerk.

9. FIVE VILLAGES WEBSITE

Members reconsidered the request to fund this website, following further information received by Councillor Eardley.

RESOLVED

That the Parish Council donates the sum of £115.00 towards the cost of this website for this year only.

10. PLANNING MATTERS

(i) Planning Applications

Members noted that there were no planning applications requiring consideration at the meeting.

(ii) Cheshire West and Chester Design Code

The Chair reported on this new initiative from Cheshire West and Chester Council and suggested that the Parish Council submits its design preferences for future schemes in Mollington.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Crowe drafts a response to the Code for approval by the Parish Council.

11. PARISH MAINTENANCE 2024-2025

(i) Weed Spraying

RESOLVED

That following consultation with the Chair, Wayne Brassington to provide a quote for the required works, for consideration by the Parish Council.

(ii) Planters and Notice Boards

Councillor M Jones had been unsuccessful in obtaining quotes to make five new planters and also two new Notice Boards.

RESOLVED

(a) That the Chair purchases the new planters;

(b) That the Clerk seeks details for a new Notice Board, with three panels, in wood and aluminium.

(iii) Statues

RESOLVED

(a) That the Clerk contacts Councillor J Jones to ascertain whether or not he was able to purchase the female statue and 20 large plastic poppies.

(b) That the Clerk purchases a wreath.

12. WARD COUNCILLOR'S BRIEFING

Members received an update from Councillor Eardley on the following matters:-

- There had been an exchange of correspondence regarding the maintenance of the school ditch. It was the responsibility of Cheshire West and Chester Highways, under riparian ownership and Councillor Eardley was seeking its maintenance.
- It was proposed to re-seed the wildflower area at junction of Townfield Lane and then cut around it correctly, so that it stood out as a designated space.
- Councillor Eardley had given the pre-school a £500 donation for school transport to the church for the Christmas Assembly.
- There was no budget available for siding out works and a particular concern related to the safety implications on Parkgate Road, so another request would be made to Cheshire West and Chester Council to complete this necessary work.
- Flooding had been resolved at the Shropshire Union Canal as a new gully had been installed.
- The cycle path required further maintenance.
- Cheshire West and Chester Council had very little budget available and Public Rights of Way were not a priority unless they were on a regular maintenance schedule.
- Members were encouraged to report any concerns via the Cheshire West and Chester mapping service.

- Cheshire West and Chester Council was launching a scheme to enable any residents/groups who undertook basic maintenance tasks in their community, to be included on the Council's insurance. This would include siding out work. As soon as the scheme was launched, Councillor Eardley would circulate details.
- Two tree areas had been highlighted for maintenance work, ie Tarrant Court and Well Lane.
- Councillor Eardley would purchase some red and white tulip bulbs for the Parish Council.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and thanks be expressed to Councillor Eardley for his ongoing work in the Parish, and also for agreeing to purchase flower bulbs for Mollington.

13. NEWSLETTER

RESOLVED

That a draft copy of the Newsletter be circulated by the Chair for Members to check.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Thursday, 21st November 2024 at 7.30 pm, at St Oswald's Primary School.

15. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair considered the following item of Council Business (or other person presiding) required discussion as a matter of urgency due to time constraints.

16. SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

Members were concerned that the bus to Upton was only half full, yet was refusing to stop to enable children to use the service, as it was passing them whilst they were walking to school.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Brassington drafts a letter (to be sent by the Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council) to the Member of Parliament, asking her to use her influence on the Council to have a more reasonable approach on this matter.

17. EXEMPT BUSINESS

Members resolved that the following item of business was exempt from the press and public as it contained information relating to an individual.

18. PERSONNEL MATTERS

Members considered a request from a former employee of the Parish Council for backpay. Members considered the impact of unpaid invoices sent to the former employee's house, and correspondence from debt collection agency, Bristow Sutor in response to one of the unpaid invoices. The former employee's personal involvement in the payment of one of the invoices, had resulted in a duplicated payment and uncertainty regarding the account to which the duplicated payment would be refunded.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the backpay be approved and paid to the former employee;**
- (ii) That the Chair collects documents from the house of the former employee;**
- (iii) That the Clerk monitors the refund of the duplicated payment in the bank account. If the payment is refunded to the Parish Council, the Clerk will then transfer the sum to the former employee.**

Mollington Parish Council Risk Assessment 2024-2025

Identified Risk	Potential consequence of risk	Assessment of impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Controls in place to manage risk	Required Action
Loss or damage of physical assets owned by the Council.	Assets unable to be used. Expense of replacing assets.	H	M	An up to date register of assets. Adequate insurance of assets.	Regularly update register of assets and review insurance accordingly.
The risk of damage to third party property or individuals as a consequence of the Council providing services or amenities to the public.	Risk of litigation should an individual or third party property become injured or damaged.	H	M	Public liability insurance. Continue to report the failure of services and amenities to the public to the relevant authority.	Annual review of Public Liability Insurance cover
Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty.	The Council may be unable to provide its services. Damage to reputation of the Council.	H	L	Regular bank reconciliations are carried out. Internal audit carried out annually.	All payments detailed at Council Meetings.
Security and maintenance of documents and equipment.	Risk of loss of council records or property.	H	L	Documents backed up and Officer equipment safely stored when not in use.	Regular back up of laptop documents and website.
Compromised banking arrangements, including borrowing or lending as they are inadequate.	Loss of income through poor investment of funds. Bank charges incurred through unauthorised borrowing.	L	L	Regular bank reconciliations are carried out before each Council meeting. The budget is monitored each month and balances are transferred between the deposit account and current account.	

