

# Cheddleton Parish Council



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## Meeting of the Full Council

Dear Councillors,

Councillors are summoned to a **Full Council Meeting** of Cheddleton Parish Council which will be held Community Centre, Hollow Lane, Cheddleton on **Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 7.30pm,** following on from Planning and Amenities Committee meeting at 6.45pm.

The press and public are invited to attend the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

*Mrs. M Matthews*

Parish Clerk and RFO

## AGENDA

### 1. Apologies

To receive any apologies (through the Clerk in accordance with Standing Orders).

### 2. Declaration of personal & prejudicial interest or requests

For dispensation on any item on the agenda. Members should notify Monitoring officer within 28 days if not already declared.

### 3. Civility and Respect Pledge – **Attached**

To consider reaffirming the Council's commitment to the Civility and Respect Pledge, adopted in 2022, and to agree that the Pledge will be reaffirmed annually at the Annual Meeting of the Council to ensure expected standards of conduct remain at the forefront of councillors' responsibilities. To agree actions to remind councillors of the Pledge, their obligations under the Code of Conduct, and to promote expected standards of behaviour at council meetings.

**Proposal** that the Council reaffirms its commitment to the Civility and Respect Pledge and agrees that the Pledge will be reaffirmed annually at the Annual Meeting of the Council to ensure standards of conduct are regularly reviewed and remain at the forefront of councillors' responsibilities. It was further agreed that councillors will be reminded of the Pledge and their obligations under the Code of Conduct, and that expected standards of behaviour at council meetings will be promoted to members of the public.

### 4. Chair to close the meeting for public session

Members of the public are invited to address the Council on any issue over which it has a power.

### 5. Minutes of the Meetings - **Attached**

**Proposal** to confirm and accept the minutes of Finance Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026 as true and accurate record

**Proposal** to confirm and accept the minutes of Full Council on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025 as true and accurate record

**Proposal** to confirm and accept the minutes of Standing Orders meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025 as true and accurate record

**Proposal to confirm and accept the minutes of Garages Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025 as true and accurate record**

**6. Clerks Report**

I have now completed four working weeks with the council and would firstly like to thank councillors for the warm welcome and ongoing support I have received.

It has been a very busy first month, involving a wide range of duties including responding to emails, speaking with residents, liaising with community groups, and supporting councillors with council matters.

The main tasks completed during the month include:

- Making corrections and updates to the council website
- Arranging one burial and a separate memorial amendment
- Processing and reviewing accounts from August to December
- Updating council passwords, permissions and contact addresses
- Preparing minutes from last month's meetings
- Managing new hirers for the Community Centre
- Sorting through council archives and more recent paperwork
- Revising three policies and creating one new policy
- Attended Zoom briefings on:
  - Devolution update from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC)
  - Mobile phone contract
  - Finance systems
- Preparing the draft budget for council consideration
- Producing the agenda and minutes for the Finance Committee meeting
- Working with various councillors to work on projects where they are taking lead to help me out, from butter cross, to resident and school liaison, to playground inspections

During the next month, I will be focusing on:

- Rectifying the VAT position
- Becoming fully organised with council paperwork and records
- Creating and setting up relevant folders and documentation required for audit
- Reviewing and progressing outstanding council resolutions
- Submitting the formal request for the council precept to SMDC
- Creating and reviewing policies required by statute

Public may notice a change in the format of agendas and minutes. This has been introduced to aid transparency, ensure councillors are provided with full and clear information to make informed decisions, and most importantly to ensure the council meets legislative requirements.

The only element not currently followed is continuous minute numbering from the Annual Meeting in May. This will be implemented from the May Annual Council Meeting onward.

Overall, my aim is to ensure the council has a strong and well-organised administrative foundation in place, allowing us to move forward efficiently, compliantly, and with confidence.

**7. Bank Reconciliations - Attached**

**Proposal to confirm bank reconciliations for August, September, October, November and December along with the relevant income and expenditure reports**

**8. Payments – Attached**

**Proposal to accept and process payments for January**

**9. Accounts – Scribe PowerPoint - Attached**

While inputting the accounts for the current financial year, the Clerk has identified several accounting and VAT-related matters requiring Council consideration:

**VAT Treatment Issues Identified**

- VAT has not been applied to teas and coffees supplied.

- Room hire and burials income has been recorded as Z – 0% VAT rather than E – VAT exempt.
- No VAT reclaims have been submitted during the current year, resulting in the Council being three VAT returns in arrears.

