

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE WOOLSTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, WARREN LANE, WOOLSTON ON 20 JANUARY 2026

Present: Councillor C Wilcock (Chairman)

Councillors: M Banner, C Kilgannon, H Klein, D Nowell, G Rushby,
S Rydzkowski, L Sheridan, D Warren

Apologies for absence: Councillor R Tynan

C100 Chairman's remarks

The Chairman reported the apologies of absence from Councillor Tynan for family reasons. Representatives of the Save Woolston Neighbourhood Hub group were welcomed to the meeting. The Council agreed to bring forward the agenda relating to the current closure of the centre by the Borough Council to facilitate the group in making a presentation at the meeting. The Chairman welcomed the representatives from Cheshire Constabulary and the Council agreed to bring forward the agenda item relating to the Policing of Woolston to allow the officers to attend a later meeting.

C101 Code of Conduct – declarations of interest Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

There were no declarations of interest.

C102 Apologies for absence

The Council noted the apologies for absence from the Chairman, Councillor R Tynan.

C103 Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved,

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2025 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

C104 Policing of Woolston

PCSO Roberts presented the monthly report for January 2026:

Resolved,

That

1. the report be noted and the officers be thanked for their attendance;
2. this item be brought forward on future agenda to allow the Police representative(s) to resume their duties.

(Please see appendix for a copy of the report).

C105 Borough Council business – Woolston Neighbourhood Hub – temporary closure

The Council considered the following response from the Borough Council to the representations made at the meeting held on 9 December 2025 (Minute C92 Borough Council business – Woolston Neighbourhood Hub – temporary closure):

Mon, Jan 19, 2026

Dear Members of Woolston Parish Council,

Thank you for your letter following your meeting of 9 December 2025 regarding the consultation on the future of the Woolston Neighbourhood Hub. The Council appreciates you taking the time to set out the issues raised and the concerns expressed on behalf of the community.

We understand the concerns you have highlighted about direct communication and the absence of a formal briefing, and we recognise the challenges this has created when responding to residents. We are grateful for your patience and for continuing to share feedback during what we know has been a difficult period for the community.

We acknowledge your support for the motion approved by Full Council on 1 December 2025, and we remain committed to taking forward the actions outlined within it.

Your suggestions regarding a phased reopening of parts of the Hub—including meeting rooms, the library, fitness facilities, squash courts and the studio—have been noted. We also recognise the importance you place on reinstating the GP surgery and addressing the roof repairs needed to support Padgate Medical Practice. These matters will form part of the ongoing assessment of future options for the site.

The Council is aware of the strong community support for the Hub, reflected in the high level of public engagement and local campaigning. We value the Parish Council's continued efforts to represent residents' views and to encourage participation in the consultation.

Thank you again for your correspondence and for your continued engagement. The Council remains committed to working constructively with the Parish Council and Ward Councillors as this process moves forward.

Kind regards

Cheryl

Cheryl Siddall (She/Her)

LiveWire, Communities and Wellbeing Manager (Interim)

The Council noted that no mention had been made of the suggestion that the new artificial grass pitches proposed for Woolston Playing Fields at Hillock Lane, in partnership with the Borough Council, to be partly funded through a proposed Section 106 planning agreement, be sited at the centre.

The Clerk submitted details of the process for making application for borrowing approval for funding to support the Borough Council in urgent action to re-open access to facilities at the centre. The Cheshire Association of Local Councils was responsible for processing applications for all parish councils in the county. Detailed written guidance and an application form had been supplied by the Association. This process could not commence until discussions had been held with the Borough Council and agreement reached on the scope of works and contribution requested from the parish.

Representatives of the Save Woolston Neighbourhood Hub group reported on the Woolston Neighbourhood Hub – Full Evidence Pack that had been submitted to the Borough Council (*Please see the Appendix for a copy of the document*).

The Council noted the opening to the document:

“Executive Summary

The evidence pack set out the social, financial, technical and legal case against the closure of Woolston Neighbourhood Hub. It demonstrated that the closure was not supported by robust evidence, disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups, fails statutory duties, and risk long-term financial harm to the Council and community.”

