



Ashton Hayes and Horton cum Peel Parish Council

PARISH MEETING at 7.00pm

Monday 16th March 2026 at The Parish Rooms, Golden Lion, Kelsall Road,
Ashton Hayes

In attendance: 14

The Chairman of the Parish Council opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He asked each group to share any highlights of the reports that they had provided previous to the meeting and that was circulated at the meeting.

INFORMATION SHARED BY COMMUNITY GROUPS

ASHTON HOUSE NURSERY – prepared by Sophie Greensmith

As requested, please find below some highlights from Ashton House Nursery's activities over the past year:

- **26 September** – Macmillan Coffee Morning: £467.17 raised
- **30 October** – Harvest Collection donated to St John's Church for the West Cheshire Food Bank and to the Frodsham Food Bank
- **November** – Poppy Appeal
- **10–14 November** – Children in Need: £2,779 raised

Looking ahead, Ashton House Nursery plans to continue our regular charitable commitments, as in previous years (Macmillan Coffee Morning, Poppy Appeal, Harvest Collection and Children in Need). We also aim to celebrate and raise awareness of causes that impact families within our setting, such as Military Child Awareness Month and Hydrocephalus Awareness Week. We look forward to providing a more detailed update on these initiatives next year.

ASHTON ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION – prepared by David Routhwaite

Report on the 2025 growing year and outlook for 2026

A wonderful year for normally wet land! A kind spring was followed by a hot summer, but the ground had been so saturated the previous year that it was July before the dry weather began to be noticed, and by then most established crops had roots that continued to sustain them. The brook ran, and we only needed one new diaphragm replacement on the pump. The grass continued to grow until the last week of July but then came to an abrupt halt in August, when the then accumulated soil moisture deficit brought an early finish to the courgette crops, though pumpkins and squashes generally survived well.

Most legumes, including sweet peas, did well; onions were mixed but beetroots were the star performers. Early sowings of sweetcorn were good but late ones disappointed – fortunately the local badgers found a different 'dining room'.

Soft fruit generally performed well and the apple crop, in common with the rest of the village, was fantastic. The 'local pollinators' can claim some credit for the late spring and early summer successes, but once the ground dried out they suffered too.

Brasicae seemed to suffer from all the attacks that were going: from drought, to insects, to pigeons and were a general disappointment.

The good weather allowed a very social barbeque in early August, when it was nice to entertain the neighbours. We even had dry days for both the spring and autumn clean-ups, when all the usual hedging and ditching jobs etc were tackled.

It was sad to say farewell to Niki and Paul but we welcomed Dylan and family.

Once again thanks are due to Stuart Scott for our manure but particularly to Bryan and Jean, who make all this possible.

2026 began with our AGM, held in The Golden Lion. We sadly said farewell to Bob, who was one of the founder members but welcome Richard and Rachel.

More manure arrived in early February, so there will be plenty to do once the ground dries out. Presently all the plots are taken but anyone wishing to join the waiting list should contact David at davidrounthwaite@hotmail.com or tel. 01829 752070

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH – prepared by Revd Dr Phil Weston (Vicar)

During 2025 St. John's continued to pursue its ministry and mission to our ecclesiastical parish of Ashton Hayes and Mouldsworth, including the following regular activities:

- Sunday morning services at 9am and 10.30am each week, plus monthly 6.30pm Evensong services on the first Sunday of the month. A new weekly Wednesday 9am service of Morning Prayer also began in September.
- Our monthly Sunday Club (for primary school aged children) and Youth Group (for teens).
- Monthly Sunday afternoon 'Messy Church' services continued for primary school-aged children, including music, craft, food and games.
- Our monthly Thursday afternoon Café was open to all ages.
- Pastoral care, prayer and support for the elderly, housebound and bereaved; and
- Assemblies for Ashton House Nursery and Ashton Hayes Primary School hosted in church (as well as in school), including at Harvest and Christmas.