### **Section 33 VAT Partial Exemption**

- The Council should be operating under Section 33 special partial exemption for local councils.
- This requires an annual de minimis/significance test to demonstrate eligibility to continue reclaiming 100% of VAT.
- HMRC will need to be formally notified, and it is likely that a review of up to four years of historical accounts will be required to ensure compliance.
- It is noted that these matters are not considered malicious but are likely due to the complexity of VAT regulations.
- This will require admin hours that need to be considered.

### **Financial Software Suitability**

- The Council currently uses Rialtas Alpha, which is designed for receipts and payments accounting, whereas the Council operates on an income and expenditure basis.
- Rialtas Alpha does not support the bridging software required for Section 33 VAT submissions.
- The system is limited to single-user access unless additional fees are paid, and corrections require restoring backups and re-entering data.

### **Proposed Change of Accounting Software**

- It is proposed that the Council moves to Scribe accounting software, which:
  - Is cloud-based with unlimited users
  - Supports income and expenditure accounting
  - Is compatible with VAT and Section 33 requirements
  - Allows easy corrections without restoring backups
  - Includes free training and ongoing support not just on finance but many topics and councillors can join.
- The Council currently pays £426 per annum for Rialtas Alpha.
- The cost of Scribe would be £612 per annum, plus a one-off setup fee of £499.

### **Invoicing Procedures**

- The Council currently issues letters rather than formal invoices.
- Proper invoicing is required for VAT compliance and audit purposes, and this functionality would be supported within the proposed new system.

### **Recommendation from finance committee to move to Scribe accounting software**

## **10. Website and email**

The current website (My Parish Council) is not user friendly and does not meet WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility regulations, with seven severe compliance issues identified and over 75 minor issues. Local councils are required to comply with WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards.

- The platform does not allow for add-ons or additional pages to support key council functions such as:
  - Public surveys and consultations
  - Mailshots
  - Community Centre bookings
- Ongoing issues have also been experienced with the Council's email provision.
- Failure to address the identified issues presents a legal and reputational risk to the Council.

### **Website Provider Options Considered**

- Aubergine 262 (a leading website provider for local councils):
  - Annual cost: £1,348
  - Set Up: £1500
- Netwise (website my previous council changed to):
  - Uses the same website templates as Aubergine 262
  - Provides good customer support
  - Annual cost: £330

- One-off setup fee: £599
- Includes unlimited Flexmail email addresses

#### Email Provision

- Netwise includes Flexmail, a lower-cost alternative to Microsoft 365.
- Given the size of the Council, including 17 councillors, it is considered that Microsoft 365 may not represent best value at this time.
- It is advised that Flexmail be trialled initially, with the option to migrate to Microsoft 365 in the future if required.

#### Current Costs

- The Council currently pays £312 per annum for the My Parish Council website, which does not meet accessibility or functional requirements.

**Recommendation from finance committee to move to Netwise for website and email**

### 11. Precept Requirements for 2026/27 Financial Year – **Attached**

Recommendation by finance committee to approve a 10% precept increase, setting the total precept request at £93589, resulting in a Band D charge of £41.03, an increase from £37.30 in the previous year.

The increase is due to rising inflation and higher contract costs, the inclusion of the Clerk in the Local Government Pension Scheme, and the need to begin building annual earmarked reserves for future elections and potential asset transfers from district to parish. This will ensure the council is in the strongest possible financial position ahead of the formation of unitary authorities. The budget also supports improved transparency and communication with residents and community groups through enhanced website provision and upgraded financial systems. These improvements will enable access to additional free training opportunities and ensure the council meets current accessibility and legislative requirements.

**Proposal to confirm and accept budget for 26/27**

**Proposal to confirm and request precept amount of £93,589, resulting in a Band D charge of £41.03 and increase of 10%**

### 12. Policy Review - **Attached**

**Proposal to confirm and adopt the following policies:**

**Standing Orders 2025**

**Press, Media and Social Media Policy**

**Data Protection (HR) Policy**

**Information Protection Policy**

### 13. Committees – **Attached**

Chairs to report anything from committees – no meeting of committees have been held since last full council apart from finance which is detailed below.

**Proposal to confirm attached committees' sheet is correct and to vote on vacancies, sheet to be updated and put on website.**

### 14. Rest Centre

Following discussions with the officer responsible, the Community Centre is listed as a potential rest centre. However, as the council did not provide an official confirmation at the time, alternative arrangements have since been put in place. As a result, while the centre may still be identified as a rest centre, it is considered very unlikely to be used in the future. No action is required by the council at this time, and there is no need to purchase any additional equipment or supplies.

### 15. Local Government Reorganisation

I recently received an update from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) regarding devolution and the proposed creation of unitary authorities.