The representatives gave examples of action taken by the group including:

- delivery of leaflets to households in the Woolston and Bruche areas to encourage residents to respond to the Borough Council's online consultation
- organised public protests of support for the centre to re-open outside Woolston Neighbourhood Hub. This was reported on local and regional media
- used the Borough Council's procedure to ask questions at both the Full Council and Cabinet meetings
- submitted a petition to the Borough Council of over 3.5k names seeking the re-opening of the centre
- contacted the National Health Service and Warrington Wolves RLFC for their support
- requested details of the results of the consultation exercise
- challenged the estimated cost and need for repairs

The group were continuing their work and seeking meetings with officers to re-open facilities at the centre. The Padgate Medical Centre had confirmed their support for the surgery to re-open:

Resolved,

That

1. the response from the Borough Council be noted;
2. consideration be given to ensure that the Borough Council's stated commitment to working constructively with the Parish Council and Ward Councillors is achieved;
3. the thanks of the Council be recorded to the Save Woolston Neighbourhood Hub group for their valuable work in presenting the case and supporting the need for the re-opening of the facilities at the centre that are vital for the whole community.

C106 Co-option of members

Further to Minute C89 – 9 December 2025, the Clerk reported that no applications had been received by the closing date of 16 January 2026:

Resolved,

That notice be given of the two remaining vacancies and applicants be invited to attend the next meeting of the Council.

C107 Matters of report from previous minutes

There were no matters arising.

C108 Budget and Parish Precept 2026/27

The Council considered a report of the Clerk on the Budget and Parish Precept for 2026/27. The report gave a summary of the estimated net expenditure for 2026/27 together with other financial provision to be made. The Council previously had agreed that the budget be prepared on a no growth basis. Information provided by the Borough Council on the Tax Base for 2026/27 was noted.

In determining the precept the Council had regard to additional financial pressures on the community in common with other areas to be met in the coming year:

Resolved,

That

1. approval be given to a precept of £26,607 for 2026/27 maintaining the estimated amount for a Band D property;

2. the draft budget recommendations be approved;
3. a report be made on any adjustments required in the next financial year.

C109 Borough Council business

The Council received reports from Borough Councillors on matters under consideration by the Borough Council relating to the parish and on issues that they had acted on for residents since the last meeting and other issues relating to responsibilities of the Borough Council. (The Council noted that the reports related to the parish council area and not to the wider area of the Rixton and Woolston Borough Ward unless there was an issue of interest to Woolston).

1 Reports from Borough Councillors

Councillor Sheridan reported that he had received representations from the local Scout group at the closure of the Woolston Neighbourhood Hub.

2 Matters raised with the Borough Council

- Borough Council review of road safety on Holes Lane, Hillock Lane and Gig Lane – no further information to report.
- A57 Manchester Road – construction of a new pedestrian island on Manchester Road just to the west of the junction with Weir Lane and request to remove the tactile surface from the dropped crossings on A57 Manchester Road on the grounds of road safety. These indicated a crossing point for persons with disabilities and the proposed improvements had not been implemented. The introduction of a pedestrian island was under consideration by the officers – no further information to report.

Resolved,

That the reports be noted.

C110 Committee matters

The Council considered matters relating to the undermentioned committees:

(1) Environment and Amenities Committee

1. Parish Path Warden scheme – condition report

Councillor Nowell reported on inspections made of public footpaths including:

- Obstruction of the path alongside the River Mersey on the length from the Thelwall Viaduct towards Rixton by anglers with their rods and other equipment.

Resolved,

That

1. the report be accepted;
2. the Borough Council be informed of possible obstruction of the path and advise on the body responsible for policing this matter.

2. Ranger Cabin, Woolston Park

The Council noted that there was no further information to report on repairs to the Ranger Cabin.

3. Woolston Playing Fields – proposed improvement scheme

The Council noted further to Minute C93(4) that an application for full planning permission at Woolston Playing Fields had been submitted for the erection of **Artificial** Grass Pitch, Extension to the Existing Car Park, and Associated infrastructure.

4. Battery Lane Allotment Site

– management matters

The Council noted that monthly inspections with a representative of the Association were to resume in February.

– annual rent for the allotment year 2026/27

The Council considered setting of the annual rent of a plot for the year 2026/27. The Clerk reported on the current rent of an allotment from the Borough Council, and it was Resolved,

That

1. the rent for an allotment for plot for 2026/27 be set at £26 (£13 for senior citizens and persons in receipt of Job Seekers allowance) and the required notice be given to tenants;
2. approval be given to a review of the level of the annual rent with the Battery Lane Allotment Association having regard to funding maintenance and other works at the site.

(2) Finance and General Committee

1. Banking arrangements – introduction of online facilities

Further to Minute C93 (2) 1. – 9 December 2025 the Clerk reported on the operation of the proposed revised banking facilities including authorisation of transactions. National Westminster Bank had provided details of the process for introducing online access to the Council's existing accounts:

Resolved,

That the report be noted.