Other notable events in 2025 included:

- A Family Quiz Night on 24th January.
- A Wine Tasting Evening on 8th March 2025, hosted by Chester Beer and Wine.
- An 'Easter Experience' event for the Primary School at the end of March.
- A fundraising Afternoon Tea on 13th July.
- St John's choir's Summer Concert on 18th July, plus an Ashton Folk performances on 6th December - both in aid of St. John's Church and the NW Lupus charity.
- A 'Bach to the future' concert by David Bird and friends on 17th October was also generously held in aid of church funds.
- Our Harvest Festival on 5th October, with food donations for West Cheshire Foodbank.
- A 'Light up a life' service for the bereaved on Sunday 19th October.
- Our Remembrance Sunday service on 9th November.
- A Christmas Craft Fair on 22nd November; and
- A Toy Service, with gift donations for adults and young people in the care of Save the Family, was held on 7th December.

Other community organisations, such as the Women's Institute, Ashton Sings and the Gardening Club continue to hire our church building for meetings and special events. Recent relocation of the control unit has made the building's heating system much more reliable for all users this past Winter. Subject to diocesan approval and sufficient funds being raised, we also hope to replace our ageing church boiler this coming year.

Finally, we continue to publicise our church's activities in our monthly 'News from the Pews', on our website, Facebook page and Nextdoor, as well as in 'Around Ashton'.

ASHTON HAYES & MOULDSWORTH COMMUNITY SHOP prepared by Lisa Allman

The community shop has its financial year end in February each year and reports the results to our shareholders at our AGM in August each year. At the AGM we present our accounts, and share key milestones for the year with our shareholders.

Last year, we reported that during 24/25 Deb Deynem our store manager along with the support of the management committee and the team of staff have worked hard to control costs and purchase stock wisely to ensure we deliver the best possible return.

As we entered this financial year, we knew we were facing several key challenges.

- Increased costs – Particularly Energy costs.
- Rising staff costs – driven by the increasing Minimum Wage rises.
- Reduced Sales /Footfall For the first time in a number of years we have had a downturn in sales.

We have responded to the challenges faced by

- Continuing to negotiate the best deals we can for necessary business costs such as Internet, telephone and business insurance costs.
- Asking customers to help us by using cash where possible to reduce the costs of banking charges incurred by the business when using credit or debit cards which are often prohibitive for small business.
- Working with our staff team to ensure we keep our paid staff hours to a minimum and maximise the use of volunteers.
- Reflecting on the footfall during the trading week and looking at how we can reduce costs by closing at the times when footfall is very slow.
- Reflecting on services that generate a cost to the business – Newspaper deliveries have been offered by the business since we opened. However, with an increasing trend to access news online the sales are falling. Whilst we do charge for a delivery service with a reduced volume of sales the charges received do not always cover the costs of the salary of the delivery staff. We review this regularly. At the moment we will continue the service as we know it is valuable for those who are most vulnerable in our community, but we have taken the decision not to take on new customers for delivery.

We require around 55 hours of volunteer support each week. Continued volunteer support is vital to the success of the Community shop. We are always willing to welcome new volunteers and training is given for all who come forward.

We are currently preparing our year end accounts for 25/26 which we will present again at our AGM in August.

ASHTON HAYES AND MOULDSWORTH VILLAGE HALL – prepared by Heather Lutton

Trustee team

- We have had some changes in the trustee team this year: for various reasons, Peter Mitchell, Helen Rimmer and Steph Abell resigned as Trustees
- A warm welcome to Martin Bell has joined the trustee team. MB is the new head at Ashton Primary School and we're delighted to have him onboard.
- We hope to recruit to the trustee team in the spring/ summer.

The hall users and booking

- We've seen a steady amount of new users e.g. birthday parties, christenings and other one-off events.
- Express Yourself With Saz, is a new user to the hall booking on Tuesdays for an art class open to all. We also have a new regular user who uses the hall to practice ballroom dancing.
- We're very fortunate to have a group of long-standing users who use the hall regularly Janis Anderson School of Dance, Ashton Sings, Kelsborrow Choir, a private badminton group and Pilates.

Ongoing maintenance, projects and grants

Ongoing Maintenance

- June 2025 - Tree felling was needed due to a tree with woodworm and close to the hall on the back field.
- June/ July 2025 - agreed to have a shared notice board with the WI after the notice board ownership and usage was completed generally for village organisations.

Grants

Two grants have been awarded this year. :-

1. FCC Communities Foundation - The project includes kitchen refurb (together with full new crockery), external and internal decoration, new fire alarm and secondary glazing.
 - Internal and external decoration has been completed;
 - New fire alarm system has been installed;
 - Secondary glazing has been installed;
 - Kitchen refurbishment is to be completed in next few weeks.
2. Ashton and Mouldsworth Parish council – This will fund draft proofing on the doors of the village hall. This work will be completed by the end of March.

