



Longridge Town Council

Full Council – Minutes

Meeting Date:	10 June 2026		
Place:	Station Buildings, Berry Lane, Longridge.		
Present:	Councillors: R. Walker, (Chair), L. Jameson, P. Smith, J. Rogerson, M. Gornall, N. Eccles, N. Stubbs, A. Wallbank, K. Spencer, M. Gee, R. Ray and C. Hyde.		
In attendance:	Town Clerk, and one member of the public.		
Meeting started:	18:30	Meeting closed:	20:40

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1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIR.

The Chair (Cllr. Walker), welcomed new Councillors: Rachel Ray, Claire Hyde, and Maria Gee and noted that council now has a full complement of councillors.

Members agreed that first names could be used in the conduct of meetings; however, the formal minutes will continue to refer to Members as “Councillor [Surname]” in accordance with usual practice.

2. DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE.

The Clerk noted that Declarations of Acceptance of Office had been received from the new Councillors and the Deputy Mayor as required.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

There were no apologies as all members were present at the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS AND WRITTEN REQUESTS FOR PECUNIARY INTEREST DISPENSATION.

A conflict of interest was noted in relation to Agenda Item 13 (Banners and Brackets Working Group), where it was reported that a Councillor’s spouse had submitted a printing quotation which had been considered by the Working Group. (see Minute 13 below).

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

The Chair sought Council’s approval (which was given) to vary the order of business to allow Agenda Item 14 Memorial Bench Policy to be taken earlier in the meeting. The Chair explained that the member of the public was present specifically to listen to the Council’s considerations on this item.

6. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL.

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2026, with a minor amendment to note that Cllr. N. Stubbs (not Cllr. N. Walker) had apologised, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

7. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR).

The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer presented the report on the AGAR 2025/26, summarising the findings of the internal audit undertaken by David Swift MCIAA. Members noted that the audit had been completed with positive findings and no significant concerns raised.

Members noted that, for the first time, both gross income (£234,160) and gross expenditure (£254,247) for 2025/26 exceeded the £200,000 threshold. It was noted that if either figure remains above £200,000 for a second successive year, the Council will be required to move from receipts and payments accounting to income and expenditure (accruals) accounting from 2027/28.

Members further noted that the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders are due to be updated this year, this work having been outstanding since 2024/25.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Internal Audit Report for the year ended 31 March 2026, prepared by David Swift MCIAA, be received and noted, together with the action points set out therein.
- b. That the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1 of the AGAR 2025/26) be approved.
- c. That the Accounting Statements (Section 2 of the AGAR 2025/26) for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved.
- d. That the Chair of the Council be authorised to sign Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR 2025/26 on behalf of the Council, with the Responsible Financial Officer completing the required certification, and that the completed AGAR, together with the Notice of Public Rights, be submitted to PKF Littlejohn the official external auditor.
- e. That the action points identified by the Internal Auditor be noted, and that the Clerk progress these during 2026/27, reporting back to the Finance Committee and Full Council as appropriate.

8. FINANCE REPORT

The Clerk and Cllr. Gornall (Chair of the Finance Committee) presented the Finance Report.

Members noted that the Council remains in a strong financial position with total available funds of £161,163, that the precept had been received in full, and that expenditure is currently below profile across most categories. Members noted that some 2025/26 costs (in particular, chauffeur expenditure and certain HMRC payments) had been paid in the 2026/27 financial year, and that project expenditure on the Kestor Lane entrance and Playground/Gym upgrade UKSPF schemes is expected to increase later in the year as works progress. Bank reconciliation had been completed to 30 May 2026 with no discrepancies.

Members further noted, that an unbudgeted but explainable cost of £700 had been incurred for fence repairs at the allotment following accidental damage by a vehicle and was not considered to represent an unbudgeted risk. Members agreed that a chauffeur policy should be drafted to cover insurance, licensing and eligibility.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Finance Report and the accounts to date be approved.
- b. That the Clerk draft a Chauffeur Policy covering insurance, licensing and eligibility, for consideration at a future meeting.

9. GRANTS – LONGRIDGE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE COMPANY (LSEC)

The Clerk presented the report on the grant application from the Longridge Social Enterprise Company (LSEC) for £4,788.75 (excluding VAT) towards the installation of thermal room-dividing and outer curtains at the Civic Hall. Members noted that the application had been considered in principle by the Finance Committee on 22 April 2026 and referred to Full Council for final decision, subject to a detailed cost breakdown, which had since been provided.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the grant application from the Longridge Social Enterprise Company (LSEC) for £4,788.75 towards thermal curtains at the Civic Hall be refused.
Members separately noted that a revised Grants Policy, placing greater emphasis on supporting smaller and first-time applicants, had been approved by the Finance Committee.
- b. That the revised Grants Policy be circulated to all Councillors after being tested by sample applicants (for example, the Heritage Centre) ahead of being brought back for Full Council ratification.

