



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 15TH MARCH 2026 AT 18.30HRS AT ALVANLEY VILLAGE HALL

In Attendance: Mrs Hughes (Chair)
Residents: 7
Clerk: Mrs Ryall-Harvey

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 16TH APRIL 2025

The minutes were agreed as a true record, proposed by John Wright seconded by Brenda Crowe and unanimously agreed that they be signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING

Nothing raised.

UPDATE REPORTS:-

Alvanley Parish Council

It has been a year of meaningful progress, community spirit and renewed identity for Alvanley and I am pleased to present this report outlining the work undertaken by the Parish Council during 2025-26.

Honouring Our Heritage

One of the most significant additions to the village this year has been the installation of the life-size metal outdoor World War I and World War II memorial soldiers purchased to commemorate VJ Day in August and stood proudly as a reminder of the bravery and sacrifice of those who served. Their presence has already become a valued focal point for reflection within the community. The parish can re-use the silhouettes as a fitting tribute for Remembrance Day.

Environment and Village Improvements

In March, volunteers and councillors came together for a successful snowdrop planting initiative, adding seasonal beauty and biodiversity to our shared spaces.

We also completed extensive footpath clearance works on the B5393 from junction of Manley Road to Towers Lane improving safety and accessibility for walkers, families and visitors.

A commemorative bench was purchased in honour of the many residents that served our village, who are no longer with us.

Strengthening Governance

This year saw the introduction of several new policies and procedures, ensuring that the council continues to operate with openness, transparency, accountability and efficiency. These updates strengthen our ability to serve our community effectively and meet modern governance standards.

Digital Progress

A new holding website has been developed and is now live, providing residents with up-to-date information while work continues on a fully interactive, long-term site. This is an important step towards improving communication and accessibility for all our residents.

Council Membership

During the year, three members resigned and we were delighted to welcome three new councillors to the Parish Council all of whom have settled in well and attended some of the many training courses on offer to assist them to prepare for their roles within the community. Their enthusiasm, skills and commitment have already made a positive impact, and we look forward to the contributions they continue to bring.

Community Thanks

Our grateful thanks go to: -

- The White Lion Public House for once again providing the beautiful floral displays in our 3 large square planters.
- The resident who plants bulbs and plants to keep the bespoke metal village sign (situated on the triangular grass verge top of Primrose Lane) and surrounding area looking lovely and colourful.
- The family that donated literally thousands of snowdrop bulbs and spent their weekend helping the volunteer's plants them up on the verge at 'cricket club corner'
- The local farmer who stores the council's assets and can also be relied upon to assist with other requests
- Local businesses that show support by mending broken Fingerpost sign and another that has created a bespoke wooden plinth for our Peace Lamp.
- To the residents coming together on Sunday morning to help with the annual Litter Pick and donning very brightly coloured hi-vi wear.

we thank you all most sincerely.

A new identity for Alvanley

Residents were invited to enter a competition to get creative and design a village crest/logo. The members were very pleased to receive numerous entries. This colourful emblem now gives the Parish Council a clear and distinctive identity, reflecting both our heritage and our aspirations for the future.

How we represent you further afield

Members of the Parish Council attend: -

- Sandstone Ward Committee meetings – a group of local councils that come together to provide information, shared experiences and ultimately work towards the benefit of our collective communities.

- CW&C Connections – Locality meetings. These are organized by the local authority to enable members to talk directly to officers and let them know what issues we face and what we would like to see in our respective communities.
- CW&C Town and Parish Council Conference – an opportunity to listen to and ask questions from the Chief Executive and Leaders of the Borough Council.
- Cheshire Association of Local Councils – the Parish Council is a member of this organisation and by being so, has access to the knowledge and expertise of the National Association of Local Councils which is an overarching body that represents over 10,000 Town and Parish Councils in England.
- Cheshire Constabulary – Local Policing Unit meetings. Arranged to enable attendees to receive progress reports in relation to neighbourhood policing and the desire to commit to the government’s policy guarantee and balancing the books.

Ongoing Representation

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has continued to represent the interests of the community, engaging with residents, responding to concerns and working with partner organisations (as already mentioned) to ensure Alvanley’s voice is heard at every level.

