Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Stapeley & District Parish Council held at Stapeley Community Hall on Monday 16th November 2026

www.stapeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk / clerk@stapeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk

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Attendance

Chairman:	Cllr A Jacobs
Councillors:	Cllr J Hillman, Cllr M Aspaturian, Cllr J Dickinson, Cllr M Docker, Cllr S Ford, Cllr J Gibbs, Cllr Y Orungbemi, Cllr M Whalley
Apologies:	Cllr I Lurcock, Cllr C Sirigou
Clerk:	Mr Wayne Salisbury **Other:** None
Not in attendance:	None
Public:	0

Meeting started at 7:30 pm.

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
   Apologies were received from Cllr I Lurcock and Cllr C Sirigou.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   a) No pecuniary interests were declared by members.
   b) Cllr Ford declared an other interest in item 8a, planning application 26/3849/FUL, Crewe Vagrants Sports Club. The Chair noted that this did not preclude Cllr Ford from taking part in the discussion.
   c) No dispensations were requested by members or granted prior to the meeting.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting**
   RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. **Public Participation**
   No members of the public were present.

5. **Cheshire East Borough Councillors' Report**
   No Cheshire East Borough Councillors were in attendance, and no report was received.

6. Authorisation of payments

The Chair noted that the schedule of payments had been reviewed by Cllr Gibbs and Cllr Dickinson and that the payments were routine.

Cllr Whalley asked about the street lighting payment. The Chair advised that the Council is responsible for 13 streetlights, an arrangement which dates back many years, and that the Council had looked on several occasions at if it could be ended, without success. Cllr Docker advised that the lights are located around the end of Broad Lane, in the more rural part of the parish.

RESOLVED: that the schedule of payments for the 16th November 2026 correctly states the invoices presented and that **£1,086.84** is approved to be paid; **£1,082.05** has been paid as per the annual approved payments list and **£7.00** has been paid to avoid late payment. (as detailed on page 291)

7. Clerk's Report

The following points were shared with members in addition to the written report shared ahead of the meeting.

- The December meeting will be held on Monday 14th December 2026, a week earlier than usual because of Christmas, as previously agreed by the Council. The meeting will focus on setting the 2027-28 budget and precept. The Clerk aims to circulate the budget documents earlier than usual.
- Following the resignation of Robert Carter, the Council is in the casual vacancy period. As the vacancy arose within six months of the May 2027 elections, a by-election cannot be called. Once the notice period ends in early December, there will be an opportunity to co-opt, and if no co-option takes place, the vacancy will remain unfilled until the May 2027 elections.
- The Council's previous contact at Cheshire East Highways regarding the Speed Indicator Devices has retired. The Clerk is now in contact with a new officer, who has asked for six weeks to establish further information.
- The Mayor of Crewe had been invited to an event organised by the Rotary Club at Crewe Vagrants on 13th November, and Crewe Town Council had followed civic protocol by notifying the Council.
- The following updates relating to the community hall were given.
    - A quotation of £535.00 from JD Services for the supply, delivery and installation of the Christmas tree, including fitting the Council's existing lights to the tree and porch, has been accepted under the delegation of the Clerk and Chair. The Christmas budget is £750.00. Installation may take place as early as this weekend.
    - When repairing the guttering, the contractor found the gutters heavily blocked with debris, which was likely to have contributed to the earlier damage. A quotation of £155.00 to clean the gutters was accepted under the Clerk's delegation, and the work has been completed.
    - The Clerk thanked members for their feedback on the parking guidance for hirers, and a final version was circulated on the day of the meeting. The guidance will be issued to occasional hirers with their booking documents, shared with regular hirers and displayed on the noticeboard.
    - Since the last meeting (19th October 2026), 6 casual bookings had been made for the Community Hall, totalling 22 hours.
    - An enquiry for a pole fitness class could not be accommodated, as the hall is already in use at the times requested. An enquiry for a weekly three-hour booking on Friday mornings for baby and toddler sensory and development classes is progressing.
    - The Community Hall net position as of 16th November 2026 was reported as £2,303.00, with income of £10,500.00 and expenditure of £8,197.00.
- The following planning decisions were reported.
    - 26/3316/VOC, The Round House, 81 to 83 London Road: Variation of condition 2 on approval 25/5013/HOUS for a single storey extension to the rear of the existing indoor swimming pool approved with conditions on 12th November 2026.
    - 25/2193/OUT, Land at London Road: Outline application for up to 85 homes with associated landscaping, play area, drainage and infrastructure approved with conditions on 13th November 2026.
- The Clerk noted that his priority following this meeting will be preparing the budget documents for the December meeting.

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The following questions and comments were raised by members.