Across Staffordshire, a total of 70 proposals have been submitted from the 27 district authority areas. Of these, five proposals are relevant to Cheddleton, including one which involves a potential boundary modification.

All proposals remain under consideration and the process is moving into Stage 3 of the six-stage programme, which is the statutory consultation stage. This is scheduled to formally begin in early February and will run for a period of seven weeks.

During this stage, authorities and stakeholders are invited to comment on the proposals by responding to ten questions based on the six government criteria that proposals must meet. Additional questions are included where boundary modifications or amendments have been submitted.

Stage 4 will involve the government determining which proposal will be accepted as the final model. This decision is currently expected in July 2026.

Stage 5 will focus on the creation of the required legislation to enable the new authority to be implemented. This will include the establishment of shadow authorities and shadow elections, which are expected to take place in May 2027.

As a result, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council elections scheduled for March 2028 may not take place. This uncertainty is the reason parish and town councils are being advised to give careful consideration to budgeting and the setting aside of election reserves. Should full parish elections be required without combined district or shadow elections, the financial cost to councils could be significant. We still don't know if our own elections will be moved by a year either.

Stage 6 will be the transition period, during which a full implementation plan will be developed. This stage will also include the harmonisation of council tax across the new unitary authority area and assessment.

## **16. Update on Highway Issues**

Cllr Beardmore to report

## **17. Facebook**

As the Parish Council does not currently have a Facebook page, residents rely on information being shared across multiple unofficial Facebook group pages, which can lead to inconsistent or inaccurate information. An official page could be used to provide clear, timely updates in one central place, for example:

- Notices of meetings and agendas
- Information on consultations and surveys (e.g. Unitary Council proposals)
- Meeting cancellations or changes
- Important parish or council updates

A potential disadvantage of Facebook is the risk of inappropriate use, such as residents posting items for sale, personal comments, or gossip. To mitigate this, the page could operate as an information-only page with posting by members of the public disabled and clear page rules in place.

**Proposal to approve the setting up of an official Facebook page for Cheddleton Parish Council, managed by the Clerk, with public posting turned off and used solely for council communications.**

## **18. Printer Plan**

The Parish Council is currently on a monthly printing plan costing £55.99 per month for 15,000 pages. Due to reduced printing while the former Clerk was away, page allowances have rolled over and the Council currently has over 7,000 pages remaining and eight unused ink cartridges. The printer itself is now older and no longer under warranty, therefore warranty implications are not a concern. Alternative "own-brand" cartridges are available from Cartridge World at a cost of £67.42, which would represent a significant saving compared to continuing the monthly plan. If the current plan is reduced or cancelled, the cartridges already supplied under the plan cannot be used, cartridges will continue to be sent until the plan fully ends. This means that a number of cartridges are likely to be wasted regardless of whether the plan is continued or amended. In light of this, it will be more cost-effective to end the printing plan entirely and purchase cartridges as and when required.

**Proposal to cancel the current printer plan and move to purchasing ink cartridges independently as required.**



## 19. Phone Contract - Attached

The current mobile phone contract is held in the former Clerk's name and paid for via her personal bank account. The contract costs £7 per month and has been used with an older mobile belonging to the former Clerk. This contract is due to end on 25 January, at which point the Council will lose both the phone number and an established contact method for residents, contractors, and other organisations.

The current Clerk has confirmed that she does not wish to use her personal mobile number for Council business. The Council therefore needs to consider alternative arrangements, which could include either:

- Taking out a new mobile phone contract in the new clerk's name, or
- Using a virtual phone system accessed via a mobile app.

At the Clerk's previous place of work, a virtual phone system was used via an app rather than a physical handset. One such provider is 8x8, which offers a phone app downloaded on the Clerk's personal device. This would allow the Clerk to make and receive Council calls without carrying a second phone. Key benefits include:

- A dedicated Council phone number
- Call recording, with recordings stored for 180 days
- A web-based console to review calls if required for training or investigation purposes
- No handset required
- No set-up fees or transfer of ownership fees
- If the Clerk changes, login details can be transferred to the next Clerk, who simply downloads the app, allowing the number to remain as a long-term ("forever") Council contact number

The cost of the proposed 8x8 service would be:

- £3.99 per month for 150 minutes
- £1.20 per month for call recording storage
- Total monthly cost: £5.19, which is more cost-effective than the current arrangement and provides additional safeguarding through call recording.