New Parish Clerk

In February we appointed a new Clerk Mrs Trudy Ryall-Harvey who, in a short space of time, has put her wealth of knowledge and experience to very good use by assisting the members in all areas of our sector. We are fortunate to have a clerk that can match our ambitions to start on the journey to obtain ‘Quality Status’ and other important new obligations and opportunities heading our way.

In closing I would like to thank my fellow councillors, our volunteers, local partners and every resident who has contributed to village life over the past year. Your support and involvement are what makes Alvanley such a strong and connected community. I look forward to another year of progress together.

Alvanley and Manley Primary School

This year has continued to be busy for children and staff across our school. Our headteacher Mr Thapar has been absent from school since Christmas on bereavement leave, resulting in some staffing changes. Despite this, children in school have continued to access opportunities and events within the community. Children from our Alvanley site have completed activities in the local community including nature walks and bike training sessions. Our Reception children had the pleasure of joining OPAL (Older People Active Lives) at Christmas time to sing songs to local residents in the Village Hall. A memorable visit for all!

School have also continued to access St John’s Church for many events, such as our Harvest Festival and Infant Christmas Nativity’s in the Autumn term, and our recent Easter Service. A huge thank you to the church for allowing us access for these special events. Parents within our community have raised funds for the Church in thanks. We have continued to welcome parents into the school community for a variety of further activities, including our Christmas fair and Spring Bingo that our PTA organised, as well as parent assemblies and workshops.

As a small school split across two sites, we continue to face the ongoing challenges of finance and budgets. We are continuing to work with the local authority to further understand our position and forward planning for the school.

Children across our school from Reception to Year 6 continue to participate in sporting events and competitions with schools from our Frodsham and Village School Partnership (FAVSP). Our FAVSP cluster has also been successful in purchasing two 16-seater minibuses that you may have spotted parked outside Helsby High School.

The 12 schools within the cluster have use of the minibuses throughout the year and we hope this will make it easier for our children to access events within the community, as well as reducing transport costs for us as a school.

The school have also been successful in securing grants from Tesco in Helsby which enabled us to install a new children's kitchen at the Manley site, and we hope a further grant will help to transform an outdoor learning space at the Alvanley site. A huge thank you to our local community for voting for our school in Tesco and enabling us to add further enhancements to the school.

As you can tell, life continues to be busy in school and we are looking forward to continuing with our many events as we head into the summer term.

Mrs Jade Cupples
Acting Headteacher

Alvanley Parochial Church Council

The Community Payback Team have maintained the churchyard until late Autumn and have promised to continue after Easter. A new fenced off-area has been erected in churchyard for grass cuttings.

Awaiting permission for the Manley War Memorial names, plus the Canadian soldier buried in the churchyard, to be engraved on the War Memorial. Suggestion has been made to split the cost 3 ways - church, Manley PC, Alvanley PC.

A wooden portable baptism font has been purchased -paid by a funeral donation.

Section of collapsed boundary wall has been rebuilt and the church roof repaired and is now watertight.

The west wall has been inspected and is awaiting for permission to be repointed.

Following on from the very sad death of Stephanie Hughes, who had offered to take over as church treasurer, we are still looking for a new church treasurer.

Alvanley Cricket Club

The summer of 2025 brought a great deal of success at **Alvanley Cricket Club**.

First and foremost, we could celebrate the success of our **1st XI** led by Alex Reid, who have earned **promotion to Division 1**. This is no small feat having just missed out on promotion in 2024 by finishing third in their league—it reflects not only the talent and hard work of our players but also the collective spirit that drives this club forward. Congratulations to every member of that squad for setting such a high standard.

Our **Women's 1st XI** under the leadership of Sarah Auterson (now Fletcher) continues to go from strength to strength, showcasing skill, passion, and teamwork that should inspire us all achieving promotion to Div 2. Similarly, the **2nd XI** has delivered a season of consistency and growth, proving that depth and dedication run deep within this section of our club. Their performance in the rained off cup final at Hale Barnes was fantastic and shows the strength in depth that has been developed.

Our men's **2nd XI** led by Charlie Fletcher, showed incredible character to recover from a difficult start to the season, to mount a promotion challenge, that unfortunately fell short in the final game. This team is already playing at the highest league status ever achieved in the club's history. To have almost reached the Premier League was in itself an incredible achievement as this is usually the reserve of the big town club's across the

County.