- The Chair emphasised the importance of members reviewing the budget documents as soon as they are received, so that the December meeting can have a focused discussion.
- Cllr Dickinson asked that an email be sent to all members as a reminder that the December meeting is a week earlier than usual. The Chair noted that members should be checking their Council emails regularly, and that all meeting dates are published on the Council's website.
- Cllr Docker asked if, given the delay with Cheshire East Highways, the warranty on the Speed Indicator Devices may expire, and if an extended warranty should be sought from Elan City. The Clerk advised that Elan City units are very reliable, and that if the response from Highways is not positive, the units could be tested.
- Cllr Docker asked if the Council could do anything about visits to the parish by other civic heads. The Clerk advised that civic heads are entitled to attend events within the parish provided that protocol is followed.
- Cllr Hillman asked if the Council could also have been represented at the Crewe Vagrants event. The Chair noted that the invitation had come from the Rotary Club rather than Crewe Vagrants.
- In response to a question from Cllr Aspaturian, the Clerk confirmed that the total cost of the Christmas tree of £535.00 is within the budget of £750.00.
- Cllr Docker asked how the tree would be decorated. The Clerk advised that the contractor is experienced in decorating Christmas trees and will use the Council's lights from last year, with the white lights on the porch and the coloured lights on the tree, and that the specification sent to the contractor included photographs and a video. The Chair noted that the tree will be decorated in the way the contractor is used to.
- In response to a question from Cllr Hillman, the Clerk confirmed that the contractor is aware of the electrical arrangements for the tree, including the time clocks and extension cables.
- In response to a question from Cllr Orungbemi, the Clerk advised that a quotation for removing and disposing of the tree will be sought in January, and that the budget was set to cover the full process.
- Cllr Aspaturian noted that gutters are normally cleaned after the leaves have fallen. The Chair advised that the gutters were already full and needed clearing to avoid the gutter failing.

8. Planning

a) To consider the following planning applications.

Reference	26/3849/FUL	Deadline for Comments	26th November 2026
Type of Application	Full Planning		
Location	Crewe Vagrants Sports Club, Newcastle Road, Blakelow, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 7EP		
Proposal	Extensions and internal remodelling of the existing sports club facilities with some landscape improvements.		
Cheshire East | pa.cheshireeast.gov.uk | Application | 407298			

RESOLVED: to submit the following comment to Cheshire East Council.

Stapeley & District Parish Council supports this application.

b) To consider any planning applications which have been received since the publication of this agenda.

No further planning applications had been received since the publication of the agenda.

c) To consider representation at the Strategic Planning Board Meeting on 18th November 2026.

The Chair advised that the David Lloyd Leisure application (25/2328/FUL, Land Adjacent To Crewe Vagrants RUFC, Newcastle Road, Nantwich, CW5 7EP) is to be considered by the Strategic Planning Board on 18th November 2026. The limited documents submitted since the Council last considered the application mainly relate to site levels and landscaping, and a direct walking and cycling path from the site to the roundabout has been included, which addresses one of the points previously raised by the Council. The Council's other observations, including highway capacity and air quality, have not been addressed, although these were made as observations and the Council had supported the application.

Cllr Whalley expressed concern that the site remains dangerous to reach on foot, as the road at the crossing near the site is fast and dark, and considered the statement that 80% of trips are expected to be made by private car to be disingenuous. Cllr Hillman noted that cycling is an option, as the crossing has a footpath and cycle path.

Cllr Hillman suggested that the Council be represented at the Strategic Planning Board to speak in support of the application, as the Council usually attends to object.

The Chair agreed that the Council needs to show balance, but advised that she is unable to attend and that it is a two-hour round trip to Macclesfield to speak in support.

The Clerk advised that a written statement could be submitted, as had been done previously.

Cllr Gibbs added that submitting the Council's support in writing would be sufficient.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk submits a written statement to the Strategic Planning Board on behalf of the Council, as follows.
Stapeley & District Parish Council supports this application, as per its previous comments, and welcomes the inclusion of the walking and cycling route from the site to the roundabout, which addresses one of the points previously raised by the Parish Council.

9. CIL Working Group (Community Infrastructure Levy)

The Chair advised that the working group had not met since the last meeting and provided the following update.

- The Chair had chased Vistry again regarding the Victorian Orchard land, and no response had been received.
- As agreed at the October meeting, the Public Rights of Way team at Cheshire East Council had been contacted about upgrading Deadman's Lane. The team responded within a day, and the Chair spoke with an officer on Friday 13th November. Cheshire East Council would like to partner with the Council on the upgrade.
- The officer advised that drainage improvements were carried out on the lane over the summer.
- The officer's estimate, given from memory, was around £40,000 to surface the lane with a compacted MOT type material. Only part of the lane is registered as a public right of way.
- The next step would be for the officer and a Cheshire East Council engineer to walk the route with the Council to identify what else may be required, and any proposal would be brought back to Council.
- The officer had indicated that Section 106 monies may be available from Maylands Park Phase 2, although this could be some time in the future.
- An earlier Section 106 obligation relating to the lane could not be upheld as it had been incorrectly drafted.

Cllr Docker expressed concern that a compacted MOT surface would be more suited to horses than pedestrians, as it becomes messy when wet, and considered that a hard tarmac surface would be better for children walking to school. The Chair shared these concerns and advised that the surface would need to be agreed and must be an all-weather surface.

Cllr Gibbs noted that, as the lane is a bridleway, a surface suitable for horses is likely to be required. Cllr Docker asked if the width of the lane could be split, with half suitable for horses. The Chair advised that this would be considered once the site meeting had taken place.