Future projects

- Short-term focus (next 3 months)
 - To complete the final works of the FCC grant – refurbishment of the kitchen.
 - Badminton lines will be repainted on the floor in 2026.
 - Tidy up the exterior of the hall – bedding plants, signage and grounds maintenance (removal of leaves and moss from winter)
- Long term focus (over the next 12 – 24 months)
 - Upgrade of the lighting to the main hall.
 - Introduce an online booking system/ website
 - Investigate possible storage options
 - Look into solar panels to increase our energy efficiency and reduce overheads.

ASHTON HAYES SPORTS AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION – prepared by Ian Ridgley,
Chairman

AHSRA continues to provide an important facility for the use of the local community. It is only able to do that with the support of volunteers whose commitment and contribution is greatly appreciated.

Facility Usage

In August 2025 we organised a survey where we monitored usage of the facility for a full day. Feedback from users was overwhelmingly positive and several people were even travelling to Ashton just to use visit the field and the playground. The path was very popular with walkers and runners and several people talked about how they had taught their children to ride a bike around this path.

From the survey we estimate that there are over 34000 uses of the field and pavilion a year which emphasises the importance to the community.

AHSRA does not receive any direct funding from the Council and is therefore heavily reliant on fundraising, facility hire and grants.

Fundraising

During the year we ran 3 successful fundraising events during the year which each attracted good turnouts.

The VE Day 80th anniversary was part of a national celebration and provided an opportunity for people to come together to enjoy the bar. This culminated in the lighting of the beacon. The Picnic in the Park enjoyed very hot (if a little too hot) weather but with side stalls to browse, side show games and fun races. Funds for AHSRA were raised through a tombola, raffle, refreshments, bar and BBQ.

In December the Lighting of the Christmas Tree event had to be rearranged to coincide with better weather and was a great success with Father Christmas managing to spare time from his busy schedule to visit and say hello to the children. Like all our events this was free entry with funds raised from the sales of food and drink and from the raffle. A combined choir from the Church and Ashton Sings helped everyone get into the Christmas spirit with a selection of carols. We also supported the fundraising for the Golden Lion by running a garage sale during the summer. This was very successful and raised around £3000.

Facility Hire

The football pitches are hired out mainly to Tarvin FC with over 60 matches played over the course of the season with players ages ranging from under 11s to Vets.

Over the last year, the Pavilion has been used for a range of purposes and this trend continues as local people become more aware of its versatility and the opportunities it can offer, all at a reasonable hire charge.

We have seen an increase in meeting bookings (helped by the availability of WIFI) and children's parties are becoming a regular feature. We received feedback the following from a resident illustrating how the space is being creatively used for gatherings of friends or family:

"Please may I book the Pavilion again for a family get together. Last time, I found the space excellent as it gave the children the opportunity to play outside on the field and playground, but could also come indoors for drinks and snacks, use of toilet, and some of the smaller ones and babies were warm and cosy inside. Being able to make hot drinks for the adults was most welcome. I brought a selection of games, puzzles, play dough, and we played 'pass the parcel'. I've been telling lots of people about it, and everyone said what a good idea it was. Also, we enjoyed seeing the Christmas tree light up just before we left."

We also have a few regular social group meetings including a couple of fortnightly and very popular lunch groups, one run by OPAL, a local charity, and one by AHSRA. There is also a fortnightly social group run by a local resident and the pavilion forms a base for a local weekly walking group where members to have a coffee after their walk.

Grants

National Lottery Community Fund £19,500. An application was submitted and accepted for Bark Chippings for the playground, Fencing and second gate for the playground, Additional Safety signage as required by insurers and to cover some specialist pitch mowing costs.

Cheshire Community Action £500. Awarded following an application to fund a fixed netball post, which had been requested by our community.

Cheshire West and Chester Council funded the pitch refurbishment works, consisting of the application of a weedkiller, mechanical aeration (punching holes in the pitch), top dressing with a sandy loam and reseeding. The impact on pitch health is already apparent, ensuring a good playing surface for matches and social play. Thanks for arranging this go to Tarvin AFC's Robin Grimshaw and to John Seilers from CWAC for organising the works by Swiftgate.