10. TERMS OF REFERENCE:**10 (a) Estates Committee – Terms of Reference and Delegated Spending Authority**

The Clerk presented the report arising from the Estates Committee meeting of 19 May 2026, recommending an increase in the Committee's delegated spending authority for maintenance and emergency works from £1,000 to £2,000 per item.

Members noted that this reflected current price levels, with playground repairs in particular regularly costing in the region of £1,500–£1,600, and that the increase was considered proportionate to the Council's overall budget and asset portfolio.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the increase in the Estates Committee's delegated spending authority for maintenance and emergency works, from £1,000 per item to £2,000 per item, be approved with immediate effect.
- b. That the amended Terms of Reference of the Estates Committee be approved.
- c. That the Clerk finalise and publish the revised Terms of Reference, appending the current Asset Register, and report back to the Estates Committee on implementation.

Members separately resolved, in respect of other Estates matters, that the Council agrees to Ribble Valley Borough Council's request to remove the 'shelter' on the recreation ground, with no replacement to be provided, and that the review of utility charges be referred to the Estates Committee (see also Minute 16 below).

10(b) Community Hospital Advisory Group – Terms of Reference

The Clerk presented the report proposing the establishment of a Longridge Community Hospital Advisory Group, bringing together representatives of the Town Council, the Help Save Longridge Community Hospital campaign group, and the Parliamentary Office of the MP for Ribble Valley.

In discussion, there was a consensus among that the Council should be cautious about over-promising, recognising that Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Trust is the only body with substantive power over the relevant services, and that the campaign group already has the support of the local MP and an existing channel into the NHS consultation process.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Terms of Reference for the Longridge Community Hospital Advisory Group be NOT approved at this meeting.
- b. That the Council's formal pledge of support to the Longridge Community Hospital Campaign Group, made on 13 May 2026, be noted, and that the existing decision of the Finance Committee to fund printed leaflets and promotional material for the campaign group, continues to stand as an appropriate level of support.

11. TOWNELEY GARDEN WORKING GROUP – PUBLIC CONSULTATION OUTCOMES AND PROCUREMENT

The Clerk presented the report summarising the outcomes of the public consultation on the proposed upgrade of the former bowling green at Towneley Garden, and the recommendations of the Towneley Garden Event Space Working Group following its meeting of 27 May 2026.

Members noted that 351 valid responses had been received, with 98.86% supporting an upgrade in some form, and a majority (56.13%) favouring Option 1 (an attractive, garden-style design).

Members approved a hybrid design, combining a central self-binding gravel event/performance circle with surrounding planted garden borders, accessible paths and seating, upgraded lighting, and new electrical infrastructure to support markets and live events, as set out in the Working Group's detailed design.

Members noted that the scheme would proceed to procurement for Stage 1 (groundworks only, with no planting in this phase), and that the current biodiversity net gain of 7–9% would need to be increased to meet the 10% target, incorporating suggestions from WG member Mr Martin Brown. Members further noted that self-binding gravel had been confirmed as the preferred surface on the grounds of wheelchair accessibility and drainage, with resin bond surfacing ruled out on grounds of cost, cracking and drainage performance. Cllrs. Gee and Hyde were invited to join the Stage 2 working group to advise on biodiversity and planting.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the outcome of the community consultation exercise, and the deliberations of the Towneley Garden Event Space Working Group, be noted.
- b. That the detailed hybrid design for the Towneley Garden Event Space, as presented, be approved as the basis for procurement.
- c. That the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Working Group Chair, be authorised to seek competitive quotes from suitably qualified contractors for Stage 1 (groundworks) of the approved design, in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and the conditions of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant of £90,000.
- d. That Councillors Gee and Hyde be appointed to the Stage 2 Towneley Garden working group to advise on biodiversity and planting.

12. INSTALLATION OF SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS

Councillor Walker presented the report proposing the installation of low-cost, standalone, solar-powered surveillance cameras at key locations across the town, in response to recent incidents of vandalism, including in the vicinity of the play area on the recreation ground.

Following discussion, Members deferred the proposal. Concerns raised included the risk of the Council overstepping its proper remit, the ongoing revenue costs associated with such equipment, and the need for community consultation on specific camera locations before any installation proceeds.