The Chair noted that the estimate gave an indication of the likely scale of cost, which is well within the Council's CIL funds and would not require all of those funds to be spent on one project.

In response to a question from Cllr Whalley on the likely use of the lane, the Chair advised that children attending Broad Lane Primary School could use it as an alternative walking route, and that the lane being available as a route is taken into consideration for the school's catchment area. The Chair noted that the upgrade of the lane had come out strongly in the CIL survey.
Cllr Docker added that its use by children would depend on parents being willing to allow it.

Victorian Orchard

Cllr Hillman advised that the surveyor who carried out the original survey of the Victorian Orchard is willing to carry out an updated survey for a fee, and had suggested another tree specialist who could carry out the survey should she be unable to. The surveyor intends to make an initial visit within the next two weeks, although much of the site is inaccessible, and would like to be involved with the working group.

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In response to a question from the Clerk, Cllr Hillman confirmed that this relates to the Victorian Orchard Working Group, which is separate from the Conservation Area Working Group. The Chair noted that the orchard overlaps with the work of the CIL Working Group, as CIL funding could be used for it.

The Clerk advised that members had been appointed to the Victorian Orchard Working Group in May 2026, but that the group does not have terms of reference, and that he would draft them.

The Chair advised that informal meetings of the CIL Working Group and the Victorian Orchard Working Group would be arranged, and noted that, as the December meeting will focus on the budget, further updates would be brought to the January meeting.

10. Talbot Way Pond Area

The Chair advised that the Conservation Area Working Group had not met since the last meeting. A meeting has been arranged for the next couple of weeks to review the actions agreed at the last meeting, and an update will be given at the January 2027 meeting.

11. Neighbourhood Plan Review Steering Group

The Chair noted that the steering group has a membership of six, set deliberately given the amount of work involved, and currently comprises Cllr A Jacobs, Cllr J Hillman, Cllr S Ford and Cllr C Sirigou, with two places available. No further members came forward.

The Chair noted that Cllr Lurcock may still wish to join, as he had not been present at the previous meetings.

12. Bank Reconciliation

The bank reconciliation had been completed by Cllr Hillman and Cllr Aspaturian. Cllr Aspaturian queried the VAT figure. The Clerk asked if the query related to the VAT reclaim that is shown on the cash book report, and asked that any queries on the bank reconciliation be emailed to the Clerk before the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the bank reconciliation as of 30th September 2026 be approved. (as detailed on page 292)

13. Complaints Procedure

The Chair introduced items 13 and 14 together, noting that the complaints procedure needed updating for a number of reasons, as set out in the report, and that this had required an update to the Complaints Committee Terms of Reference.

Cllr Hillman noted that the policy refers to complaints going to either Full Council or a committee, without defining which. The Clerk advised that this is a judgement made when a complaint is received. Complaints come first to the Clerk, or to the Chair if the complaint concerns the Clerk, and most can be responded to and resolved at that stage. Where this is not possible, the complaint is referred.

The Chair noted that complaints can range from minor matters to complaints about procedure, that some matters, such as comments about the pond, had been dealt with informally, and that the Complaints Committee has only been convened once in the time she has been on the Council. Cllr Hillman was satisfied that the policy allows the Council to respond to the nature of each complaint.

RESOLVED: that the updated Complaints Policy and Procedure (November 2026) be adopted. (as detailed on pages 293 to 297)

14. Complaints Committee Terms of Reference

RESOLVED: that the revised Terms of Reference for the Complaints Committee be adopted. (as detailed on pages 298 to 300)

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15. Budget Setting Process

a) To review the expenditure and income forecast and forecasted budget position for 2026-27.

The Chair presented the full year forecast, which is based on actual figures to October and a forecast for November to March, and highlighted the following budget lines.

- WiFi (line 62): no spend is expected, following the Council's decision not to proceed with the installation because of its financial position at the time.
- Building Maintenance (line 63): the budget was an estimate, and around £2,200 is forecast to remain. Future works will be considered as part of the 2027-28 budget.
- Gas and Electricity (line 66): a significant increase had been budgeted, but a saving has been achieved through the quotation from Octopus.
- Miscellaneous (line 19): this holds the road traffic surveys, which will be transferred to CIL as agreed.
- Conservation Pond (line 42): nearly £8,000 remains, as Stage 2 of the works could not be completed because of the weather and is expected in the spring.
- Hall hire income is higher than expected, and bank interest of around £7,500, which had not been forecast, has been earned because of the CIL funds held.

Cllr Whalley asked why CIL income had not been forecast. The Chair advised that CIL depends on which planning applications are approved, and is received in phased payments as a development is completed, under the legal agreement between Cheshire East Council and the developer. Most of the CIL received relates to Maylands Park Phase 1a and 1b.

In response to further questions from Cllr Whalley, the Chair advised that the London Road development is at outline stage and would need reserved matters approval, and that further CIL would be received if it, or Maylands Park Phase 2, goes ahead. The Chair confirmed that CIL is not a form of grant funding and that the amount is set by Cheshire East Council, not by the developer. Cllr Hillman noted that the Council does not know when CIL will be received and has no input into the amount.