Our men's **3rd XI** have developed fantastically and performed admirably, using a range of players across the season. It was pleasing to see the woman of our club break through and contribute regularly in this team, which has been expertly skippered by David Bergstrand. The gap between 2nd and 3rd XI cricket is larger than we would like, but David has shown real commitment and desire to close that gap, and as a club, we must focus upon doing our utmost to improve the facilities available for those players who represent our club so well, despite having to play all their games away from our Frodsham Road home.

Our **junior sides**, provide hope for the future with an abundance of talent. Their performances have been outstanding, and more importantly, they embody what the club is all about—sportsmanship, learning, and enjoyment of the game.

Chris Fletcher
President of the Club

Alvanley Village Hall

It was reported that the hall has suffered after covid, as when it reopened several committee members decided not to come back and the committee dwindled to 2 to 3 people. 'There are a few regular users who provide enough income to keep the property afloat. The committee realised that they were out of line with paperwork, health & safety and risk assessments etc were out of date. Mr Hughes recently advertised in Helsby to Hand and on the local facebook site, 8 people responded and they have now formed a new committee and a further two or three people have been in touch who are also interested. The inaugural meeting was held on Thursday 2nd April to obtain contact details, with another to be held on Monday 20th April. Mr Hughes hoped that the new committee would work together to move the Village Hall forward. It was reported that the new treasurer had already signed up for Starlink and this will hopefully be installed shortly. New Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer have been elected and Mr Hughes will continue as the Secretary. Mr Hughes confirmed he was currently working to update the bank mandate.

The residents thanked Bob Hughes for all of the work he has done to maintain the hall over the years.

The White Lion, Public House – no report submitted.

Helsby OPAL Club

Helsby OPAL Club has been based in Alvanley Village Hall for nearly 10 years now, where we feel well at home in the hall and enjoy the space it provides and the beautiful outlook over the church.

We have up to 15 older people that regularly attend, all are currently aged between 70-98 and reside in the Helsby, Elton, Ince and Dunham areas. We have a team of 20 volunteers who come and support members and transport them to and from the club in their cars. Members come every Thursday morning from 10am-12 noon. Attendees enjoy refreshments and a range of activities including seated yoga, speakers, craft, music, board games, quizzes, bingo and themed days. Members have a range of abilities, some have mobility problems, sensory impairment or memory problems, but the Club is open to anyone who feels they may be a risk of social isolation and/or has a carer that could do with a break. The Club is not a drop in, and new members must apply first before starting. This can be through self-referral or through a family member or friend. Members pay a session fee of £6.50 to attend, however this doesn't fully cover the cost to run the club and as a charity we look to fundraise were possible to keep this valued service viable.

We are always looking for new volunteers to help support the Club and OPAL as a wider charity. More information about the services the charity provides, and volunteering opportunities can be found at www.opalservices.org.uk We regularly update our Facebook page with photos from our recent events and useful information.

Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority - Report by Cllr Deynam, Ward Councillor

As you know, the Sandstone Ward covers the villages of **Alvanley, Ashton Hayes, Dunham on the Hill, Kingsley, Manley, and Mouldsworth**. It is a privilege to represent such a proactive set of communities, and this report outlines the key challenges we have faced over the past year and our collective wins.

The 2026/27 Budget & The Alternative Proposals

The Council formally set its budget on **26th February 2026**. While the administration's budget ultimately passed, it was subject to intense debate and several key motions from the Conservative Group designed to provide more direct relief to residents.

- **Council Tax & Reserves:** The Conservative Group tabled a motion to reduce the proposed Council Tax increase from **4.99% down to 3.99%**. We argued that with the Council's "Equalisation Reserve" sitting higher than necessary, a portion should be used to mitigate the cost-of-living impact on households.
- **A "War on Potholes":** We proposed a reinvestment of **£500,000** specifically for an accelerated pothole repair programme. This would have been funded by repurposing underperforming capital schemes, focusing on the deteriorating state of our rural lanes in wards like Sandstone.
- **Strengthening Planning:** To address the housing crisis, we proposed a **£300,000 investment** into the Planning Department to recruit more officers and apprentices. The goal was to clear the application backlog and provide the Council with better legal standing against speculative developers.

While these motions were not carried, they represent my ongoing commitment to ensuring your tax money is spent on the "front-line" services that matter most to our villages.