Members noted that funding of up to £5,000 has recently become available from the Police and Crime Commissioner for anti-social behaviour measures, including cameras, and agreed that the Clerk should pursue this funding stream, including the possibility of a model combining PCC grant funding with a Council top-up to help businesses and public spaces fund their own CCTV.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the proposal to install standalone surveillance cameras at key locations across the town be deferred, pending further community consultation on locations and consideration of available external funding.
- b. That the Clerk pursue the Police and Crime Commissioner's anti-social behaviour funding (up to £5,000), including consideration of a model combining PCC grant funding with Council top-up support, and report back to a future meeting.

13. BANNERS AND BRACKETS WORKING GROUP

The Clerk presented the recommendations of the Banners and Brackets Working Group following its meeting of 20 May 2026, covering quotations received for banner design, printing and installation, and the proposed engagement of a specialist marketing agency to manage advertising sales on the banners.

Following discussion, Members agreed that the matter should be referred back to the Working Group. It was noted that a number of issues remained unresolved, including: concerns regarding commercial advertising within a conservation area; the absence of a service level agreement covering timely installation and removal of banners; and a conflict of interest, noted under Agenda Item 4 above, in that a quotation for installation work had been submitted by the spouse of a Councillor.

Members were broadly supportive of the principle of using the brackets for community event banners but were divided on the question of selling advertising space to commercial advertisers, and it was agreed that the proposed engagement of a marketing agency should be reconsidered by the Working Group.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the recommendations of the Banners and Brackets Working Group be referred back to the Working Group for further consideration of:
 - Commercial advertising policy in a conservation area;
 - A service level agreement for banner installation and removal;
 - The proposed engagement of a marketing agency,

With the Working Group to report back to a future meeting of Full Council.

- b. That the conflict of interest concerning the installation quotation submitted by a councillor's spouse be formally documented by the Clerk.

14. MEMORIAL BENCH PLAQUE POLICY – ADOPTION

The Clerk presented the Memorial Bench Plaque Policy, as recommended by the Estates Committee on 19 May 2026, for formal adoption.

Members heard from a member of the public, attending under Public Participation, in support of an application for a memorial bench plaque to commemorate her late father, a former Town Mayor, on two occasions, a First Responder and police officer with thirty years' service.

Following discussion, Members resolved to refer the policy back to the Estates Committee for revision before formal adoption, having identified the following matters to be addressed: the inclusion of a restriction on embellishments (such as flowers, soft toys and photographs) beyond the nameplate itself; consideration of a cap on the proportion of benches in any one area that may carry memorials; clarification that benches remain public property and open to all; and a review of clause 10.3 of the draft policy, concerning the circumstances in which the Council bears the cost of replacing weathered plaques, which several Councillors questioned as drafted.

Members also raised a procedural point of wider application: that draft policies emerging from Committees should in future be circulated to all Councillors in advance of the Full Council meeting at which they are to be considered, and not only to members of the originating Committee.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Memorial Bench Plaque Policy be referred back to the Estates Committee for revision, to address amongst other matters:
 - A restriction on embellishments beyond the nameplate;
 - A cap on the concentration of memorial benches in any one area;
 - Clarification that benches remain public property open to all;
 - Review of the clause concerning Council-funded replacement of weathered plaques.
- b. In future, draft policies emerging from Committees be circulated to all Councillors in advance of the Full Council meeting at which they are to be considered.

15. COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP APPOINTMENTS

Members noted the appointments made at the Annual Meeting of the Town Council on 13 May 2026, and confirmed that the newly elected Councillors Rachel Ray, Claire Hyde and Maria Gee would be allocated to Committees and Working Groups as agreed, including the appointment of Councillors Gee and Hyde to the Towneley Garden Stage 2 working group as minuted above.

16. REVIEW OF UTILITY CHARGES.

The Clerk withdrew this report, as he was in possession of additional information.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk resubmit an updated report to an early meeting of the Estates Committee.

17. COUNCILLOR REPORTS AND UPDATES FROM CHAIRS OF WORKING GROUPS

Verbal updates were received from Committee and Working Group Chairs. No specific matters were minuted for decision.

18. CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

RESOLVED:

That the Chair send a letter of thanks to the Rotary Club for their work at John Smith's Park.

19. FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted that the time of Full Council meetings would change to 6:30pm with immediate effect, to align with the timing of other Committee meetings, and that the Council's website and all communications should be updated accordingly.

RESOLVED:

That, with immediate effect, Full Council meetings commence at 6:30pm, and that the website and all Council communications be updated to reflect this change.

The dates of future meetings were confirmed as follows:

2026: 8 July (no meeting in August), 9 September, 14 October, 11 November, 9 December.

2027: 13 January, 10 February, 10 March.

Signed:

Chair of the Council

Date:

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Mission Statement

Endeavour through foresight and leadership, to enhance quality of life for residents and visitors.
Working to enrich and nurture opportunity to protect and improve the built and natural environment and improve community pride.