Cllr Docker asked if CIL had been received for the Stapeley Water Gardens development. The Chair confirmed that it had been received some time ago, and that this had been discussed at a previous meeting, where a query had been raised.

The Chair then presented the forecast budget and year end reserves position, and the following points were noted.

- At 31st March 2027, the general reserve is forecast to be £66,923.68 and the CIL fund £347,028.03, giving forecast total cash of £413,951.71.
- The 2026-27 budget included payments of £90,248.15 and receipts of £41,000.00, with an appropriation from reserves of £49,248.15. Instead, the general reserve is now forecast to increase by £11,756.13.
- The difference is mainly because the pond and road traffic survey costs have been met from CIL, the £6,000.00 budgeted for Speed Indicator Devices is not needed as these were bought in the previous year, hall income is higher than forecast, bank interest of around £7,500 has been received or is forecast, and several budget lines are below budget.
- Based on the forecast, the general reserve will be 239% of the precept. The level of the 2027-28 precept will depend on the budget agreed in December, which the Clerk will set out.

Cllr Docker noted that the figures will be in the public domain, and asked if the Council should consider setting a small precept next year in view of the level of reserves.

The Chair advised that this would be a matter for the December budget discussion, but noted that part of the current position results from the Council holding back on spending after setting a low precept previously, which was the main reason for suspending the WiFi installation. Once a precept is reduced, it is very difficult to increase it again, and major expenditure could leave the Council in a difficult position.

Cllr Hillman asked if the interest earned on CIL funds is ring-fenced with the CIL. The Clerk advised that Cheshire East Council does not stipulate how CIL funds are held, and that his interpretation is that the interest can form part of the general reserve.

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Cllr Hillman asked if investing CIL funds to earn a return that would help keep the precept low would be a legitimate use of CIL. The Clerk and the Chair advised that it would not, as this would be using CIL to fund the general activities of the Council, rather than to improve the parish.

b) To receive any suggestions from members for expenditure to be considered in preparation of the 2027-28 draft budget.

No suggestions were raised at the meeting.
The Chair asked members to send any ideas for specific budget lines for 2027-28 to the Clerk ahead of the December meeting.

16. Exclusion of all persons other than Stapeley & District Parish Council members and staff

No motion was moved, as no members of the public were in attendance.

Part 2

17. Clerk Additional Hours

RESOLVED: to pay the Clerk an additional 8.00 hours for hours worked in excess of his contract between 19th October and 15th November 2026.

Cllr Hillman raised that additional hours are being approved consistently and asked if the Clerk's contracted hours should be reviewed. The Chair advised that the Staffing Committee will be convened in the new year.

Meeting concluded at 8:27 pm.

Chairman……. Date……

Schedule of Payments – as resolved in item 6.

Stapeley & District Parish Council
Schedule of Payments
16th November 2026

	Date of Debit or Cheque Raised	Recipient	Purpose	£	£	Payment Method	Power of expenditure	Scribe
1	17/11/2026	Vorwerg Ltd (Bright & Beautiful)	Cleaning - Stapeley Community Hall - September 2026	531.42	1062.84	BT - Unity	LGA 1972 S 133	Yes
2	17/11/2026	Vorwerg Ltd (Bright & Beautiful)	Cleaning - Stapeley Community Hall - October 2026	531.42		BT - Unity	LGA 1972 S 133	Yes
3	17/11/2026	Wayne Salisbury - Clerk	Smarty - Mobile Phone Plan (August to November)	24.00		BT - Unity	LGA 1972 S 111	Yes
			Total	**1086.84**				

Payments made as per the annual approved payments list

	Date of Debit or Cheque Raised	Recipient	Purpose	£	£	Payment Method	Power of expenditure	Scribe
4	27/10/2026	W Salisbury - Clerk	Salary - October 2026	629.37		BT - Unity	LGA 1972 S 112	Yes
5	20/10/2026	HMRC	PAYE Contributions - Month 7	212.86		BT - Unity	LGA 1972 S 112	Yes
6	05/11/2026	Valda Energy	Streetlighting Energy (26/09/25 to 25/10/26)	165.40		DD - Unity	Highways ACT 1980 s301	Yes
7	02/11/2026	Greenzone	Community Hall - Waste Collection (12/11/26 to 30/11/26)	74.42		DD - Unity	LGA 1972 S 133	Yes
			Total	**1082.05**				

Payments made as previously resolved at a meeting or to avoid late payment

	Date of Debit or Cheque Raised	Recipient	Purpose	£	£	Payment Method	Power of expenditure	Scribe
	31/10/2026	Unity Trust Bank	Service Charge (No invoice, detailed on bank statement)	7.00		BT - Unity	LGA 1972 S 111	Yes
			Total	**7.00**				