2. Adoption of revised model Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Further to Minute C93(2) 2. 9 December 2025 the Clerk reported that following approval to introduce online facilities amendment of the revised models to control online access to the Council's banking accounts were being prepared for consideration by the Council:

Resolved,

That the report be noted.

3. Implementation of the new Council website

Further to Minute C93(2) 3. – 9 December 2025, the Clerk reported that the process of transferring to the new website was being carried out with the company:

Resolved,
That the report be noted.

4. Parish Council initiative – liaison with local schools

Further to Minute C93(2) 7. – 9 December 2025, the Clerk reported that the Headteacher of Woolston Community Primary School had agreed to support the Council's initiative with local schools:

Resolved,

That approval be given to Councillor Rushby, as promoter of the initiative, and Councillor Banner, as Chair of the Finance and General Committee, meeting with the school to promote the initiative.

5. Applications for grant aid

Noted no new applications to consider.

C111 Reports from members appointed to local bodies

The Council received reports from members who were appointed by the Council or other organisations on local bodies including:

New Cut Heritage and Ecology Trail Group – Councillor Rydzkowski reported on monthly surveys carried out by the Group. Information was published by the group on their website including details of the Annual General Meeting.

Friends of Woolston Park group – Councillor Klein reported information from the Chair of FOWP group on their recent activities. *(Please see the Appendix for a copy of the report.)*

Public Rights of Way Forum – Councillor Nowell. No meeting held.

Resolved,

That the reports be noted.

C112 Correspondence – Police precept and budget 2026/27

The Council considered information from Cheshire Constabulary on the intention to reduce the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) and from the Police and Crime Commissioner on his support for community policing to ensure a named Police Constable or PCSO for every ward in Cheshire. Budget discussions were ongoing and would not be concluded until February:

Resolved,

That support be given for the retention of a Police Community Support Officer for Woolston.

C113 Planning Applications and decisions

The Council considered the following planning applications submitted for comment by the Borough Council:

Application No: 2025/01394/TPO

Application Type: TPO

Location: 10 Bowfell Grove, Woolston, Warrington, WA1 4FT

Proposal: Discharge of Condition for a replacement tree attached to appeal decision APP/TPO/M065/9662 (related to planning application no. 2022/41932)

Application No: 2025/01628/CLDP
 Application Type: Certificate of Lawfulness (Proposed)
 Location: 1 Maple Road, Woolston, Warrington, WA1 4DP
 Proposal: Confirmation of proposed change of use from C3 (A) dwellinghouse to C3 (B) children's home for 2 no. children

Application No: 2025/01747/FULM
 Application Type: Full Planning (Major)
 Location: Woolston Playing Fields, Hillock Lane, Warrington, WA1 4PF
 Proposal: Full Planning Application for the erection of an Artificial Grass Pitch, Extension to the Existing Car Park, and Associated Infrastructure.

Councillor Nowell reported on representations and objections published on the planning website:

Resolved,

That

1. no representations be made in respect of Application Nos: 2025/01394/TPO and 2025/01628/CLDP;
2. to allow members to consider submissions published on the Borough Council's website on Application No: 2025/01747/FULM, comments be submitted to the Clerk by 23 January 2026 and any submission be made in accordance with the procedure for making representations on a planning application before the next Council meeting.

C114 Business raised by Council Members

No items of business raised.

C115 Accounts

Resolved,

That approval be given to the following payments:

Cheque No	Date expenditure incurred	Payee	VAT not recoverable	Amount	Purpose	S137
4869	16/12/25	Employee 1	0.00	462.43	M9 December 2025	
4870	20/01/26	HM Revenue and Customs (Clerk)	0.00	346.80	PAYE Months 7-9 2025-26	
4871	20/01/26	BWP Creative Ltd	0.00	314.58	Website	

C116 Date and venue of next meeting

The Council considered the venue for the next meeting given the continued closure of Woolston Neighbourhood Hub:

Resolved,

That the next meeting be held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 24 February 2026 at the Church of the Ascension.