New goal posts bought with Football Association funding earlier in the year are now installed, and the main and smaller pitches remarked.

Finances

We reported last year that we were running at a £2000/year deficit however, with a combination of prudent cost savings (including the battery installation partly funded by the PC and Carbon and Energy), revenue from facility hire and grants, our financial situation has improved to close to breakeven. However, costs increase every year and we have already had a couple of unexpected expenditure items which mean that we are always looking for ways to raise money.

Village Fun Day with Fun Dog Show Saturday July 11th

This year we are planning a much bigger village fun day than previous years We are running a dog show with the support of Sands Vets. There will also be Craft Stalls and Vintage Vehicles. To keep children occupied there will be Slip and Slide Water Fun (weather dependent), Games and Fun Races. Refreshments will be available, including BBQ, Bar and Ice creams. We will have live music, a raffle and more.

We are hoping that as many people as possible from the village attend bringing gazebos, chairs, picnic rugs etc and making this a real community event.

Volunteers

While we do have a committed group of trustees, we are always looking out for volunteers who can spare just a few hours per month. The sorts of things we need help with include:

- Hosting 'welcoming spaces' sessions at the pavilion, chatting over tea and biscuits.
- Secretary duties including taking minutes and record keeping, dealing with inbound email etc
- Admin such as arranging health & safety inspections, filing accounts, updating companies house etc
- Assisting the Treasurer with invoicing etc
- Helping with pavilion rental activities such as taking bookings, opening up etc
- Being on a rota for daily safety inspections
- Arranging contractors for maintenance works
- Being part of the team running community fundraising events

You could also volunteer as a Trustee of the AHSRA charity, helping to ensure that the Playing Field is funded. Information is on the AHSRA web pages or contact ashtonhsra@gmail.com to arrange a chat to find out more.

ASHTON HAYES WI – report prepared by Liz Weston

As we stated in our report last year, our membership continues to grow and we're delighted about this. The WI as a whole has such a lot to offer - both locally and nationally - our members can vouch for that.

Throughout the second half of 2025, we continued to welcome some excellent speakers to our monthly meeting in St. John's. Our first get together of 2026 took the form of a lunch at The Golden Lion and we were made very welcome by Michael and his staff. The food was delicious and the event was enjoyed by all. For those of you who don't know this fact - it was Ashton Hayes WI who bought the extractor fan for the pub's kitchen, thus making it possible for the opening of the establishment to come about a little earlier than it would have done if extra funds had had to be found for the equipment. We have our uses!! Our monthly meetings started proper in February, when we met in St John's and welcomed Paul Rooney, who told us about "Life with My Guitar" and entertained us with some fabulous songs and music. In March, Hen Johnson will have talked to us about "The WI in Wartime", which will be very interesting, as Ashton Hayes WI has quite a varied history of its own when it comes to what the WI did in this village during the war years. The rest of 2026 should prove to be yet another interesting and entertaining year for us.

As well as our meetings each month, our members get the opportunity to visit venues of interest, both locally and further afield. For example, a trip was arranged to visit Haworth and The Bronte Parsonage Museum and a good time was had by all who attended. Nearer to home, the Cheshire Federation's Autumn Meeting was held at Storyhouse in Chester and amongst the Guest Speakers was Aled Jones. This year's CFWI Spring Meeting is being held at Nunsmere Hall, with the Guest Speakers being The Lord Mayor of Chester and Will Kirk from The Repair Shop. Two other trips are planned to the Allotments at Winsford and to the Guide Dogs for the Blind Training Centre at Atherton near Manchester.

Encouraging our members to learn new skills, or improve upon skills that they already have, is still very much on our agenda and local courses are suggested to members on a regular basis - some being at The Cheshire School of Glass in Frodsham; Craft Courses are also held at The Farmers Arms in Kelsall and at Blakemere Craft Centre.

Our Darts, Bowls and Quiz Teams have also enjoyed another good year and the Darts and Bowls Teams practice regularly, so as to be on top form for their Group and County matches. Indoor Bowls sessions are held at Kelsall Community Centre on a regular basis, so there's something for everyone.