Invoices checked and verified at the meeting held on 16th November 2026

Cllr J Gibbs 16/11/26

Cllr - Proposer - Sign & Date

Cllr J Dickinson 16/11/26

Cllr - Seconder - Sign & Date

Receipts - October 2026		
Date	**Amount**	**Details**
20.10.2026	£90.00	Community Hall - Regular Hire
19.10.2026	£60.00	Community Hall - Regular Hire
19.10.2026	£187.50	Community Hall - Regular Hire
15.10.2026	-£60.00	Community Hall - Occasional Hire Refund
15.10.2026	£0.00	Community Hall - Occasional Hire
15.10.2026	£45.00	Community Hall - Occasional Hire
15.10.2026	£107,588.36	Cheshire East Council - CIL
14.10.2026	£105.00	Community Hall - Regular Hire
12.10.2026	£285.00	Community Hall - Regular Hire
12.10.2026	£75.00	Community Hall - Regular Hire
09.10.2026	£695.05	HMRC - VAT Reclaim
06.10.2026	£60.00	Community Hall - Occasional Hire
02.10.2026	£60.00	Community Hall - Occasional Hire
01.10.2026	£45.00	Community Hall - Occasional Hire
	£109,235.91	

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Bank Reconciliation Q2 – as resolved in item 12.

9 October 2026 (2026-2027)

Stapeley and District Parish Council

Prepared by: W Salisbury - Clerk / RFO Date: 9th October 2026

Name and Role (Clerk/RFO etc)

Approved by: W Salisbury - Clerk / RFO Date: 9th October 2026

Name and Role (RFO/Chair of Finance etc)

	Bank Reconciliation at 30/09/2026			
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2026			189,232.56
	ADD			
	Receipts 01/04/2026 - 30/09/2026			168,595.82
				357,828.38
	SUBTRACT			
	Payments 01/04/2026 - 30/09/2026			47,748.16
A	**Cash in Hand 30/09/2026** (per Cash Book)			**310,080.22**
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements			
	Petty Cash	30/09/2026	0.00	
	RBS Current Account	30/09/2026	0.00	
	RBS Gold Deposit Account	30/09/2026	0.00	
	Unity Trust Current 0033	30/09/2026	7,989.14	
	Unity Trust Instant Access 0046	30/09/2026	302,375.48	
				310,364.62
	Less unpresented payments			284.40
				310,080.22
	Plus unpresented receipts			
B	**Adjusted Bank Balance**			**310,080.22**
	A = B Checks out OK			

Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose and principles
Stapeley & District Parish Council aims to respond to concerns and complaints promptly, fairly, respectfully and proportionately. This policy explains how people may complain about the Council's administration, procedures, services or handling of personal information and how the Council will respond. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction requiring a response; the person does not need to use the word "complaint".

The Council will consider each complaint impartially, make reasonable adjustments where needed, avoid unnecessary disclosure of personal information, record the outcome and identify improvements. No person will be disadvantaged for making a complaint in good faith.

2. Scope and alternative routes
This policy applies to complaints about the Council's administrative actions, its procedures, the conduct of Council business and alleged failures to comply with data protection law in relation to a complainant's personal data. It does not replace the following separate processes:

Matter	**Route**
Council policy choices or requests to reconsider a decision	Submit representations to the Clerk for the Council or relevant committee; the complaints procedure can examine procedural fault, not automatically overturn a lawful policy decision.
Alleged breach of Councillors' Code of Conduct	Cheshire East Council Monitoring Officer (section 10).
Grievance, employment or disciplinary allegations	Council's employment policies, normally through the Chairman and Staffing Committee (section 9).
Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations request/review	Relevant statutory information request or internal review process; refer to the ICO where relevant.
Subject access or other personal data rights request	Council's data rights process and statutory response timetable; a linked data complaint is handled separately.
Service outside Parish Council responsibility, e.g. highways or waste collection	Direct to the responsible authority, normally Cheshire East Council, as appropriate.
Allegation of crime, fraud or safeguarding emergency	Refer immediately to the appropriate authority; do not await the complaints timetable.

Where one correspondence contains several different issues, the Council may separate them into the appropriate processes, explaining this to the correspondent. A complaint about the way a data rights request has been handled remains a data protection complaint for the purposes of section 8.

3. How to make a complaint
Email: clerk@stapeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk Complaints may also be made by post, telephone, in person or another accessible means. To request postal details or assistance preparing a complaint, contact the Clerk through the published Council contact details at https://stapeleyparishcouncil.gov.uk/ Complaints about the

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Clerk should be directed to the Chairman through the Council's published contact arrangements; the Clerk should not investigate a complaint about their own conduct.

Please give your name and preferred contact details where possible, explain what happened and when, include relevant evidence, explain the impact and describe any preferred outcome. A complaint can still be considered if some information is missing. Anonymous reports will be assessed on the information available, although the Council may not be able to provide a personal response. The Council will not insist that a data protection complaint be made only in writing or on a particular form.

A representative may complain on someone's behalf. Before disclosing personal data or discussing a person's confidential affairs, the Council may reasonably verify identity or authority; it will not routinely demand more evidence than necessary. Any person needing assistance or a reasonable adjustment should contact the Council.

4. Acknowledgement and initial assessment

The Council aims to acknowledge a complaint within seven working days of receipt, confirming the responsible contact, the likely next steps and, where possible, an estimated response date. The normal aim is a substantive written response within 30 calendar days of receipt. These are service standards, not grounds to delay mandatory statutory duties. The Council will explain significant delays, provide appropriate updates and record its actions.

