

GREAT SANKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Finance Committee

Minutes of meeting: Tuesday 6th January 2026
Whittle Hall Community Centre

Chair: Cllr T Williams
Present: Cllr N Catlow
Cllr P Watson
Cllr S Pennington
Cllr B Simpson

In Attendance: K Carter (Clerk)

1. To receive and approve any apologies for unavoidable absence.

All members present.

2. To approve the minutes of previous meeting 2/12/25.

The draft minutes were moved and accepted as a true record of the meeting and signed as such.

FINANCE/2026/01/1: Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2025 as a true record.

3. To consider the budget and precept level for 2026-27 and make a final recommendation to full Council.

There have been several budget meetings in the run-up to the final decision required to be taken by full Council on 14 January 2026. These discussions have considered the council's current financial position, the general (emergency) reserve, and earmarked reserves. The three-year financial projection is updated each year to allow the council to manage any future financial burdens as far as possible.

The discussions to date are summarised as follows:

- **Income.**
 - The majority of the council's income is raised through the precept levied on all households in the parish.
 - Additional income is raised through the hire of the community centres. The community centres are subsidised through the precept to provide good quality, but affordable premises for community groups, charity organisations and small local businesses. The setting of the hire rates is always a balancing act between mitigating rising running costs and the impact of any increase on customers. Hire rates were reviewed in October 2025 and a small increase implemented from 1 November 2025. Consideration was given to setting a maximum subsidy level of £75,000 with phased increases in hire rates to meet this and link rates to the CPI. (agreed 12.11.25, Parish/2025/92).
- **Fixed expenditure.** This covers basic expenses for admin, running costs for the community centres and upkeep for the council's green spaces. Future estimates are based on previous and current costs with an allowance for inflation and known increases.
- **General Reserve.** This is essentially an emergency fund to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances. Guidelines are for this to cover 3-6 months expenditure. The current level of general reserve is £100,000 which is now only

GREAT SANKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Finance Committee

Minutes of meeting: Tuesday 6th January 2026
Whittle Hall Community Centre

around 2 months expenditure. The recommendation was to increase this by £10,000 per annum over the next three years (agreed 12.11.25, Parish/2025/91)

- **Earmarked Reserves.** These are funds built up and set aside for specified long-term projects or significant future expenditure. Current earmarked reserves are
 - Parish Playing Field, £115,000. Match funding with the Football Foundation for the installation of the drainage system.
 - Sankey Station, £72,448. Project to re-purpose disused buildings for community use in collaboration with Sankey Station CIC.
 - Childs Wood Field, £35,395. Possible relocation of grounds team (feasibility study currently underway) and re-landscaping for community use.
 - Proposed additions:
 - a) Play Equipment. To set up a fund for the replacement of play equipment on Tim Parry Recreation Ground and Vicarage Community Park. £10,000 per annum for the next three years.
 - b) Grounds Equipment. To set up a fund to replace grounds equipment on a 3-year rolling cycle with old equipment sold to mitigate purchase costs. £3,000 per annum.
- **Horticultural Apprentice.** The council currently has a Grounds Team consisting of a Head Gardener and Horticultural Apprentice. Workload is at a maximum with the council's current sites but will increase over the next 12-18 months with the development of the Parish Playing Field and the plans for Childs Wood Field. The current apprentice is due to finish in Spring 2026 and will be taken on as a full-time Gardener. The council has debated whether to take on another apprentice which has been widely accepted as required to meet demand and further to this, the timing of recruitment. The current recommendation is for the role to be filled mid-year in 2026-27.
- **Unknown costs.**
 - PPF maintenance. Once the drainage system has been installed, the council is required as part of the grant conditions from the Football Foundation to maintain the pitches to a good standard. This will require an enhanced maintenance routine to be carried out by an external contractor, which can only be properly assessed once the works have been completed. It is anticipated that the installation will start in Spring 2026 and a 6-month settling in phase will follow. The enhanced maintenance may therefore be required midway through the 2026-27 financial year. A placeholder sum of £13,000 has been allocated within the budget, but this may need to be increased further.
 - Childs Wood Field. Earmarked reserves for this project are currently £35,395. Depending on the progression of the projects this may need additional funds for completion.
 - Parish-funded PCSO. The council has contributed towards additional PCSO provision within Great Sankey since 2006. Cheshire Constabulary is currently proposing to reduce the overall numbers of PCSO's in the region, and this is likely to happen. The council has had no correspondence relating to whether there will still be an option to continue with a parish-funded PCSO or what this provision, if offered, will look like. A budget of £46,300 has been allocated pending information from Cheshire Constabulary and a consequent decision by the council on the service.