APPENDIX

**Woolston
January 2026 - Monthly Parish report**

**Neighbourhood Sergeant PS Ryan Cunliffe
Neighbourhood Officer PC David Reddington
PCSO Bethan Roberts**

Anti Social Behaviour

1 Youths (0), environmental (1), personal (0)
Personal/environmental include neighbour, parking/traffic

Burglary

0 Dwelling
1 Other

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Criminal Damage

6 3x over same period gate / fence

Vehicle crime

1 Theft of vehicle
3 Theft from vehicle Business - HGVs
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OTHER

- Speed enforcement – 18 Dec Hillock Lane, observed 18 – 28mph
- Speed monitoring – 31 Dec Gig Lane, observed 17 – 30mph
- Speed monitoring – 10 Jan Hillock Lane, observed 22 – 32mph
- Speed enforcement – 15 Jan Hillock Lane, observed 24 – 26mph
- Safer Internet Day 2025 Top Tips - UK Safer Internet Centre
- Operation Lawmaker rolls into Warrington and sees further arrests and illegal bikes seized | Cheshire Constabulary. Man charged in relation to vehicle thefts across Cheshire and Staffordshire | Cheshire Constabulary
- For further information and how to download the Hollie Guard App Cheshire Constabulary and The Hollie Gazzard Trust working together to keep people safe across Cheshire | Cheshire Constabulary
- To tackle nuisance off-road motorbikes we need the following information – detailed descriptions of the bikes and riders, where the bikes are kept (lock-ups, garage locations), names if possible. Please quote ‘Operation Scrambler’ when you call Cheshire Police on 101. We continue our patrols and appeal for anyone with information to help us identify these individuals to get in touch (Crimestoppers 0800 555 111)
- The new Warrington Youth Zone opened in Warrington town centre in July 2022, the website provides for further information about membership and sessions
Website: <https://warringtonyouthzone.org>
What's On - Warrington Youth Zone

- The Environment Agency have a 24hr hotline 0800 80 70 60 for members of the public to report matters such as flooding from rivers/streams, poaching/illegal fishing to them <https://www.gov.uk/report-an-environmental-incident>
- 24/7 mental health crisis lines free to call

North West Boroughs Healthcare has upgraded its existing 24/7 mental health crisis lines to Freephone numbers. This means they are now free to call from both landlines and mobile phones. The new dedicated phone numbers are:

- 0800 051 1508 for people living in Halton, Knowsley, St Helens and Warrington
- 0800 051 3253 for people living in Wigan

The crisis lines provide support 24 hours a day, seven days a week to people of all ages, including children and young people, who need urgent mental health support. You do not need to be known to our services to contact our crisis lines; they are available for patients and public. Please be assured, anyone who dials the original local numbers will still reach our mental health crisis teams first time, without the need to be diverted

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Please advise people reporting an incident/crime to ring Cheshire Constabulary on 101 (999 in case of emergency) so it can be recorded correctly - not via facebook/email

Online Reporting portal is available via the Cheshire Constabulary website to report certain crimes, incidents, issues:-

<https://www.cheshire.police.uk/ro/report/>

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Useful Links offering advice and information:-

Online safety and advice

<https://www.cheshire.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/fa/fraud/useful-contacts-for-fraud-cyber-crime-advice/>

<https://www.getsafeonline.org/safeguarding-children/>

Advice & information regarding risks of substance abuse available on FRANK

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Home/Business safety and security information

<https://www.cheshire.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/residential-burglary/>

<https://www.cheshire.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/non-residential-burglary/>

<https://www.cheshire.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/theft-from-a-vehicle/vehicle-safe-and-sound/>

Advice to help keep your bicycle safe

<https://www.cheshire.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/theft-of-a-bicycle/how-safe-is-your-bike/>

Whilst the majority of dog owners act responsibly, a few do not always pick up and bin their dog's mess. Residents can use the WBC online reports to provide them with information which could help to identify irresponsible dog owners

<https://www.warrington.gov.uk/dog-fouling>

[Leave only pawprints | warrington.gov.uk](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/leave-only-pawprints)

WBC online reporting portal:-
[Report and Apply | warrington.gov.uk](https://warrington.gov.uk)

If you or someone you know needs advice and support regarding domestic abuse
<https://www.openthedoorcheshire.org.uk/>

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Schools & other events

Green Lane – Class visits, meet the police / people who help us
St Peters Primary – Foundation Class visit
Friends of Woolston Park – Young Friends groups and other volunteers met
WBC – liaise with Youth Services, Highways, Environmental, Trading Standards Depts

Surgery

Rixton & Woolston PCSO Surgery at St Martins Methodist Church, Gig Lane, Woolston
Dates/times subject to change due to operational commitments
Face to face drop-in surgeries – 26 Feb 1000 – 1100, 19 Mar 1000 - 1100

At Rixton with Glazebrook Community Hall, community coffee event 26 Jan 10:30 – 11:30

**FRIENDS OF WOOLSTON PARK GROUP
JANUARY 2026 REPORT**

CABIN UPDATE

No further news relating to the upkeep of our Rangers cabin
The internal holes on the roof appear dry at the moment even after the heavy rains that we have had recently. This would suggest that somebody has repaired the holes on the roof
Some of the members have been doing some more small external repairs by refitting new wood after some top wood had been weather damaged over the preceding years. It has also been undercoated and top coated.