The Clerk will initially determine if an issue can be resolved routinely, requires formal investigation, belongs to another route, or raises urgent safeguarding, legal or data-security concerns. The Chairman will take this role for complaints about the Clerk or where the Clerk has a conflict of interest. A data protection complaint must always receive the treatment required by section 8, whether or not it also concerns another matter.

5. Informal resolution

Where suitable, the Clerk or Chairman may seek to resolve a concern promptly by explanation, apology, correction or practical action. The outcome will be recorded proportionately. Informal resolution is optional: any person may request formal consideration immediately, and serious complaints or statutory data protection complaints will not be made dependent on completing an informal stage.

6. Formal complaints and investigation

The Clerk may investigate and conclude routine administrative complaints within their authority. Serious, complex or unresolved complaints, complaints raising significant procedural concerns, or complaints needing a decision beyond the Clerk's authority will be referred to the existing Complaints Committee. The Committee is constituted as four parish councillors, with a quorum of three and meetings as required, under its separately adopted Terms of Reference. The Clerk or Chairman will inform the complainant of the route followed. Where a proposed remedy requires expenditure, only the full Council may approve that expenditure.

The investigator will identify the issues, review relevant records, seek comments from those concerned, consider the available evidence fairly and record reasons for conclusions. Persons involved should have an appropriate opportunity to respond to material allegations. A member with an interest or prior involvement which compromises impartiality must not take part in determining the complaint.

The written outcome will normally state the issues considered, essential findings, if a complaint is upheld (fully or partly) or not upheld, any appropriate remedy or improvement, and review options. Information about another person's employment or private affairs will not be disclosed merely because they were involved in a complaint.

7. Complaints Committee procedure

A complaint requiring committee determination will be handled under the Council's Standing Orders (particularly 3, 4, 11 and 15) and the Complaints Committee's adopted Terms of Reference. The Clerk or an alternative person where necessary will notify the complainant of the proposed date and process. Where a

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hearing is held, the complainant may attend and be accompanied or represented, subject to lawful meeting access and confidentiality arrangements. Relevant evidence will normally be exchanged at least seven clear working days beforehand, where practicable. The Committee is chaired by the Council Chairman unless absent, conflicted or previously materially involved, in which case an eligible committee member will be selected to chair the matter.

At a hearing, the Chair will explain the procedure; the complainant and the Council's representative will each have a fair opportunity to outline their position, answer relevant questions and summarise. Any member who is conflicted or whose previous involvement compromises impartiality must withdraw from considering and determining that complaint. The Committee must remain quorate: if it cannot, the hearing will be rearranged and the Council may appoint eligible members or substitutes in accordance with its Standing Orders and Terms of Reference. The Committee may deliberate privately only where lawful; the exclusion of press and public requires a case-specific decision under applicable meeting law, not an automatic blanket exclusion.

The Committee may uphold, partly uphold or not uphold a complaint, explain its reasons, identify proportionate non-financial remedies within its delegated authority and recommend policy or procedural changes to Council. A reasoned decision will normally be confirmed in writing within seven working days after the meeting. If more investigation is required, a revised date will be given. The Committee will report appropriately to Council, separating confidential details from any public report. There is no automatic requirement to publish a complainant's identity or the full decision; statutory meeting openness, agendas, minutes and disclosure rules still apply.

8. Data protection complaints

An individual may complain if they consider that the Council has infringed UK data protection law in handling personal information relating to them. Examples include collection, use, sharing, accuracy, storage, security, retention and the handling of an access or other rights request. A complaint need not identify any law or use a prescribed form. This section implements section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018, introduced by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 and effective from 19th June 2026.

The Council will facilitate complaints electronically and by other means and acknowledge receipt within the statutory 30-day period, normally meeting its faster seven-working-day target. It will take appropriate steps without undue delay to examine the complaint, make proportionate enquiries, keep the complainant informed of progress and communicate a reasoned outcome without undue delay. The usual 30-calendar-day response target is aspirational, not a statutory deadline for completion.

The Clerk, acting as Proper Officer and the Council's designated Data Protection Lead, will normally coordinate the investigation and response. The Data Protection Lead is the primary contact for operational data protection matters and is not an appointment as a statutory Data Protection Officer under the UK GDPR. The Council remains the data controller and retains overall responsibility for compliance. Where a complaint concerns the Clerk or creates an actual or potential conflict of interest, the Chairman will arrange an impartial investigator who was not involved in the events complained about, obtaining suitable specialist advice where needed. The Council may seek proportionate clarification, evidence or identity/authority verification when necessary, but must not use these requests to create avoidable delay.

An allegation that information has been lost, disclosed or accessed improperly must also be considered promptly under the Council's data breach/security incident arrangements and Standing Order 21, including assessment of any duty to notify the ICO within 72 hours and affected individuals where applicable. A data complaint does not suspend or replace separate statutory obligations relating to information rights requests.

A complaint will not be refused solely because the person has also contacted the ICO or taken legal advice. If a matter cannot reasonably be investigated, or has already been fully addressed with no new issue, the Council will explain the decision and any remaining rights. A complainant can complain to the ICO at any time; the Council cannot require them to complete an internal review first.