**Proposal to approve moving to a virtual phone system using an app-based service (such as 8x8), providing the Parish Council with a permanent contact number, call recording facilities, and reduced monthly costs.**

## 20. Playgrounds – Attached

An update will be provided by Cllr Shaw regarding the recent playground inspections undertaken and the works identified as necessary to reduce the level of risk. Inspection reports attached for members' information. Quotes are currently being sought for the required works. To date, one quote has been received, and additional contractors have been contacted and chased for further quotations. In order to support effective planning and prioritisation of works, it is proposed that quotations are obtained and presented to the Council in stages, based on levels of risk and urgency.

**Proposal to confirm that Cllrs Shaw, Rogers and Worthington are authorised to obtain and present three quotations to the Clerk on urgent work and that a budget set to authorise work so this can take place as a matter of urgency. Footpaths committee to consider and bring back to council plan for remaining works at a lower risk level.**

## 21. Community Speed Equipment

A number of residents in Wetley Rocks have requested the provision of Community Speed Watch equipment to enable local speed monitoring sessions to be carried out. This matter has been discussed previously by the Parish Council. It has been confirmed that the cost of the equipment will be funded via County Councillor DHP funding, with the Parish Council required to purchase the equipment initially. The DHP funding will then be transferred back into the Parish Council's account to reimburse the full cost. This item is brought back to Full Council for confirmation and support prior to the purchase being made.

**Proposal to approve the purchase of Community Speed Watch equipment for use in Wetley Rocks, with the cost to be reimbursed to the Parish Council through County Councillor DHP funding.**

## 22. Council-Owned Garages

To consider and confirm the statutory power relied upon for the acquisition of the garages purchased prior to the Clerk's appointment, to formally determine the purpose for which the garages are held, and to approve the use of an appropriate statutory power for the acquisition, holding, and reinstatement of the garages for community benefit.

The council previously resolved to purchase a set of garages; however, the minutes do not specify the statutory power relied upon. The garages are currently unusable and require expenditure to bring them back into use.

The location suffers from significant parking pressure, has areas of no footpath/ verge for parking on the road, and the road includes a school, which exacerbates safety and access concerns. Local residents have expressed a need for off-street parking.

It is therefore recommended that the council formally confirms the statutory power under section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972, on the basis that the land is required to support the council's functions in improving parking provision, highway safety, and local amenity.

**Proposal that the council confirms that the acquisition, holding, and intended use of the garages is exercised under section 120 (Property / land powers) of the Local Government Act 1972, on the basis that the land is required to support the council's functions in improving local parking provision, highway safety, and amenity in an area experiencing significant parking pressure, including the presence of a school and the absence of a footpath/ verge. It was further resolved that the council approves the principle of expenditure required to bring the garages back into use, noting that any income generated will be incidental to the primary community and safety purpose.**

The Parish Council is required to ensure that all assets are adequately insured. Insurance cover details have now been received for the garages.

The proposed insurance cover is as follows:

- Declared asset value: £50,000
- Annual rental income: approximately £4,800
- Public liability cover limit: £1,000,000 (the minimum level available)
- Additional annual insurance cost: £100.56, including administration fee

This insurance is required to ensure the garages are properly covered as Council assets and to protect the Council from potential financial and liability risks.

**Proposal to approve the additional annual insurance cost of £100.56 to insure the Mill Lane Garages.**

## 23. Councillor Identification (ID Cards and Lanyards)

The use of identification cards and lanyards has been suggested to support councillors when representing the Parish Council in public settings, such as:

- Visiting prospective planning sites
- Attending police or council surgeries
- Meeting residents or contractors
- Carrying out other council duties

Having visible identification can help residents feel confident that they are speaking to an authorised representative of the Parish Council, particularly when discussing sensitive or council-related matters. It can also present a more professional and consistent image for the Council.

The Clerk has previous experience of introducing ID cards and lanyards at another parish council, where feedback from both councillors and residents was positive.

To keep costs proportionate, the ID cards would be laminated and produced in-house. Two lanyard options are available:

- Personalised lanyards with the Council name printed on them, at a cost of £70
- Plain red lanyards to match the Council logo colour, at a cost of £10.19

For a more professional and consistent appearance, personalised lanyards are recommended. To control costs, councillors who leave office would be required to return their lanyards for re-use.

**Proposal to approve the introduction of councillor and officer ID cards with laminated badges and personalised lanyards, with budget of £70, with lanyards to be returned when councillors leave office.**

**24. Moorside High School Pedestrian Crossing Request – Attached**

Werrington Parish Council has requested the support of Cheddleton Parish Council in relation to a proposal from Moorside High School for Staffordshire Highways to install a pedestrian crossing to improve the safety of students. A copy of the correspondence prepared by Werrington Parish Council, which is to be sent to relevant parties including the local MP, county councillors, and Staffordshire Highways, is attached for members' consideration. The Council is asked to discuss the request and determine whether it wishes to formally support the proposal.

