

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held at Park View School, Lombard Drive, Chester-le-Street on Tuesday 19th May 2026.

PRESENT Chairman: Councillor Craig Martin.

Councillors: Suzanne Brown, Margaret Caygill,
Maureen May, Patrick Driscoll, Dennis Hall,
Darren Hawkes.

County Councillor: Craig Martin.

Clerk: David Murrell.

Two Residents

The outgoing Chairman, Councillor Craig Martin, commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone, particularly the two residents. Cllr Martin thanked the Vice-Chairman and the Clerk for all their support over the previous year, and thanked all Councillors for their active engagement in Council matters. Councillors agreed with Cllr Hall that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should be commended for all their work over the previous year.

Item 1. 26/45 Election of Chairman

Nominations were requested for the Office of Chairman for the year 2026/2027. Cllr Craig Martin was proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations. Cllr Martin was duly elected, therefore, as Chairman.

(**Resolved** - that Cllr Martin is duly elected as Chairman for 2026/2027).

Cllr Martin thanked Councillors for his re-election.

Item 2. 26/46 Election of Vice-Chairman

Nominations were requested for the Office of Vice-Chairman for the year 2026/2027. Cllr Suzanne Brown was proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations. Cllr Brown was duly elected as Vice-Chairman.

(Resolved - that Cllr Brown is duly elected as Vice-Chairman for 2026/2027).

Cllr Brown thanked the Chairman and all Councillors for their support during the previous year.

Item 3. 26/47 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Jackie Gregory and Chris Veitch.

Item 4. 26/48 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Craig Martin declared interests as a County Councillor and as a Trustee of Park View Academy. Councillor Darren Hawkes declared an interest as a member of the North Lodge Remembrance Group.

Item 5. 26/49 Election of Portfolio Holders

The following Councillors were elected as Portfolio Holders - a) Communications and Media Development - Cllr Chris Veitch, b) Crime and Community Safety - Cllr Jackie Gregory, c) Finance - Cllr Chris Veitch, d) Highways and Community Assets - Cllr Patrick Driscoll, e) Horticulture - Cllr Maureen May, f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations (including Council representative at CDALC and Local Network meetings) - Cllr Maureen May, g) Picktree Village - Cllr Suzanne Brown, h) Planning - Cllr Darren Hawkes, i) Play Areas - Cllr Margaret Caygill, j) Policy and Governance - Cllr Dennis Hall, k) Project Development, Business and External Relations - Cllr Craig Martin.

The Chairman thanked all those Councillors who had put their names forward for a Portfolio.

Item 6. 26/50 Report of the County Councillor

The County Councillor advised that he had no matters to report and invited any questions. However, Councillors had no questions to put to the County Councillor.

Item 7. 26/51 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 21st April 2026, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting and were duly signed by the Vice-Chairman in the Chair.

Item 8. 26/52 Chairman's Report

The Chairman gave an update on the progress of the Remembrance Artwork. The Artwork itself was ready for installation, awaiting the base being put down by the County Council. The Clerk advised that the Lease for the land had been signed for the Parish Council and returned to the County Council for sealing and then registration at the Land Registry.

Councillors thanked the Chairman.

Regarding outstanding matters -

- a) Re Minute 26/35). Re the Milburngate sale, the County Cllr advised that financial documents were not in the public domain. However, Councillors agreed with him and Cllr Hawkes that, because of the sale, Council Tax payers had avoided a highly detrimental financial situation.
- b) Re Minute 26/35). Cllr Caygill advised that the apple tree had been cut down. Councillors agreed that the horticulture contractor should be asked to remove the stump.
- c) Re Minute 26/37 section b). Re litter on the north verge of Blind Lane, the Clerk advised that the County Council was seeking to co-ordinate a date for grass cutting and litter picking while traffic management was in place.
- d) Re Minute 26/38 section b). Re motorcycles on the C2C route, the Clerk advised that a newspaper had reported that the Police and Neighbourhood Wardens had removed three illegal bikes from there. Cllr Hawkes advised that this followed discussions at the recent PACT meeting.
- e) Re Minute 26/38 section b). Re the repainting of the cycle lanes on North Road, Cllr Gregory had advised the Clerk that the request to the PCSO was being progressed.
- f) Re Minute 26/38 section d). Re the three new seats, the Clerk advised that the quote from the County Council was £289.74 higher than the budgeted figure. Councillors agreed to accept the quote.
- g) Re Minute 26/44 section a). Cllr Caygill advised that the fallen tree had now been removed.