FOWP

Our members continue to meet on a Monday morning doing litter picking, path clearing and cutting back bushes around the Park.. Much of this work is ongoing. We have also removed some fly tipping of small objects, but we continue to see periodically a large number of Nitrous Oxide Laughing Gas cannisters being dumped in the main car park
A group of children and their childminders called "The Happy Bunnies Playgroup" were supported for an hour on a litter pick and were afterwards rewarded with biscuits and juice in the cabin. This group of three year olds were very enthusiastic
We supported Foxwood School and their Santa Dash at Christmas and have held our own Christmas celebration in the Cabin with Adult members and Young Friends Members and their families singing carols and sharing mince pies. We have a planned new year meal for our members next week

I am also talking to a representative of Serco who are really interested in supporting us on the Park in the work that we do. Serco may also be a good source of providing us with equipment and materials as well volunteers

In the coming year I have organised two bat walks with Harold Green and these will raise money for Billinge Bat rescue. These are being run on 10th April and September 12th which will have limited numbers. We will also be looking at providing other community activities which again will include the Easter Eggstravaganza and Bird and Butterfly walks.

Number of hours worked on the Park up until 31st December 2025 = 3080.50 hours. This is the highest number of hours worked by our team in the eleven years that I have been a member of the Friends Group and this is all down to the enthusiasm of our members, the activities we organise and the companies, scout groups, play groups and schools that support us in the work that we do.

The Young Friends Group have also contributed another 284 .00 hours to this figure totalling 3364.50 for the year

Thank you to the Parish Council for their continued financial support of our Group. The uniforms have been ordered and now distributed to our members.. Everybody is fully appreciative of your help in purchasing these

Date of our next Committee meeting is Monday 2nd February at 2pm in the Rangers Cabin

YFOWP

Numbers attending stay at to 13 members and we have recently cleared paths up at the Longbarn lane entrance and also tidied up the Lime tree play area. We continue to litter pick and have made Christmas Wreaths.

All those that volunteer to work on our park are thanked for their input, which is greatly appreciated. We also appreciate all of the support that the Parish Council also gives to us

.
Jon
Chair
FOWP

Save Woolston Neighbourhood Hub Group

Submission made to Warrington Borough Council

Woolston Neighbourhood Hub – Full Evidence Pack

1. Executive Summary

This evidence pack sets out the social, financial, technical and legal case against the closure of Woolston Neighbourhood Hub. It demonstrates that the closure is not supported by robust evidence, disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups, fails statutory duties, and risks long-term financial harm to the Council and community.

2. Community Usage and Demographics

Woolston Hub served tens of thousands of visits annually. Core users include older adults (55+), disabled residents, families, children, school groups, NHS-linked users via the adjacent GP surgery, and community organisations.

3. Education and Schools Impact

At least 12 local schools used Woolston Hub for swimming, with 30–60 pupils per school per week. Closure increases transport costs, reduces pool time, and jeopardises statutory swim competence outcomes.

4. Health, Wellbeing and Preventative Care

The Hub acts as preventative health infrastructure. Loss of access increases isolation, reduces mobility, and escalates long-term NHS and Adult Social Care costs.

5. Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Impact Assessment understates negative impacts on protected groups, misclassifying age and disability impacts as neutral contrary to evidence.

6. Consultation Law – Gunning Principles

Failure to publish accurate costings and technical reports prevents meaningful consultation.

7. Technical Assessment and Building Condition

Repair costs remain estimates without intrusive surveys. Phased and low-cost inspection options exist.

8. Legionella Management

Legionella risks are manageable through standard treatment. Dry-side reopening is feasible.

9. Financial Analysis and Revenue Loss

Closure removes income streams from lessons, memberships, schools, and hires.

10. Section 106 Funding Evidence

Over £250,000 of S106 leisure funding is ringfenced for Woolston Hub-related facilities.

11. Best Value Duty

Failure to deploy earmarked funds risks breach of the Local Government Act 1999.