After the disappointment of not having a Cheshire Federation marquee at last year's Cheshire Show, we're pleased to say that there will be a WI presence this year, but in a somewhat reduced capacity - less classes than usual, but at least we'll be there. Refreshments will be available for visitors to the Show - these were also missing last year.

Details of our meetings and other activities can be found on our Notice Board outside The Community Shop and we submit an article to each issue of Around Ashton. Guests are always made most welcome, so why not come along and see if the WI is for you - only ladies can become a member, so sorry chaps! We're definitely not all Jam and Jerusalem.

For more information, contact Margaret Sheppard on: 01829 752455

ASHTON HAYES GARDENING CLUB – prepared by Linda Peppin

In 2025 we had a busy and enjoyable programme, including an evening visit to clematis expert Ken Black and a coach trip to RHS Bridgewater, which looked just as beautiful in the autumn as it had in summer. Both events were a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who came along.

Our speakers covered a wide range of topics, from hostas and hardy geraniums to keeping colour in the garden with bulbs throughout the year.

Looking ahead to 2026, we've got another excellent line-up of guest speakers at the Church. Topics include evergreen plants for small gardens, life in the pond, the gardens of Cholmondeley Castle, roses, trees and shrubs for smaller spaces, and even hedgehogs in the garden.

Our summer evening visit will be to Norley Bank Farm Garden, following on from Neil Holding's fascinating talk last year about its development.

The annual coach trip will be to Trentham Gardens. Only about an hour away, it promises to be a really enjoyable day out.

New members are always very welcome. Membership is just £5 per year, offering great value as well as a discount at Okells Garden Centre. If you'd like to find out more, please email ashtonhayesgardeningclub@gmail.com.

ASHTON HAYES COMMUNITY ENERGY COMPANY- prepared by Kate Harrison

It has been a quiet year for the Energy Company as many of the members were busy with the demands of the pub committee and the renovation works.

We would particularly like to thank one of our committee members, Richard Stradling, for his valiant efforts in liaising with various companies over the solar installation work. He also undertakes monitoring of the performance of the solar installations at the school and pavilion. The panels at the Golden Lion are owned by Ashton Hayes Community Hub, not the energy company but we will be available for any help and advice, for example deciding whether to add battery storage.

The Energy Local scheme is now operational and should help the Community Shop with energy bills by optimising the use of the energy generated by the school and pavilion.

Our infra-red camera has been loaned out to a few residents over the winter. If you would like to book it, please contact Kate Harrison. It can be collected from the Community Shop.

The Energy Company is a spin-off from the Going Carbon Neutral Project which started 20 years ago. We still receive regular requests for information about the project from around the world. As the project started in the Golden Lion, at a quiz night, it is rewarding to see the pub finally enhancing the village and enjoying great popularity after years of closure.

ASHTON SINGS – prepared by Aileen Parry

Ashton Sings is a community choir formed in 2012 and based in Ashton Hayes. Our members are not only from the village, but all surrounding areas too. We continue to attract new members and our membership now stands at 60 with an average of 45 members singing each week. Our Musical Director is Martin Jones from Eccleshall in Staffordshire and he travels the 90 mile round trip each Monday evening (term time) to conduct us. We sing modern, traditional, and shanty music and some songs written by Martin himself. Our main aim is to enjoy singing and have fun doing so. No prior musical ability is required and there are no auditions.

We hold 2 annual concerts.....one in July and a Christmas Concert in December. We alternate our venue for these concerts between Kelsall and Kingsley Community Centres and we regularly attract a full house at each concert.

We continue with our link with Norley Primary School and their delightful little choir. They joined us at our Summer Concert last July and very recently a joint concert with the two Choirs was held at the school where children entertained us with their singing, and playing a variety of musical instruments. We also sponsor their annual music awards given out for progress, ability and effort.

Our Choir welcomed the opening of The Golden Lion Pub in the summer and were invited there in December to hold an impromptu sing-a-long of carols much to the delight of diners. A group of carers who were holding their Christmas party that evening joined in the singing with great gusto.

We recently held a social event there and once again we entertained locals with our singing as well as enjoying some individual turns by members.

Looking to the future our Summer Concert is to held on Saturday June 27th in Kelsall Community Centre and at the Christmas Concert on December 12th again in Kelsall.

Finally a friendly warm welcome is always extended to new members. You will find us any Monday evening (term time) at Ashton and Mouldsworth Village Hall , 7.30pm.