**Proposal to agree to support Werrington Parish Council's request for the installation of a pedestrian crossing near Moorside High School.**

**25. Chairman's Charity Ball**

The Parish Council traditionally holds a Chairman's Charity Ball on an annual basis, however this event has not taken place for the last year.

The Council is asked to discuss whether:

- The event should be reinstated this year, or
- It would be preferable to defer until the next council year

Consideration will include possible timing, including whether the event should be held close to the Annual General Meeting, and the likelihood of sufficient attendance to make the event viable. Should there be sufficient support and anticipated attendance, arrangements will be progressed accordingly.

**Proposal to determine whether the Chairman's Charity Ball should take place this year, and if so, to agree in principle the timing and next steps.**

**26. Public Rights of Way Definitive Map Modification Order (Deep Hayes to Crownpoint) – Attached**

To consider correspondence received from the Planning Inspectorate regarding the Staffordshire County Council (Addition of public footpaths between Deep Hayes and Crownpoint in the Parish of Cheddleton) Definitive Map Modification Order 2024. The correspondence relates to an objection received to the Order and the subsequent requirement for the Planning Inspectorate to determine whether the Order should be confirmed.

Members are asked to note that:

- The Order was made following direction from the Secretary of State after an appeal.
- Staffordshire County Council is taking a neutral stance in the matter.
- The Planning Inspectorate has asked whether Cheddleton Parish Council is willing to take the case forward in place of the County Council and to confirm acceptance of the written representations procedure.

**Proposal to consider whether it wishes to take an active role in supporting the order and agree the Council's response to the Planning Inspectorate.**

**27. Extra Meetings/ Working Sessions**

To consider the holding of additional informal meetings to support the effective operation of the Parish Council. In order to allow councillors time to discuss ongoing issues in detail, develop options, and explore potential solutions outside the constraints of formal Full Council meetings, it is proposed that a series of informal working sessions be held. These meetings are intended solely for discussion, idea development, and clarification of issues. No formal decisions or resolutions will be made, and any recommendations arising will be brought back to a future Full Council meeting for proper consideration and resolution.

The proposed meetings are as follows:

Away Day / Strategy Meeting

Date: 3 February

Time: 6.30pm

Format: Councillors and Clerk only

Duration: Aiming to conclude within 3 hours

Public attendance: Not open to the public

Formal resolutions: None



#### Car Parks Working Meeting

Date: 3 March

Time: 7.00pm

Public attendance: Open to the public

Formal resolutions: None

#### Garages Working Meeting

Date: 3 March

Time: 8.00pm

Public attendance: Not open to the public

Formal resolutions: None

While these meetings are not confidential, public attendance is not required where the meeting is being held as an informal working session rather than a statutory council meeting. This approach is permitted provided that:

- No formal council business is conducted
- No decisions or resolutions are made
- All recommendations are subsequently reported to Full Council for determination

**Proposal to approve the above additional informal working meetings, including dates, times, and attendance arrangements, for the purpose of developing proposals to be presented to Full Council for formal decision.**

#### 28. Fire Alarm Maintenance Report and Required Works - **Attached**

The scheduled fire alarm maintenance visit was completed on 19 January 2026. The Community Centre was inspected and found to be fault free. However, the Craft Centre had faults and issues were identified, as detailed in the contractor's job report (attached).

The contractor has advised of the following matters:

a. Zone 3 fault investigation

Cost: £260.00 + VAT

Based on 2 hours attendance for 2 engineers

If the fault is resolved in less time, the cost would be reduced accordingly

Full access to all areas will be required on the return visit as couldn't get into Beauty Room

b. Faulty buzzer on main fire alarm panel

The buzzer is integrated into the panel and cannot be replaced separately

A replacement panel would therefore be required

Cost of new panel: £252.70 + VAT

The contractor has confirmed that the faulty buzzer does not affect the operation of the fire alarm system; however, the panel will not audibly notify users of faults. This would require manual visual checks of the panel on a regular (daily) basis until the issue is resolved.

**Proposal to agree the appropriate course of action regarding the identified Craft Centre fire alarm faults, including approval of associated costs where required.**

#### 29. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 24th February 2026 at 7.30pm at Wetley Rocks Village Hall, Mill Lane, Wetley Rocks.

#### **Exclusion of the Public**

The public to be excluded because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 Section 2.

#### 30. Clerk - **Attached**

**Proposal to approve and sign off the Clerk's contract of employment as presented**

#### 31. Locum Clerk Arrangement

**Proposal to determine locum clerk arrangement**

**END OF MEETING**