12. Predetermination Risk

Budget decisions taken before consultation conclusions risk unlawful predetermination.

13. Monitoring Officer Issues

Issues include legality, transparency, consultation integrity and equality compliance.

14. Required Actions

Publish full reports, correct the EIA, reopen safe areas, and explore all funding options.

■ FULL EVIDENCE PACK – WOOLSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB

Updated January 2026 — Full Campaign Version

- Executive Summary

Woolston Neighbourhood Hub is a major community health, leisure, education, and wellbeing asset serving over 3,600 registered leisure users across every ward in Warrington, not only Woolston. Its closure in September 2025 due to Legionella and building concerns has removed key services for families, older people, disabled residents, young people, and patients registered at the GP practice next door.

This evidence pack demonstrates:

The Hub is safe to reopen partially now (gym, library, studios, dry areas).

Legionella remediation is low-cost and localised, not requiring full closure.

Council-reported costs (e.g., £85,000 for scaffolding) are technically implausible and unsupported by surveys.

No full condition surveys have been undertaken for over a decade, breaching good estate management practice.

The Council's reliance on estimates, not evidence, creates legal risks around predetermination.

The Council must publish all repair, reuse, rebuild, and partial reopening options as required by the unanimously passed Full Council motion (Dec 2025).

Closure disproportionately harms vulnerable groups and risks breaching the Equality Act 2010.

Ward-level data proves Woolston Hub is a borough-wide asset, not a local luxury.

Financial pressures cannot override the legal requirements of consultation, equality assessment, and Best Value.

The community is participating in the consultation in good faith. This pack provides the clear, data-driven evidence councillors need to make an informed, lawful, and community-led decision.

- Background: Importance of the Hub

Woolston Neighbourhood Hub has served residents for nearly 50 years

NHS services and Library

Original established services of Doctors surgery and Public library were integrated into the hub in 2011 to provide these services for obvious cost savings, Woolston East has always had its own GP surgery and library the only change is the population of Woolston has grown considerably

GP-adjacent preventative health services

Existing GP surgery relocated to hub from Dam lane/Manchester Rd Woolston and library located at Gorden Ave/Holes lane Woolston in 2011 as part of centralisation of public and NHS services for the East of Woolston Warrington

A public library

Existing library relocated from Holes Lane

A fitness suite, pool, sports halls, squash courts

Public green space, Football pitch

Community meeting space

Accessible exercise for older and disabled residents

Low-cost sport for children and families

Rehabilitation and NHS referral services

A social anchor for isolated residents

Footfall: 158,000 – 208,000 annual visits pre-closure.

Residents across Warrington rely on it for daily life, health, socialisation, and wellbeing.

- Closure Timeline & Emerging Concerns

February 2025 water leak from roof on squash courts and exercise suite building, due to delay in dealing with leaking roof by WBC extensive damage was caused to squash courts and exercise suite resulting in major on cost to reinstate Squash courts, courts out of use for 3 Months with regards to the exercise suite there was a small section of flooring with water damage further investigation in this area raised the concern of asbestos present in materials used in the flooring this was proven not to be the case after testing no attempt to reinstate this facility has been made and has not been used for 10 months to date

June 25 Pools Area closed to the public due to Air Vent malfunction over main pool no attempt to rectify problem by WBC and return pools to public use to date

Sept 2025: Temporary closure due to Legionella and “structural concerns.”

Oct–Dec 2025: No full survey undertaken.

Nov 2025: Protest attended by hundreds; thousands online.

Dec 2025: Full Council passes motion to protect the Hub unanimously.

Jan 2026: Cabinet emphasises “budget pressures” and “difficult decisions,” implying closure still likely.

Ongoing: No publication of costed options, alternatives, surveys, or inspection results.

- Ward-Level Data: Proof Woolston Hub Is A Borough-Wide Asset

Council data shows 3,645 registered leisure members use the Hub.

Top-Using Wards

Ward	Members	%
Rixton & Woolston	889	24.4%
Poulton North	458	12.6%
Poulton South	367	10.1%
Unknown/Outside Warrington	539	14.8%
Poplars & Hulme	150	4.1%
Fairfield & Howley	145	4.0%
Orford	112	3.1%
Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft	97	2.7%
Latchford East	138	3.8%

Key conclusion

Woolston Hub serves almost every ward in Warrington, making it a major borough asset. Closing it is not a local issue — it is a borough-wide service reduction.

- Legionella Evidence: Safe Areas Can Reopen

The Woolston Neighbourhood Hub Legionella Sample Tracker shows:

Legionella is present only in specific outlets (mainly showers).