Protecting Rural Policing: The Fight for our PCSOs

A deeply concerning issue arose at the full Council meeting on 11th December 2025 regarding the future of community safety. Plans were unveiled by the Chief Constable and the Labour Police & Crime Commissioner (P&CC) to slash the number of local PCSOs across Cheshire from 87 down to just 27 by spring 2026.

I supported a Conservative motion calling on the Council to demand a reconsideration of these cuts. For rural wards like Sandstone, PCSOs are often our only regular, visible policing presence. These cuts directly contradict the government's own "Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee," which promises accessible, named officers for every community.

While the Council eventually voted to write to the Chief Constable to express concern, the ruling Labour group amended our motion to remove any mention of the Labour P&CC, effectively shielding their own elected official from formal accountability. This was at best disappointing and rest assured, I will continue to fight against this reduction in accountability and visibility, which I believe undermines the safety and "local touchpoints" our villages rely on here but more widely, trust in local democracy.

The Housing Challenge: Targets & Land Supply

The most significant shift this year remains the change in central government planning policy. Following the 2024/25 NPPF revisions, the new **"Standard Method"** for calculating housing need became mandatory.

- **Increased Targets:** CWaC is now tasked with delivering approximately **1,900+ homes per year**, a steep increase that places immense pressure on our rural fringes.
- **The 5-Year Supply Crisis:** As of late 2025, CWaC can no longer demonstrate a robust 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS). We are not alone—roughly **61% of local authorities in England** are in this same position.

- **The Impact:** Without this supply, we face the "**Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**," which weakens our ability to refuse speculative planning applications. This makes our progress on the **New Local Plan** and the push for **Sandstone Ridge National**

Landscape (AONB) status (currently 'paused') to be considered again in the near future, even more critical than ever. For residents in villages like **Alvanley, Kingsley, and Ashton Hayes**, the designation is a vital tool for long-term protection against speculative development.

A Community Victory: The Golden Lion, Ashton Hayes

On a much more celebratory note, I am incredibly proud to highlight the progress made with the **Golden Lion in Ashton Hayes**. After years of dedicated campaigning and hard graft by the community, seeing this historic pub move toward reopening as a community-owned hub and pub over the last years has been a personal highlight of my work this year. To finally see it reopen in August 2025 and to begin to once again begin to provide the community focal point so many of us had missed for so long was truly a lifelong memory in the making. I am pleased to report that trade is brisk and consistent to date.

I have been privileged to chair the steering group to navigate planning complexities and secure supporting grants. The Golden Lion is a testament to what "Community Spirit" can achieve—it will serve as a vital social anchor, proving that our villages can successfully take charge of their own future with the right support, direction and political frameworks.

Local Infrastructure & Community Wins

- **Bus Services:** Following the 2025 **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**, we secured £100,000 in ongoing subsidies to protect rural routes. We are consulting on how to best use these funds to connect our villages to the rail hubs at Frodsham and Mouldsworth.
- **Green Bins:** The **Green Waste subscription** remains a necessity for budget balancing under the current administration, though I continue to press for improved collection reliability in our outlying areas. Ultimately I would like this charge to be removed complete.
- **Member's Budget:** I have used my community grant funding this year to support village green improvements in **Hapsford**, support for the implementation of the 20mph speed limit reduction in **Ashton Hayes**, **improved lighting and heating** in our village halls, equipment for the **Alvanley Cricket Club**, and **Breakfast Boxes** for local school children.

Borough-Wide Highlights

- **HyNet North West:** I am monitoring the hydrogen pipeline routes to ensure our ward's aesthetics and ecology is protected during any construction phase.
- **New Highways Contract:** Now in its first full year, featuring a "Rural Lane Taskforce" to address drainage and potholes across the Borough's village areas.
- **Chester Northgate:** The continued success of the new market and cinema remains a vital economic engine for the wider borough.

Closing Thoughts

As your councillor, I find the challenge of balancing central government mandates with local protection to be the most demanding part of the role. However, seeing projects like the **Golden Lion** succeed reminds me why this work matters. I want to thank our Parish Councils and the army of local volunteers for their tireless dedication. I wish you all well as we navigate the year ahead.

OPEN FORUM

A resident passed on his thanks for getting the stones removed from outside his house.

Meeting closed 18.54