Visit our website: <http://www.ashtonsings.org.uk/>

"Like" our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ashtonhayesvillagechoir>

Email the committee: ashtonsings@yahoo.co.uk

TARVIN AND ASHTON SCOUT GROUP

Scouting in Ashton

Over the last year progress has continued on renovating the Ashton Scout hut so that once again it can be used by young people. Village residents will have noticed the tradesmen on site who have repaired the outer shell of the building and upgrade all electrics to current standards. Over the last 6 months volunteers from Ashton and Hayes have also helped with upgrades to the toilets and kitchen facilities. This work is progressing well and we expect the site to be open for use by Beaver, Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies & Guides from Ashton and surrounding villages from Easter.

Whilst this is an important step in improving the facilities for young people in the area we wish to go further. Since the closure of the Scout Troop in Ashton we have not been able to provide as many places in Scouting as in the past. We want to change this but to do so will need the help of more adult volunteers. Over the last couple of months we have been working to increase the number of leaders running our present sections of Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. This is going well and we are now planning to widen the scope to encourage adults not currently engaged in Scouting to join us. Over the next few months you can expect to see posters around the villages of Ashton, Tarvin and Kelsall as well as invitations to join meetings.

Robin Turney

Chair of Trustees, 1st Tarvin and Ashton Scout Group

Report from your Sandstone Ward Councillor – Hugo Deynem **Year in Review 2025/26**

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 art 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.

ASHTON HAYES AND HORTON-CUM-PEEL PARISH COUNCIL

Main Points of Note in 2025-26

1. Matters of concern continue to be raised under Public Participation and over the last 12 months
 - 45 concerns were raised by the public, (or by Parish Councillors on behalf of the public);
 - 29 actions were instigated and completed during the meeting it was raised at;
 - 16 concerns were noted but no action raised.
2. Twelve Planning applications were considered and commented on by the Parish Council (PC). The PC responses were heavily influenced by the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) policies and principles. Of the applications received:
 - Three were **Supported** (i.e. positively contributed to the parish as per the Neighbourhood Plan),
 - Seven were given a **Neutral** response (i.e. no material impact as per the NP or general planning considerations)
 - None were **Objected** to (i.e. adverse impact as per the NP),
 - Two Planning Consultations were not brought to the Parish Council for consultation due to them being for Agricultural Buildings (AGR), however the Parish Council did object to one AGR.
 - One new planning potential breach was referred to CWaC Planning Enforcement for their investigation. However, there are still several previously reported with CWaC awaiting their investigation.
3. The PC members, as Trustees of the Parish Rooms, oversaw the sale by auction of the Parish Rooms in October 2025, this facility had become surplus to requirement with the number of community buildings that offered better facilities. Consequently, it was agreed that rather than continuing with an increasing drain on the parish precept, paid by all households, that the building be sold. This has taken place and the monies raised, invested in a Parish Room space within the Golden Lion.
4. Quarterly 'Around Ashton' (AA) newsletters were produced, typically 480 copies per issue. The PC continues to encourage residents and interested parties outside the area to receive their AA electronically. Currently **43.3%** are delivered electronically. AA costs each household £3 per annum included in the precept for paper copies.
5. The PC continues to utilise Around Ashton, its website, NextDoor and Facebook to provide access to PC papers, distribute information of potential public interest, and to promote events taking place throughout the area. These digital communication services have allowed us to reach a wider audience more quickly, whilst allowing residents to communicate more easily.
6. The PC launched the Parish Calendar and all local groups and organisations are using it to publicise their events. It is proving to be a popular one-stop shop for all events within the parish.
7. The PC has continued to provide support to the Golden Lion Community Benefit Society, following the renovation and reopening of the Golden Lion Pub in 2025. Itnow holds the Parish Council meetings in the Parish Rooms facility within the Golden Lion.

