Hulme Walfield
and Somerford Booths
Parish Council

Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 10th April 2025 at Eaton Community Hall.

Present: Cllr. Mark Hill (Chairman), Cllr. Mark Wakerly (Vice Chairman), Cllr. John Spence, Cllr. Vic Brown, Cllr. Margaret Gartside, Cllr. Adam Bamping

Isabella Lockett, Clonter

11 members of the public

1. **Welcome and Introduction**
   The Chairman, Cllr. Mark Hill welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **To approve the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting Held on 25th April 2024**
   It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in April 2024 be approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

3. **Presentation by Isabella Lockett, Managing Director, Clonter**
   Isabella shared a brief background to opera and busted some myths. Clonter is not just opera, not outdoors and isn't as remote as people think (3 minutes from the nearest pub!) Their performers, by definition, are not amateur – everyone who performs there is a singer by trade.

   Why is there an opera house in the Cheshire countryside?
   Clonter has a 400-seat auditorium now, but it all started with performances on hay bales at Clonter Farm in 1974. Isabella's mother, Anita Lockett, commissioned the first concerts at Clonter, to raise money for cancer relief. The founder, Jeffery Lockett (Isabella's father) was a trained singer, who sang for, among others Winston Churchill. Her father gathered some singers he knew, friends invited friends, and everyone came dressed up in black tie! Everyone loved it so much and it became an annual event.
   Now, fifty years later, the opera house is still going. Isabella commends her parents for their tenacity and entrepreneurial spirit for getting the endeavour started.

The name of Clonter means “chattering stream” in Anglo Saxon and the farm has belonged to the family for many years. The family were always interested in developing the farm – Isabella’s grandfather built a music room in the 1940s and 1950s. He played the piano and met his wife through music – he eventually became Master of the Musicians. Isabella’s grandmother spoke fluent French and was included on a professional recording of Faust. Even now, Clonter perform many French operas, which remind Isabella of her grandmother.

The entire family have got involved throughout the years – managing the box office, making backdrops, arranging costumes and so much more!

Clonter have toured to London, but they now want to focus more locally, introducing the wonder of music to the local community. The public are exposed to more opera than they realise, both from adverts and from folk stories and songs.

Now, the organisation runs many opera concerts and runs a competition, with reviews from a professional panel and an audience vote, where rising stars of opera perform from all of the leading conservatoires. The organisation also runs a retreat to allow singers to come to Clonter and have the space to work on whatever they need to. The organisation also welcomes over 2,000 children a year from schools where Pupil Premium is higher than average for free workshops introducing them to opera, music, musical theatre and performance. One young man, who attended a workshop, has gone on to perform at Clonter as a professional singer. However, the aim of the education programme is to make opera, and the arts, accessible.

Isabella closed her presentation by thanking everyone for attending and listening.

A member of the public asked how the schools are chosen. Isabella confirmed that schools can contact them, but they also do research and invite schools and community groups to attend. The beauty of the offering is that it can fit in with any aspect of the curriculum or anything topical.
A follow up question was asked regarding the age of the pupils. Isabella confirmed this is mainly primary schools, although they do some work with secondary. Pupils are usually 7 – 11 and the programme funds everything, from the coach to the programme. Free tickets are also offered to families, but Isabella thinks that pupils get the most from the programme. It allows pupils to begin to cultivate a love of music and to appreciate the range of music available.

A member of the public asked about the fair. Isabella said that this is one of the highlights of the year – dogs welcome, children free and classic car and dog shows. This is about making the farm accessible and letting people "come and have a look." It is one of the highlights of the year, unashamedly old-fashioned fun for everyone. This takes place annually, on the first weekend in September.
Tosca, the famous opera, will also take place over the summer, if anyone is interested in attending the next show.

4. Chairman's Report - Councillor Mark Hill

The Chairman's report is included in full in Appendix 2.

A member of the public asked about the number of houses and whether this would mean that the precept will stay low. Councillor Hill answered that the Parish has grown from 147 to nearly 1,300 houses which has meant that the precept has stayed low (and has actually decreased by 20% this year, due to the increase in residents). The Parish Council always try to seek funding and maintain transparency – they are aware of the cost of living and maintain this.
A follow up question was asked regarding what improvements Somerford Booths will see. Councillor Wakerly said that the Parish Council are hoping to install a defibrilator near Somerford Booths Hall in the next 12 months. The Parish Council are always trying to invest in their residents.

A member of the public asked if Devolution was already "definitely going ahead". Councillor Hill said that the Parish Council didn't know the answer of that and advised any residents to complete the consulation if they had a strong opinion. Councillor Brown confirmed that this is on the radar of the Parish Liaison Group (consisting of eight local rural Parishes) and the group are going to continue to monitor this and consider when most appropriate to respond.

A member of the public asked regarding Highways planning, as it seems to be illogical, with roads in the Parish being closed multiple times. Councillors sympathised, but said that Highways planning sits at Cheshire East level. The comment will be fed back to the Ward Councillor.

A question was asked regarding the new school. As far as Councillor Hill is aware, this is still going ahead but the date is to be confirmed. Residents are concerned over potential parking issues. Councillor Hill confirmed that this is still subject to a formal planning application and review and Councillors will review this when this is relased.

These minutes remain draft until they are approved at the next Annual Parish Meeting in 2026.