APPENDIX

Identified Risk	Potential consequence of risk	Assessment of impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Controls in place to manage risk	Required Action
Inaccuracies in Financial records	Public criticism by reviewer of accounts leading to reputational challenges	M	L	<p>Cash book is maintained throughout the year. At the year end, financial statements are produced from the cash book and adopted by the Council.</p> <p>The bank reconciliation is presented to all meetings.</p> <p>All invoices and payments are now stored on the cloud.</p>	Continue to formally receive financial statements at every meeting of the Parish Council
Failure to ensure all business activities are within legal powers applicable to local councils.	Ultra-vires expenditure could lead to local elector challenge. Possible external auditor investigation / public interest report. This would result in increased fees and bad publicity for the Council.	M	L	<p>All payments are authorised by the Council at Council meetings.</p> <p>CHALC Membership</p>	<p>The Minutes record all decisions taken and payments made.</p> <p>Ensure Clerk’s training is up to date.</p>
Failure to ensure all requirements are met under employment law and HMRC regulations.	Fines for not meeting requirements. Liability for unpaid tax. Risk of legal action from employee.	M	L	<p>Payroll records maintained each month.</p> <p>Parish Clerk has contract for employment which is reviewed annually.</p> <p>Annual payroll returns are submitted on time via Shires payroll.</p> <p>Employment contract for Parish Clerk is approved by Council.</p>	

Identified Risk	Potential consequence of risk	Assessment of impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Controls in place to manage risk	Required Action
Failure to ensure all requirements are met under Customs and Excise regulations.	Entitlement to reclaim of VAT for a period being lost.	M	L	VAT is analysed separately in the cash book. VAT invoices are retained. VAT returns are submitted annually.	
Failure to ensure the adequacy of the annual precept within sound budgeting arrangements.	The Council would not be able to meet its objectives due to lack of funds.	H	L	The Council set a budget annually in the annual budget meeting. Actual expenditure against budgeted expenditure is reported to Council at each meeting.	
Failure to adopt timely and accurate reporting of council business in the minutes.	The Council could be open to challenge if they do not have an accurate record of any decisions taken.	L	L	Minutes are taken at each Council meeting by the Clerk, these are properly numbered and are approved at the next Council meeting. A master copy is kept within the files stored at the Clerks home address.	To deliver the signed Minutes to the Cheshire Records Office on an annual basis. Ongoing training of the Clerk as recommended by CHALC
Failure to respond to electors wishing to exercise their rights of inspection.	An elector could complain if they are not able to exercise their right of inspection.	L	L	A notice is put up on Council website notifying electors of their right to inspection of the accounts during the relevant inspection period.	

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Identified Risk	Potential consequence of risk	Assessment of impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Controls in place to manage risk	Required Action
Inadequate document control.	Increased fee from the internal auditor or external auditor if there is a poor audit trail.	L	L	All documents are filed. There is an audit trail from the cash book to supporting documentation.	Respond to any comments/recommendations from the Auditor
Register of members' interests and gifts and hospitality isn't in place, complete, accurate or up to date.	Possible complaint by elector.	L	M	All members have adopted the code of conduct.	Ensure all new Members are clearly briefed about the requirements Annual reminders to all Members to check/update their interests
Disaster Recovery not in place	Loss of essential records	H	L	Secure online data storage.	
Any circumstance affecting the Council's ability to hold regular meetings	Inability to conduct council business due to not being able to hold face to face meetings	H	L	Hold meetings remotely where this is legal	Follow advice from CHALC
Supplier fraud including the adequacy of supplier onboarding controls	Loss of finances from goods paid for but not received	M	M	Most costs are only incurred after goods received Extra research if payment is to be made in advance	
Parish Council inquorate	Too few councillors	M	M	Immediate and extensive recruitment Positive and extensive publicity of vacancies CWAC support Monitor and manage as appropriate	Members of Parish Council

Identified Risk	Potential consequence of risk	Assessment of impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Controls in place to manage risk	Required Action
Loss of Property	Damage including third party or criminal damage	M	M	Review adequacy of Insurance Cover	Annual reviews
Staff not in place	Essential works not carried out Fraud by Staff	M L	M L	Hours, health/long term illness, training, resignation. Monitor and manage as appropriate. Fidelity guarantee value set at appropriate level	Continual membership of CHALC who will provide temporary support if required.