8. The Parish Council continued to meet with Cheshire West and Chester Council, United Utilities and the Environment Agency regarding continued concerns of flooding within the parish. The issues identified from subsequent heavy rain events have been actively pursued but CWaC respond very slowly. The main activities in 2025-26 have been:
 - CWaC investigating road drainage problems on Peel Hall Lane, including camera work and extra jetting. Further work is necessary.
 - The Parish Council organising another site meeting with representatives from CWaC, Environment Agency and United Utilities to discuss further the joint agency approach to the ongoing issues.
 - Repairs to two key drainage gullies, one associated with the culvert at the Church Road end of The Meadows.
 - The PC is pressing CWaC for the installation of onsite emergency flood water pumping facilities at the lower junction of Peel Crescent and The Meadows. A proposal by CWaC is being put forward for the funding of this.

9. Highways issues have been a constant challenge throughout the year. The Parish Council continue to monitor and report highways problems that require actioning. Outstanding issues are chased through CWaC by the Parish Council **The key actions have been/are:**
 - Reporting multiple potholes where they are more than 4cms deep. This is the minimum size at which CWaC will repair them. The public are also encouraged to report problems, as they see them, via the CWaC online reporting tool.
 - Working with the local traffic enforcement team and CWaC Highways to try to establish a police monitoring area on Church Road for a Police Van to use. Still waiting on costing for this from Highways.
 - SID monitoring of speeds through the village is still being undertaken by volunteers. The data collected has helped get police attention and also to apply for the above pilot scheme.
 - Installation of a 20mph zone along Village Road and Church Road. The consultation process for this was completed in 2024, but unfortunately due to funding restrictions experienced by CWaC this project was not completed until late 2025/early 2026
 - Hedge monitoring identified several hedges requiring attention. Most were dealt with quickly, but 3 had to be reported to CWaC, all except for 2 problem hedges have been satisfactorily resolved, and CWaC are following up on those hedges that require further action.

10. The Parish Council has continued to arrange and coordinate the twice-yearly community clean-up events that local residents volunteer to get involved in. This has proved to be popular and is felt by many residents to be an important community activity, with a positive outcome in terms of maintaining the village and the wider parish.

11. Representatives of the Parish Council have been involved in a number of external conferences & activities including the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (CHALC) Net Zero Group, Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) Connections Events and meeting with the Police & Crime Commissioner.

12. The Parish Council continues to front the Plastic Free Steering Group. The Parish Council would like to thank local businesses, community groups and the Primary School who have come together to support the Parish Council in achieving this status.

Financial Performance

- For the year 2025-26 the Parish Council budget was £32,881 with a precept set of £19,920 which was a 4.5% increase resulting in a charge of £41.21 on a Band D household per year.
- Overall for 2025-26, the PC operating costs came in above budget (as did the income) due to the sale and reinvestment of the money received from the Parish Rooms.
- For the year 2026-27, the Parish Council for the first time in a number of years is not increasing its Precept. The precept will remain at £19,760 which is a charge of £41.21 on a Band D household per year.

Council Attendance 2025-26

- For 2025-26 there were 11 councillors' assigned slots, with eight being filled and three vacancies as this report is written.
- Ashton Hayes and Horton-Cum-Peel Parish Council held 11 Parish Council meetings between May 2025 and April 2026.
- An average of 5 councillors attended each council meeting.
- CWaC Councillor Hugo Deynem attended one meeting in March and sent his apologies to all the other Parish Council meetings.
- Over the year 9 members of the public attended council meetings.
- The PCSO was noted to be absent from all of the Parish Council meetings this last year.

Grant Process

For 2026-27 the Parish Council set a budget of £2,500 towards supporting local organisation wishing to develop sustainability initiatives. In September 2025 adverts were placed in Around Ashton and NextDoor to raise community groups' awareness of the opportunity for worthy causes to apply for money from the Parish Council to benefit local residents.

Two notifications of interest were received, followed by full grant applications. A total of £2,535 was applied for. The Parish Council reviewed all applications, all applicants were invited to attend the Parish Council meeting to hear the decision of the Parish Council:

- **Support fully** one applicant, these being Ashton Hayes Primary School Parent Teacher and Friends Association (PTFA) for the installation of a Wildflower meadow and tree planting together with the creation of rain forest harvesting and an edible gardening.
- **Unsuccessful** application, this being the Ashton Hayes Sports and Recreation Association (AHSRA) due to the application not fulfilling the sustainability criteria. However, the Parish Council is liaising with AHSRA re its financial position and any opportunities to improve it .

It was agreed that these grant monies above would be paid out in May once the precept has been received, and the remaining monies be carried over and reviewed again later in the year as to how they could be spent.