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9. Complaints about the Clerk
Complaints concerning the Clerk should be addressed to the Chairman of the Parish Council, using the Council's published contact arrangements. The Chairman will initially assess if the issue concerns routine service delivery, a formal administrative complaint, a data protection matter requiring impartial investigation, or an employment matter. Administrative complaints may be resolved within the Chairman's appropriate authority or referred to the Complaints Committee. Where a complaint raises potential misconduct, disciplinary or employment matters, the Chairman shall refer those aspects to the Staffing Committee for consideration under its adopted Terms of Reference and the Council's relevant employment procedures. The Staffing Committee oversees informal dispute resolution, appoints hearing panels in appropriate disciplinary and grievance cases, and convenes employment appeal panels where required. These employment processes are separate from the complaints review process under this policy. The Clerk shall have a fair opportunity to respond as appropriate, and confidential personnel decisions or sanctions shall not be disclosed to the complainant. Any data protection issues shall continue to be dealt with under section 8 without undue delay.

10. Allegations concerning councillors
Allegations that a councillor has breached the relevant Councillors' Code of Conduct should be made to Cheshire East Council's Monitoring Officer, rather than determined by the Parish Council Complaints Committee. Email: MonitoringOfficerCEC@cheshireeast.gov.uk The Monitoring Officer's current forms and postal details are published at https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/your_council/councillors/councillor_conduct.aspx
Complaints about Council administration remain within this policy.

11. Requesting a limited internal review
A complainant may request a limited internal review within 21 calendar days of the written outcome where (a) material new evidence has become available; (b) the published procedure was materially not followed; or (c) material relevant information was overlooked. The request should identify the ground and supporting information. The Chairman, or an alternative appropriate person if conflicted, will coordinate referral for review. A review must be determined by an appropriately authorised person or body with no material prior involvement where practicable. Where the original decision was made by the Complaints Committee, the full Council will decide how to constitute an impartial review panel and formally delegate any necessary authority before it determines the review. The Council will acknowledge the request within seven working days and normally aim to respond within 30 calendar days, explaining any delay.

The review is not a general rehearing simply because the complainant disagrees with the conclusion. Its outcome will be communicated in writing and is normally the final step under this Council policy. This does not restrict statutory rights, court proceedings or referral to the ICO.

12. Confidentiality, meetings and records
Complaints will be handled on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with the Council's privacy notice, information governance requirements, statutory meeting rules and retention schedule. Records should include the complaint, dates, correspondence, decision-maker, investigative steps, findings, outcome, actions and any review. Access will be appropriately limited. Records will be retained only as long as necessary under the Council's approved retention arrangements and then securely disposed of.

The Council does not automatically publish complaint decisions online or disclose personal complaint information. Any public discussion, minutes, reporting or exclusion of press and public must follow applicable law and Standing Orders. The Council may report anonymised complaint trends to members where appropriate.

13. Unreasonable complaint behaviour
The Council recognises the right to complain, including repeatedly where new material issues arise. It may respond proportionately to threatening or abusive behaviour, persistent repetition of a matter already fully considered without new information, or demands that unreasonably interfere with Council functions.

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Restrictions may include a nominated contact, agreed communication channel or reasonable contact frequency.

Before imposing restrictions, the Council will normally explain concerns and offer an opportunity to change behaviour. Any restriction must be authorised by full council or appropriate committee, be justified and documented, specify its scope and duration, and be reviewed periodically. Measures must allow urgent matters, new substantive complaints, equality-related adjustments, statutory information rights and data protection complaints to be considered as required by law. Threats or criminal conduct may be referred to the police.

14. External routes

Data protection concerns: Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), https://ico.org.uk/ or telephone 0303 123 1113.

Code of Conduct concerns: Cheshire East Monitoring Officer (section 10)
MonitoringOfficerCEC@cheshireeast.gov.uk
https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/your_council/councillors/councillor_conduct.aspx

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman does not generally investigate complaints about parish councils. The Council may direct a complainant to another appropriate body where relevant, but should not imply that an informal conciliator is a formal appeal authority.

15. Policy review

This Complaints Policy and Procedure will be reviewed periodically to ensure ongoing compliance with legal requirements and good governance practice.

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Complaints Committee Terms of Reference – as resolved in item 14.

Terms of Reference for the Complaints Committee

Definitions

In this document the following terms have the meanings assigned to them below: -

Chairman:	The Chairman of the Committee
Committee:	The Complaints Committee of the Council
Committee Member:	Any person participating in the committee's work under the arrangements set out in the Section headed 'Membership and Quorum'.
Member:	An elected or co-opted member of the Stapeley & District Parish Council

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1. General

a) These Terms of Reference define the Council's responsibilities delegated to the Complaints Committee. The Committee shall consider complaints referred under the Council's adopted Complaints Policy and Procedure, act fairly, proportionately and impartially, and comply with the Council's Standing Orders and applicable law. Confidentiality shall be applied where lawful and necessary, rather than to every aspect of the Committee's work.