Dry-side areas—gym, library, studios, corridors, reception—are not affected.

Standard remediation includes:

Treatment in line with best practice principles

Thermal disinfection

Chemical shock dosing

Remediation cost estimated by WBC: £150,000

Industry-standard treatments: £5,000–£35,000 for comparable sites.

Crucially:

Legionella does NOT require the entire building to remain shut.

Hospitals, hotels, schools, and leisure centres routinely manage isolated Legionella findings without

full closure.

- Technical Challenges to the £3m Estimate

The Council states:

“£85,000 for scaffold access to inspect ducting.”

“Inspection would cost over £100,000.”

Independent professionals note:

- No full survey has been carried out

Yet figures are being presented as factual.

- £85,000 scaffold cost is technically implausible

Duct louvres are side-mounted, accessible via:

Mobile tower scaffold

MEWP (cherry picker)

Camera poles

Ceiling void access

Approx cost: £500–£1,500, not £85,000.

What this implies:

If one line item is this inflated, all estimates are unreliable.

- Lack of Maintenance Oversight (2012–2025)

Evidence suggests:

Reporting of problems to management via reception has been ignored over years by facility management on many occasions resulting in loss of facility in Gym, Sauna/Steam, showers, and general utilities for minor problems which required minor attention we are where we are due to senior management incompetence in dealing with everyday issues which eventually result in minor problems becoming major demonstrating their inability to facility manage

No regular condition surveys since ~2011/12

Long-term maintenance severely underfunded

Building lifecycle risks unmonitored

This contradicts:
CIPFA Property Management principles
RICS Good Practice for Public Sector Estate Management
WBC's own Asset Strategy commitments
Failure to maintain cannot justify demolition or permanent closure.

- Financial Context & Predetermination Risks

WBC faces:

£39m in-year overspend

£89m four-year gap

£48m remaining deficit

Insufficient reserves

Requirement to set a balanced budget by March

Predetermination risk

If the Medium-Term Financial Plan is set without provision for repairing or reopening the Hub, then:

The consultation outcome is predetermined
Gunning Principles are breached
Equality Act duties are breached
“Do nothing” becomes the default outcome
Legal challenge becomes viable

- Legal Duties Potentially Breached
- Gunning Principles
 - Proposals must be at a formative stage
 - Consultation must be open-minded
 - Evidence must be published
 - Responses must be considered

- Equality Act 2010

Disproportionate harm to:

Education

Junior School curriculum, swimming is mandatory and this facility is the responsibility of WBC to provide in full

Woolston has 4 primary schools within walking distance of the hub and was used to full capacity since closure transferring these classes to other hubs has still to be implemented in full without problems due to preparation to travel and logistics in transporting these Junior pupils considerable time has been lost to teaching, disturbance to their routine, and stress to the pupils is immeasurable at this time and is a major concern to the school management and parents.

Elderly

Disabled

Low-income families

People without cars

Those with health inequalities

- Public Sector Health Duties

WBC's own 2024–2028 Health & Wellbeing Strategy commits to:

Reducing inequalities

Increasing access to community health spaces

- Best Value Duty (LGA 1999)

The council must:

Consider alternatives

Provide value for money

Demonstrate proper evidence

Consider community-led models

- Possibility of Section 5 Report

Where there is unlawful predetermination, a Monitoring Officer must intervene.

-
- Impact on Vulnerable Groups

Groups most affected:

Elderly residents (over 28% of users)

Children (swim lessons, youth sports)

Disabled users (WDP scuba, rehab gym use)

Low-income families
Hong Kong BNO communities
Women accessing library and community groups
People referred by GPs for physical activity
Closure exacerbates:
Health inequalities,
Loss of Doctors surgery major impact on local people having to travel long distances to get treatment
Isolation
Transport barriers
No direct bus links to any relocated services or hubs or libraries within Warrington in all cases other than one there is a change of bus required, the one Bus No4 stops on Green lane or Padgate lane and requires a ten minute - ½ Mile walk over Padgate bridge to attend Padgate Medical centre total unacceptable to those with health, disability or walking difficulties
Loss of low-cost exercise

- Community Evidence

Includes:
Protest of hundreds
Thousands engaged online 2.8k
Testimonials from long-term users
Impact statements
Technical evidence from professionals
FOI correspondence
Independent survey data

- What the Council Motion Requires (Dec 2025)

Council unanimously resolved to:

- “Explore and publish all realistic options”

Not done.

