



Chair's annual report 2025-2026

Parish Hall

Strawberry Dance School continues to be successful and Middleton Parish Council is pleased to provide a long-term home for the studio which provides a popular activity in the village as well as an essential contribution to keeping the hall open for the use of all residents.

Middleton Bowling Club continue to meet at the hall every Thursday morning.

The Community Hub is open to all on Wednesday mornings for coffee and company, children's play and getting to know your neighbours. It has proven popular with village residents, and has recently had visits from the new county councillor and PCSO.

The hall has hosted Easter, Halloween and Christmas events.

The hall has a steady trickle of bookings at other times, mostly for childrens' parties. The council aims to improve and promote the hall to increase community use.

The hall has been upgraded to better welcome people with disabilities, with a new wheelchair lift and upgraded accessible toilet. This was funded by the UK Prosperity Fund grant.

Repairs to the hall drainage system have been completed and the drains have not blocked since.

Various other repairs and maintenance to the hall and village facilities have been completed, including the hall heating system

Unfortunately during a party booking, people using the hall have caused damage to the snooker table and driven vehicles on the green, leaving deep holes in the grass. The holes have now been filled, and council members are applying for grant funding to repair the snooker table. There has been almost no interest in using the snooker table which remains available to the village on request.

Village facilities

The playground has received a much needed update to some equipment, with a new Ninja Trail installed thanks to a National Lottery grant secured last year. Picnic benches and various play items have also been added.

A large number of tree saplings have been planted around the village; some have taken well while some have died and been removed. Unfortunately all of the trees along Low Road by the playground have been knocked down by cars.

Middleton & Overton Sports FC continues to use and maintain the football pitch and pavilion, although flooding remains a problem in winter. The Dong Energy grant fund for playing field upgrades and maintenance has now been spent.

The council has resolved a legal threat over trees near the boundary of the playing field, at minimal cost.

Admin & financial

The council has opened a new bank account and moved day-to-day operations from NatWest to Lloyds, which has provided significantly better service. The council can now manage the accounts online, make card payments and send and receive BACS transfers.

The AGAR annual audit was completed on time and no concerns were raised by the auditor.

The council has set up VAT reclaims, and recovered funds retrospectively for the past three years.

The hall's music license has been reviewed and the cost has increased sharply, as well as having retrospective charges to repay.

The city council has revised NNDR rates for the hall, hub and playing fields. Unfortunately this has led to a significant increase in some areas; the parish council is in ongoing discussion with the city council regarding setting the appropriate rates.

Goals for next year

Launch a quarterly village newsletter to keep residents informed.

Increase community use of the hall for events, parties and functions.

Resolve the uncertain status of the lease for the playground and village green, between the Parish and Lancaster City Council.

Get posts installed around the village green to prevent vehicles being driven on the grass.

Hire a grant officer who would be dedicated to applying for further grant funding, targeted at upgrading the hall and play facilities. This role could be combined with acting as hall caretaker.

Create a community garden next to the hall, with space to grow flowers and vegetables. If this proves to be popular, consider launching a more ambitious allotment project in the village.

Council

The council welcomes Lisa Salem and Damian Bogucki who joined the council this year.

The council thanks Gemma McMurray who stepped down from the council this year. Before stepping down, Gemma secured multiple major grants to fund the improvements completed this year, as well as contributing to launching the Hub.

There are vacancies available on the council; any interested residents are invited to come along to meetings and find out more.