GREAT SANKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Finance Committee

Minutes of meeting: Tuesday 6th January 2026
Whittle Hall Community Centre

- **Precept options.** The options considered were to
 - a) increase the precept by 2% with an assumption that the PCSO fund would not be required and could therefore be repurposed later in the year for the unknown costs listed above. The disadvantage could be that there would not be additional funds if the council continues with the PCSO position which may then require larger precept increases in the future.
 - b) include a £50,000 contingency fund within the 2026-27 budget to manage the unknown elements. This would necessitate a larger increase in precept for 2026-27 of approx. 8% with much lower increases in subsequent years. The concern was that this would be an extra financial burden for residents on top of anticipated increases in Borough Council tax rises, and police/fire service precepts. The counterargument was that an 8% rise would still not be a significant sum for householders as it equates to an additional £4.35 per annum or 6pence per week for a Band D property.
 - c) Implement a 4% increase in precept over the next 3 years. On current estimates this would give a £60,000 surplus over that 3-year period to build reserves for future costs whilst giving residents a known & manageable increase each year.

A vote was taken and the majority decision was to recommend option c to full council for consideration.

FINANCE/2026/01/2: Recommended that the parish council precept is increased by 4% over the next three financial years.

4. To scrutinise financial expenditure arising since the last meeting, including payments by Direct Debit.

A list of payments to be made had been circulated prior to the meeting. The following payments were considered and approved.

Presented By	Description	Amount, £
Landscape Academy	Npors Cat & Jenny Training	£209.41
Amazon	Mealworms Bird food – Grounds	£6.99
Amazon	Bird Seed Mix – Grounds	£20.40
Amazon	Flush Bolt for Container Window – Grounds	£17.89
Amazon	Peanut bird seed – Grounds	£21.27
Trade UK	Mini roller set, LED Light – BB Centre Maintenance	£22.47
MKM	Paving and grout – Grounds	£206.30
B&B Hygiene Ltd	Cleaning Supplies	£520.67
Firecheck NW Ltd	Fire extinguisher for TP	£101.28
Firecheck NW Ltd	Fire extinguisher for HM	£202.56
WBC	Wildflowers 2025	£5187.34
Holly Oak Tree Service	Tree works Childs Wood Field	£2700.00
Trade UK	RCD Adaptor – Grounds	£20.98
WBC	Election Recharge Costs	£6135.92

GREAT SANKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Finance Committee

Minutes of meeting: Tuesday 6th January 2026
Whittle Hall Community Centre

WBC	Service Charge – HM	£382.89
Firecheck NW Ltd	New fire alarm battery – HL	£180.00
NWFE Ltd	Computer software and control access switch	£552.00
Canda Copying	Office copier charges	£174.83
Comtec	Centre electric repair	£696.00
Equals Card	Petty Cash top up	£180.61
	TOTAL	£17,539.81

FINANCE/2026/01/3: Resolved to authorise all payments listed (under LGA 1976 s19 or LGA 1972 s15(5), s101, 111, 112, 133, 142 or 137).

The following direct debits on the Council’s account during November were also noted:

Novuna finance	03/11/2025	Council Electric Van	Lease	456.20
Lex Autolease	03/11/2025	Council Electric Van	Lease	851.98
BT	06/11/2025	WIFI/Telephone	HL/TP/BB/HM	385.33
Peninsula	11/11/2025	H&S Service	H&S	200.93
Smart Pension Ltd	12/11/2025	Pension payment September	Wages	2044.72
Global 4 Comm.	14/11/2025	Office 365/email	Office	122.04
SSE Energy	25/11/2025	Gas	HM	189.65
SSE Energy	25/11/2025	Gas	WH	43.28
SSE Energy	25/11/2025	Gas	BB	178.07
SSE Energy	25/11/2025	Gas	HL	151.71
Water Plus	27/11/2025	Water charges	HL	72.49
BT	27/11/2025	WIFI/Telephone	WH	263.60
Utility Warehouse	28/11/2025	Mobile phones	Office	56.38
Service Fee Charge	30/11/2025	Service Charge	Office	21.30
			TOTAL	£5037.68

5. To consider any quotes received and authorise or make recommendations to full Council where appropriate.

None.

6. To consider requests for financial assistance

None received. It was noted that Friends of Westbrook Library have requested to speak to the council on 14th January with a view to making a request for financial assistance; details are expected at that meeting.

7. Budget 2025-26: to scrutinise documentation and when satisfied as to correctness to sign off financial reports and bank reconciliations for November.

The bank reconciliation and budget monitoring pages for November were considered and accepted. Checks on financial transactions were carried out prior to the meeting by Cllrs Williams and Watson.

FINANCE/2026/01/4: Resolved to accept the bank reconciliation and budget monitoring pages for November 2025 (Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 reg 4).

GREAT SANKEY PARISH COUNCIL
Finance Committee

Minutes of meeting: Tuesday 6th January 2026
Whittle Hall Community Centre

- 8. To authorise payment of wages, tax and ERNIC for December.**
The list of wages to be paid was considered and authorised. Total Employment Costs (including salaries, pensions & HMRC) were £29,960.

FINANCE/2026/01/5: Resolved to authorise payment of wages and HMRC costs (£29,960 total) for December 2025 (LGA 1972 s112).