- “Ensure continued access to library, fitness and community space”

Not done.

- “Provide a detailed update within 3 months”

DUE 1ST March

This must include immediate action, as the MTFP will determine the Hub’s fate before March.

- Alternative Options the Council Must Publish

Partial reopening
Dry-side reopening
Remedial works only
Phased refurbishment
Community partnership model

Sport England funding routes
Mixed-use redevelopment
Borrowing options
Combined Authority mayoral funding (from 2027)
ACV (Asset of Community Value) protections
Government grant options
NHS/Primary Care Integration models

- Conclusion

The evidence is unequivocal:

Woolston Hub can be partially reopened safely now

Cost estimates are unverified and unreliable

Ward-level data proves borough-wide dependency

Vulnerable groups are disproportionately harmed

Legal duties require transparency, alternatives, and equality analysis

The Full Council motion must be delivered — not diluted

Budget decisions made before consultation ends risk illegality

The community calls for:

- Immediate publication of full technical surveys
- Immediate publication of all repair/rebuild options
- Immediate plan to reopen safe areas
- Protection of the Hub within the Medium-Term Financial Plan
- Full transparency at every stage

Woolston Hub is not optional. It is essential.

--- Appendix A: Schools Using Woolston Neighbourhood Hub

The following schools regularly used Woolston Neighbourhood Hub for curriculum swimming provision. Each school typically brought between 30–60 pupils per week, contributing significantly to statutory swim delivery under the National Curriculum:

- Woolston Community Primary School
- St Peter's CE Primary School
- St Augustine's CE Primary School
- Fox Wood School
- Birchwood CE Primary School
- Christ Church CE Primary School
- Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
- St Alban's Catholic Primary School
- Newchurch CE Primary School
- Gorse Covert Primary School
- Culcheth Community Primary School
- Croft Primary School
- St Helen's CE Primary School

In addition, Woolston Hub provided a dedicated weekly session for home-educated children. Closure forces schools to travel further, reduces water time, increases costs, and risks non-compliance with statutory swimming outcomes.

Appendix B: Legal and Statutory Framework

Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty

Section 149 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. Evidence shows disproportionate negative impact on disabled people, older residents, children, and carers.

Consultation Law – Gunning Principles

Consultations must be at a formative stage, provide sufficient information, allow adequate time, and have conscientious consideration of responses. Withholding costings and reports undermines legality.

Predetermination

Setting budgets or financial strategies that remove options prior to consultation conclusion risks unlawful predetermination (Localism Act 2011 guidance and case law).

Local Government Act 1999 – Best Value Duty

Authorities must secure continuous improvement in economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Allowing assets to decline while holding ringfenced funds risks breach.

Health and Safety Law

Duties under HSWA 1974, RIDDOR, ACOP L8 and HSG274 apply. Legionella risks are manageable and do not automatically justify total closure.

Section 106 Planning Obligations

Funds are legally ringfenced and must be spent in accordance with agreements. Failure to deploy available leisure S106 funding may constitute maladministration.

Monitoring Officer Red Flag Checklist

Appendix C: Monitoring Officer – Red Flag Checklist

1. Predetermination Risk

Budget setting and financial planning that removes viable options for Woolston Hub prior to lawful consideration of consultation responses.

2. Failure to Comply with Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality Impact Assessment misclassifies clear negative impacts on age, disability, children, carers and low-income residents as neutral.

3. Unlawful Consultation (Gunning Principles)

Insufficient information provided to consultees, including absence of substantiated costings, engineering reports and alternatives.

4. Best Value Duty Concerns

Allowing a revenue-generating public asset to fall into managed decline while holding earmarked S106 funds risks breach of the Local Government Act 1999.

5. Financial Transparency Failures

Reliance on estimates presented as costs, lack of inspection evidence, and failure to publish alternative options undermine decision integrity.

6. Misuse or Non-use of Section 106 Funds

Failure to deploy ringfenced leisure and health S106 contributions may constitute maladministration.

7. Health & Safety Governance

Withholding RIDDOR and Legionella compliance data during a live consultation creates regulatory and legal exposure.

8. Procedural Impropriety

Deflecting substantive consultation questions into FOI processes after the consultation end date restricts meaningful participation.

9. Failure to Implement Full Council Resolution

Unanimous motion requiring transparency and exploration of all options has not been demonstrably actioned.

10. Reputational and Judicial Review Risk

Cumulative governance failures expose the Council to legal challenge, Ombudsman investigation, and loss of public trust.

Chairman.....