APPENDIX 1

Unaudited Accounts
01-April-2024 to 31-March-2025

Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths
Parish Council

Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths
Unaudited Accounts
01-April-2024 to 31-March-2025

Receipts			
Precept Payment		£	13,000.00
Bank Interest		£	3.36
Reserves Income		£	-
Exceptional Income		£	601.19
VAT Refund		£	358.68
		£	**13,963.23**
Payments			
Salary / Clerk Homeworking Allowance		£	5,925.00
Clerk Expenses		£	95.40
Training		£	189.00
Memberships		£	541.42
Professional Fees		£	522.36
Communication		£	832.44
Donations		£	550.00
Meetings		£	220.98
Community Projects		£	-
Fixed Assets		£	2,258.44
Banking Charges		£	96.00
Civic Responsibilities		£	39.98
		£	**11,271.02**
Excess of Receipts over Payments		**£**	**2,692.21**
Balance at 01-April-2024		£	29,697.86
Excess of Receipts over Payments	Plus	£	2,692.21
Less Spend From General Reserves	Less	£	-
Less Spend From Earmarked Reserves	Less	£	-
Balance of Accounts at 31-March-2025		**£**	**32,390.07**
General Reserves (inc. Current Account)		£	-
Earmarked Reserves		£	18,491.82
Total Reserves		**£**	**18,491.82**
Represented By			
Current Account		£	32,390.07
		£	**32,390.07**

APPENDIX 2

Annual Meeting: Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths PC: 2024 - 2025

Chairman: Mark Hill

Good evening and welcome to the HWSB PC APM nice to see so many people here.

Thank you to our guest speaker Isabella, it was something a little different this year I hope you found it interesting.
We have as a PC, as is the case every year, been extremely busy and I'm about to outline just some of that work, only a small proportion.

There is without doubt huge changes within our parish, not only from housing developers, but governments past and present and we must be ready to take on those challenges.
There have been many consultations to consider and the latest is the Devolution of Cheshire and Warrington (Mayor). If devolution happens, we must prove we are a council that can support and run our parish professionally and effectively.

There is also worldwide politics to think about and any effects that will have on households. I'm sure there will be knock on effects from the latest world challenges.

We, as a council, are having to change to move with the times as our Parish grows. This is not a small growth plan but a plan that has come all at once and we must take on that task, as approximately 1000 houses are being built within the Parish.

We, as the council every month, carry out our statutory duties at the meeting and within the agenda. We adjust the agenda to suite.

Much of a councillor's work is carried out between meetings and over the past year these are just some of the issues and things that have been carried out.

There have been many things happened over the past year and, in no particular order or standing, are:

Firstly, we have moved to Eaton, this was to give our residents a better place to meet with lighting in the car park during the winter months and now having enhanced facilities e.g. indoor toilets. We wish to support the hall and its sustainability. Going forward we

can hold meetings, training and presentations, which we could not do at the fisheries. I do, however, thank them for their support over the years.

Ongoing development of a Parish defibrillator strategy to include all the new and existing housing development, industrial units and villages.

Community training for CPR and defibrillator use has now been delivered; this is thanks to Cllr John Spence and Friends of Giantswood Lane - hopefully there is to be follow-on courses in the future.

As I have previously mentioned the parish has changed, with the large development in progress and change is inevitable so we have now moved slowly towards social media. The platform 'X' (previously Twitter) has been chosen; to reach out to our newest and oldest residents alike but a paper copy is still available for those who wish to have it. Paper-less is good for our environment and has savings to the parish. This money can be used elsewhere on community projects.

The bridle/ footpath enhancement is ongoing, and trees are being planted and an herb bed completed. There will be cut throughs from the Redrow estate onto the bridle/ footpath, timescales discussion is ongoing. There is more work to be done, so if you have any ideas, please contact a Councillor or the Clerk.
Extra dog waste bins have been added, and we are still working on safety barriers at the ends of the bridle/footpath.

Continuing with the bridle/footpath at the top of the path we have developed an area of reflection with seats and trees, and I thank all residents for your enthusiastic involvement and assistance. Once the trees grow, it will look fantastic.

Councillors work includes looking at planning application and understanding them, reviewing them and replying to the authorities with concise answers. It is a huge amount of work with expert knowledge required and I thank Cllr Brown for this.

The Parish Council has been working alongside the neighbourhood watch scheme for some time and there has been an ongoing issue which has taken many hours of hard work and is still ongoing. If anyone who hasn't joined Neighbourhood Watch, I encourage you to do so, it works. Please contact Mr Ian McCulloch.

We have developed a strategy to try and reduce speeding on Giantswood Lane. This is not to catch speeders but to reduce the risk of accidents, near misses and to slow the traffic close to the bridle/footpath so that pedestrians, families, horses and cyclists can cross safely. Equipment has been purchased for this purpose.

There is also many hours liaising with other parishes and the local police to ensure communications are open and residents and their views are heard, so thank you Cllr Spence.

The PC has worked with Redrow, TG and Kompan to design and build a fitness trial on the Redrow site. The equipment has been chosen and a site allocated. Depending on the weather, work should be starting, by July this year and we will keep the residents informed of progress.

And finally, the PC and its councillors are very aware of the cost-of-living crisis and any World and home issues that may have affected local people, and we are here to help and assist were possible. We, as a council, do debate precept increase every year and in HWSB, we have not increased the HWSB precept in the last few years.

I wish to thank all the Councillors and the Clerk for their dedication and hard work to this community and the growing community.

And lastly to you, the residents for attending. Thank you.