

**Minutes of Croston Parish Council Meeting  
held on Wed 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 2024, at Croston Old School**

**In attendance:** Cllrs P Sloan, P Strachan, K Almond, C Turner, P Fenemore, A Double. Mr P Cafferkey (Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer). Nine members of the public were also in attendance, of which 6 left after item 4.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr C Titherington-Teale.
2. **To receive declarations of interest:** None
3. **Minutes of the Last Parish Council Meeting: It was resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 in Croston Old School (Main Hall) be approved as a true record.

4. **Public Participation:**

A resident raised the question as to the type of weedkiller used by Countrywide and where weedkiller was applied in the village. The Parish Council stated that approved weedkiller was applied to Town Bridge, pavement along river wall and coping stones along edge of The Green plus the paths on The Green. Weedkiller is not applied to plant beds. Clerk informed this would be explained more fully in an email to the resident. The same resident wanted clarification on payments to Countrywide. The Clerk explained that when the contract went to tender, there had been an inflationary increase to the overall charge for work carried out in the village, plus last spring 2024, Croston in Bloom no longer wanted to mow Out Lane, so this work was added to the contract. Countrywide, who won the contract, are paid over 7/12 of the year (i.e. the mowing season), not in equal measure every month. Chair added that many residents had commented what an excellent job Countrywide do for Croston and how well their contracted areas were looking. Same resident also asked about bushes and plants pruned back from paths on The Green. The Chair informed that this arose from the Parish Council's duty of care and due diligence to keep paths fit for purpose for all members of the public to access safely i.e. wheelchair users, parents with prams and young children walking on the paths, members of public with mobility issues, using walking sticks etc. The Chair informed that paths with overgrown bushes and plants creates debris that make the paths slippery; the encroachment of bushes and plants onto the paths encourages algae and moss which impedes the work of Countrywide who are paid to address weed control on the paths. It creates concern for members of the public using such paths. The Parish Council has received many complaints about perceived hazardous paths and reduced visibility for drivers with plants at height around the beds of the parking spaces on The Green and the difficulties this presented manoeuvring on Out Lane. The Chair thanked Croston in Bloom for pruning the bed at The Nelson end of The Green and shared photographs to evidence the past and current situation regarding beds and paths. Several members of the public and Council commented that The Green looks very good, well-kept and tidy.

Cllr Fenemore expressed his view that he was not happy that the Parish Council was maintaining its pathways to a higher standard than that of Lancashire County Council; he stated he had received comments / complaints that implied the Parish Council was not being run correctly.

Another resident expressed concern at the speed of vehicles on Grape Lane, particularly in the 20mph zone. Similarly, another resident was concerned for the safety of children on the footpath on Station Road as he had witnessed vehicles and buses mounting the pavement there. In particular, the resident raised the question as to whether there should be a metal barrier on the pavement outside the entrance to the park to prevent children, who are exiting the park, from running into the road.

A member of Croston Together, gave a concise and detailed presentation on the condition and signage of approx. 23 Public Rights of Way (PROW) in Croston. This member explained that she has a good relationship with Lancashire County Council PROW section and that she was willing to work closely with the Parish Council to help identify and correct any issues (e.g. missing signs, overgrown paths etc).

A representative from Croston Village Festivities Group, thanked the Parish Council for its great work and suggested the Parish Council looks at the possibility of buying a living Christmas Tree for 2025 onwards.

## **5. Planning Matters**

- a) 24/00593/AGR. Barbers Moor Farm Moor Road Croston Leyland PR26 9HQ. Agricultural determination for the erection of a building for hay/straw and machinery storage.
- b) 24/00617/FUL. Land At Back Drinkhouse Lane Croston. Stable block incorporating two stables and tack room/storage (resubmission of 23/01033/FUL).
- c) 24/00603/CLPUD. Village Green Town Road Croston. Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed installation of below ground electrical cabling.
- d) 24/00681/FULHH. 19 Yarrow Close Croston Leyland PR26 9SJ. Part two storey, part single storey side/rear extension, and bay window to front elevation.
- e) 24/00651/FUL. 74 Station Road Croston Leyland PR26 9RN. Alterations to front elevation with internal reconfigurations to existing commercial premises on the ground floor and office space on the first floor.
- f) 24/00666/FULHH. Oakdene Grape Lane Croston Leyland PR26 9HB. Replacement wall at front of property 0.9m in height, erection of boundary fence to garden, 1.82m in height and installation of vehicular and pedestrian gates to side elevation of dwelling 2m in height.
- g) 24/00718/TCON. Croston Hall Estate Grape Lane Croston Leyland PR26 9HB. Notification of proposed works to trees within a conservation area involving the felling of 1no. beech, 2no. sycamore and the size reduction of 1no. beech.

Due to the earlier than normal issue of the agenda, items f and g above do not appear on the agenda but were brought before the Parish Council by the Clerk at the meeting.

There were no objections to the above planning items.