b) Decisions made within the Committee's expressly delegated responsibilities are binding on the Council, subject to applicable law and the limited internal review arrangements in the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

c) The Committee has no authority to authorise expenditure or to make binding decisions on matters reserved to full Council, including expenditure and employment decisions. Any such requirement shall be referred to full Council.

d) The public may be excluded from specific confidential business only where the Committee passes a resolution stating the reasons, in accordance with Standing Order 3(d). A complaint does not automatically make an entire meeting private.

e) The committee will meet on an ad hoc basis as required.

f) The Proper Officer shall arrange summonses, notice and agendas in accordance with Standing Orders 3 and 15, including the applicable minimum of three clear days. Minutes and resolutions shall comply with Standing Orders 3(t), 11 and 12.

g) These Terms of Reference are in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

h) Public participation at Committee meetings is subject to the full Council's determination under Standing Order 4(d)(viii). Any invitation to a complainant or another person to give evidence shall be arranged consistently with that determination.

i) The Clerk will normally prepare meetings, papers and records, including acting as the Council's Data Protection Lead. Where the Clerk is personally implicated or conflicted, the Council Chairman shall arrange impartial investigation and alternative administrative support.

2. Duties & Scope of Delegated Responsibilities

The Committee shall undertake the following duties on behalf of the Council:

a) To consider, investigate where necessary and determine formal complaints referred under the Council's Complaints Policy and Procedure, including relevant data protection complaints where referred.

b) To handle complaints fairly, proportionately, impartially and without bias, allowing complainants and persons materially criticised a fair opportunity to make representations, subject to lawful confidentiality safeguards.

c) To report complaint outcomes and recommendations to the Council while protecting personal and confidential information, with public reports and minutes limited to information lawfully appropriate for disclosure.

d) To identify lessons learned and recommend improvements to policy, procedure, training, systems and service delivery for consideration by full Council.

e) To resolve to exclude the press and public for particular confidential business only where necessary and legally permitted, recording the reasons for the decision.

f) To consider evidence, invite relevant representations and hold a hearing where appropriate; determine if a complaint is upheld, partly upheld or not upheld; and give reasons for the decision.

g) To agree proportionate non-financial remedial actions within existing Council decisions and policies, and communicate a reasoned determination through the Clerk or another appropriately appointed contact.

h) To confirm the written outcome to the complainant normally within seven working days of the decision, subject to any necessary further enquiries.

i) To distinguish administrative and service complaints from councillor Code of Conduct allegations, staff grievances, disciplinary matters and statutory information-rights requests, which shall follow their separate applicable procedures.

j) Where a complaint concerning the Clerk raises employment or disciplinary matters, to refer those matters via the Council Chairman to the Staffing Committee under its existing Terms of Reference and the Council's employment procedures. The Complaints Committee may determine a separate service complaint but must not make employment findings or impose staff sanctions.

k) To recognise that the Clerk and Proper Officer acts as Data Protection Lead for day-to-day matters and is not appointed as a statutory Data Protection Officer.

3. Powers

a) The Committee has only the responsibilities expressly delegated in these Terms of Reference. It cannot determine councillor Code of Conduct allegations, employment matters or other issues reserved to a separate statutory or Council process.

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b) The Council's Complaints Policy permits a request for a limited internal review within 21 calendar days on specified grounds. This is not an automatic full rehearing and does not affect statutory rights, including recourse to the Information Commissioner's Office.

c) A person materially involved in the original determination must not decide a review where that involvement would compromise impartiality. A review of a Clerk decision may be referred to the Complaints Committee as appropriate.

d) Where the Committee determined the original complaint, full Council shall establish an appropriately constituted impartial review arrangement and expressly delegate any necessary authority. Where impartial internal review cannot reasonably be arranged, the Council shall explain this and identify external rights or remedies.

4. Membership and Quorum

a) The Committee shall consist of four councillors appointed by full Council, including the Chairman of the Parish Council.

b) The Chairman of the Parish Council shall normally chair the Committee.

c) Where the Council Chairman is absent or unable to participate due to an interest, conflict or material prior involvement, eligible Committee members shall select one of their number to preside for the relevant meeting or item, consistently with Standing Orders 3 and 4.

d) The quorum shall be three eligible Committee members. A member shall not determine a complaint if a conflict of interest or material previous involvement would undermine fairness. If fewer than three eligible members remain, consideration shall be deferred.

e) Substitute members must be appointed by full Council under Standing Order 4(d)(v). A substitute may replace an ordinary member who has confirmed to the Proper Officer at least one day before the meeting that they cannot attend. The Committee cannot appoint its own substitutes. A late withdrawal or conflict may require a new meeting or a Council decision on membership.

5. Reporting, Records and Confidentiality

a) Complaint papers shall be handled securely and shared only on a need-to-know basis. The Committee shall maintain appropriate restricted-access records of evidence, deliberations, decisions, actions and reviews under the Council's retention arrangements and data protection obligations.

b) The Committee shall report outcomes and lessons learned to full Council, distinguishing between matters suitable for public papers and material that requires lawful confidential treatment. The complainant's identity and the full determination shall not automatically be published.

6. Review

a) These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed periodically by full Council, or following relevant changes in law, Standing Orders or the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

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