## 6. Financial Matters

- a) *Financial Statement as at 30 Sept 2024.* The Clerk reported that the estimated forecast outturn as at 31 March 2025 is a surplus of circa £5,000. **It was resolved** that the financial statement as presented by the Clerk be approved.
- b) *AGAR 2023-24:* The Clerk reported that a minor amendment had been made to the 2023-24 AGAR (Annual Governance and Accounting Return). Due to a transposition error the value of "total fixed assets" as at 31 March 2023 had been incorrectly stated as £93,583; the figure as now been amended to correctly state £92,583. **It was resolved** that the amended figure be approved.
- c) *Approval of the following transactions through the Parish Council's bank account for the month of July 2024.* **It was resolved** that the following transactions be approved.

Date	Payee	£	Description
01-Jul-24	Direct Debit (GOCARDLESS)	36.96	Website monthly fee
15-Jul-24	B/P to: Chorley Planning	143.25	Planning fee re Electrics on The Green
17-Jul-24	B/P to: Zurich	134.40	Grant, Keep Croston Tidy
18-Jul-24	B/P to: Employee 2	316.81	Salary Net Pay Tax Mth 04
18-Jul-24	B/P to: Employee 1	315.72	Salary Net Pay Tax Mth 04
18-Jul-24	B/P to: Employee 2	80.34	Refund for purchase of defib battery
18-Jul-24	B/P to: Employee 2	10.80	Mileage Tax Mth 04
18-Jul-24	B/P to: Employee 2	6.20	Expenses Tax Mth 04
24-Jul-24	B/P to: CVFG Ltd	500.00	Grant to Croston Village Festivities Group
24-Jul-24	B/P to: Coffee Day Cttee	250.00	Grant to Croston Coffee Day Cttee
24-Jul-24	B/P to: Croston Scouts	250.00	Grant to Croston St Michael's Scouts
24-Jul-24	B/P to: Community Centre	250.00	Grant to Croston Community Centre
25-Jul-24	Direct Debit (HMRC SDDS)	326.80	Employees tax for tax months 112 & 3
30-Jul-24	B/P to: Countrywide Mntnce	1380.00	Grounds Mntnce July
30-Jul-24	B/P to: Yates Playgrounds	588.00	Repairs to play ground eqt
30-Jul-24	B/P to: LALC	70.00	LALC Neighbourhood Plan Course

## 7. Payments approved by email or pre-approved and retrospectively noted:

- a) *Clerk's Claim for July 2024:* **It was resolved** that the Clerk's claim for July 2024 of 39.02 hours, mileage £27.00 and printing costs £20.90 be approved.
- b) *Grey Bins (2 no.), The Green:* **It was resolved** that £75.00 be refunded to the Clerk for the purchase of two permits from Chorley Council for the collection of two bins for green waste which are used by the Parish Council in relation to The Green
- c) *Planning Permission Fee to Chorley Council:* **It was resolved** that £143.25 planning fee paid to Chorley Council regarding a certificate of lawful works for the proposed electrical works on The Green be approved.

8. **Clerk's Claim for Aug 2024:** It was resolved that the Clerk's claim for Aug of 24.43 hours, £16.20 mileage and expenses of £2.70 be approved.
9. **Parish Councillor Vacancies:** The Clerk reported that Chorley Council had received 10 or more requests from members of the public for a formal election to be held to fill the two vacancies on the Parish Council. If more than 2 nominations are received by Chorley Council then a contested election must be held. If only two nominations, or fewer, are received then the election is uncontested and the nominee(s) are appointed to the Parish Council. In the event of a contested election this will cost the Parish Council approximately £14,000 or approximately £10,600 if the Parish Council chooses not request polling cards which are only optional. **It was resolved** that in the event of a contested election the Parish Council would not take up the option of polling cards.
10. **Parish Council Insurance:** It was resolved that the Clerk be authorised to renew the Parish Council's insurance with Zurich insurance with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2024, for a three year period at a cost of £1,171.08 per annum. This is £715.01 cheaper per annum compared to the quote received from the Parish Council's current insurer.
11. **Number of Parish Council Meetings per Annum:** This item was deferred pending the appointment the filling of the two vacancies on the Council.
12. **Grant Application:** It was resolved that a grant be awarded of £250 to the Croston Over 80s Group to help towards the purchase of a Christmas present for each person aged 80 and over in Croston.
13. **Christmas Tree & Christmas Lights:** It was resolved that the Parish Council, as in previous years would purchase a Christmas Tree for The Green. The Christmas lights are to be put up by volunteers on the 23 Nov 2024 and they will be officially switched on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2024 on which date the Christmas Fair also takes place. The lights are to be taken down on Wed 8 Jan 2025.
14. **Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Contract Update:** The Chair wished it to be minuted how excellent, responsive and flexible Countrywide are, and that they have agreed to cover any minor additional work within the agreed contract price through rescheduling as necessary. The Parish Council and Countrywide are working closely together regarding the grounds maintenance required at Out Lane Car Park. There is also a very positive relationship between the volunteers who provide many hours of ad hoc maintenance on the Recreation Park, and Countrywide. A recent volunteer day on the Recreation Park was very successful, the marginal swale alongside the ditch was tidied up and then topped off with bark mulch purchased by the Parish Council.
15. **Street Furniture**
  - a) **It was resolved** that the offer by a local company (APT Paints) to maintain Parish Council wooden benches for a nominal fee be approved
  - b) It was agreed that consideration be given to the relocation of the bench at Cock Robin to a new location (to be decided), finance permitting.
  - c) **It was resolved** that a new St George's flag be purchased for the newly renovated flagpole on The Green.
  - d) As The Green is in a conservation area it was agreed that any flags flown on the flagpole would be a maximum of 5ft by 3ft.



16. **Town Bridge Bench: It was resolved** that the cost of materials (approx. £20) be approved for the renovation of Town Bridge Bench by Neville Norcross and Andrew Taylor.
17. **Public Rights of Way (PRoW): It was resolved** that the kind offer from a member of Croston Together (agenda item 4 refers) to work closely with the Parish Council in identifying and rectifying any issues with PRoW be accepted.
18. **Remembrance Sunday:** The Chair updated the meeting as to the arrangements for Remembrance Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. Participants to meet in the main hall at the Old School at 12:30pm for a 1pm start. Currently there are only two volunteers for road marshalling out of the ten required.
19. **VE Day: It was resolved** that the Parish Council would lead arrangements for VE Day on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025.
20. **Parking Restrictions:** It was agreed to defer this item pending advice from PCSO Maria Fetherstone.
21. **Project Renovation Update:** The Chair reported that The Green now looks very good indeed following the extremely professional work undertaken by John Christopher (Specialist Fabrications, Coppull). The bollards, barriers, flagpole, plaques, signpost, weathervane, and chains have all been renovated. The chains at the War Memorial have also been renovated and the flags are due to be re-laid, finances permitting.
22. **Requests for approval to use The Green.**
  - a) **It was resolved** that Croston Village Festivities Group be approved to use The Green on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2024 for a Christmas Fair subject to producing their public liability insurance to the Clerk.
  - b) **It was resolved** that a request for Red Admiral Music Academy to host a hymn and march Brass Band Contest on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2025 be approved, pending satisfactory responses to clarification on some matters e.g. is this a commercial or charity event, adequate parking arrangements etc.
23. **Initial discussions regarding the Precept 2025-26:** This item was deferred due to the unknown situation regarding possible election charges.
24. **OPSTA Subscription: It was resolved** that the OPSTA (Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Association) annual subscription of £10 be renewed.
25. **Chorley Operational Making Space for Water Meetings – Update:** It was agreed that Cllr Fenemore would draft a paper for approval at the November Parish Council meeting that could be presented (maximum of 15 minutes) to the Chorley Operational Making Space for Water Meeting to be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024 regarding flooding issues and concerns relating to Croston. Cllr Sloan also has a draft list of questions / concerns regarding flooding which it is hoped can be incorporated into Cllr Fenemore's paper.
26. **Garages to side of 54 Peartree Road, Croston** The Clerk reported that he had received a telephone call from Chorley Council requesting what improvements the Parish Council would like to see to the garages. The Clerk had emailed suggested improvements to Chorley Council but has not received a response. In view of the lack of engagement by Chorley Council the Parish Council considered a request for a meeting with Chorley Council should be made.

27. **Repairs to Recreation Park:** It was resolved that a new seat for the Zip Wire (Yates), repairs to the swing (Yates) be approved. Also approved that repairs to the damaged wood on the Zip Wire launch/landing pad be undertaken – material costs only - with labour kindly being provided by Croston Together.
28. **Register of Interests:** This item was deferred.
29. **Bus Shelter:** It was noted that a new replacement bus shelter has been erected opposite the railway station.
30. **Overhanging branches:** It was noted that overhanging branches impeding the footway alongside boundary of Croston Park Nursing Home have now been trimmed back.
31. **Reports from outside bodies:** Cllr Fenemore reported that he has recent photographs of the grids overflowing with what appears to be sewage on Grape Lane. Cllr Sloan is to issue an email detailing equipment from the Lower Flood Action Group that is hoped can be handed over to the Parish Council.
32. **Correspondence:**
- a) It was agreed that the Parish Council would submit a grant application to the Lancashire County Council Parishes Champion on the behalf of Croston St Michael & All Angels Church for finance towards the cost of new lighting.
  - b) It was reported that a resident whose dog had caused some damage to the zip wire seat had agreed to pay some / all of the replacement cost.
33. **Date of Next Meeting:** Wed 9<sup>th</sup> Oct 2024, 7.30pm, Main Hall, Croston Old School.

*Approved as a true record, Pauline Strachan, Chair, 9 Oct 2024*