Item 9. 26/53 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Veitch had provided the written report below -

Since the last Meeting in April there has only been 4 posts. These were relating to the following and placed on our social media.

- 1.Speed Camera van statics Blind Lane for March 2026
 - 2.Durham County Council roll out of food waste boxes
 - 3.Bus Fire on North Road
 - 4.Splash Pad dates for 2026
-

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report.

b) Crime and Community Safety

In her absence from the meeting, Cllr Gregory had provided the written report below -

Police

Crime

Please refer to website police.uk for recorded crimes in North Lodge.

Community Safety

Speed monitoring.

The speed monitoring vehicle continues to visit Blind Lane (A693). Data will be published in due course.

Sexual Assault

To report a rape or sexual assault, call Durham Constabulary on 101, or dial 999 in an emergency. If you're more comfortable reporting online, you can visit the police online reporting page here <http://www.durham.police.uk/.../rape-sexual-assault.../>

If you're not ready to speak to police, there are other agencies who can help:

The Meadows Sexual Assault Referral Centre provides free, confidential healthcare and compassionate support to people who have experienced rape or sexual assault. Call 0330 223 0099 or visit www.sarcdurham.co.uk

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line is available 24/7 and provides support for anyone who has been affected by rape or sexual assault. Call 0808 500 2222 or visit www.247sexualabusesupport.org.uk

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (RSACC) offers free, specialist support to anyone who has experienced any form of sexual violence at any time in their lives. Call 01325 354119, email info@rsacc-thecentre.org.uk or visit www.rsacc-thecentre.org.uk

Stalking

In the UK, one in five women and one in ten men will experience stalking in their adult lives.

Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which can cause someone to feel distressed or afraid.

The four key signs of stalking are when behaviour becomes: Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted and Repeated

The most common type of stalking behaviour is being sent unwanted texts, social media messages, emails, and voice mails.

Sound like something you're experiencing? Tell police, stalking is a crime.

To contact police use telephone number 101. In an emergency use telephone number 999

Reports can also be made online at www.durham.police.uk

For more advice and support:

National Stalking Helpline - 0808 802 0300

Suzy Lamplugh Trust - www.suzylamplugh.org

Alice Ruggles Trust - www.alicerugglestrust.org

Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service - www.paladinservice.co.uk

Romance Fraud/Scam

Romance fraud doesn't start with obvious lies, it starts with connection, trust and emotional dependence.

10,784 people across the UK reported being victims of romance fraud in 2025. Their losses totalled over £102M to criminals.

If you're talking to someone online who avoids meeting you in person, asks for money or creates urgent situations that only 'you' can fix, it could be a scam.

They listened. They made you laugh. They said all the right things at the right times. They told you they loved you and then they defrauded you.

Spot the signs: www.reportfraud.police.uk/romance-fraud/

Operation Drive Insured

Last week 25 uninsured vehicles were seized from the roads of County Durham and Darlington during this operation. This campaign was developed by the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MiB) in partnership with the National Roads Policing Operations.

Officers from Durham Roads & Armed Policing carried out extra patrols across the force's roads working with the MiB to focus on uninsured vehicles and take them off our roads.

Uninsured driving costs the UK £1 billion a year, but the human cost is even greater. Every 20 minutes, someone is the victim of an uninsured or hit-and-run driver.

Driving without insurance can mean you have your vehicle seized and potentially crushed, receive a £300 fixed penalty notice and six points on your licence. You could also face court and receive an unlimited fine and/or a driving ban. Police are urging drivers to ensure their policy matches their needs, including commuting to work, business use, and ensuring driving other cars is actually covered.

Operation Sunrise

Operation Sunrise, a targeted operation to find and arrest wanted criminals in County Durham.

In total, six offenders were arrested, all of whom were wanted for serious offences including rape, stalking, possession of a firearm, domestic violence, and breach of non-molestation orders. A firearm and offensive weapon were also seized as part of the arrests.

If you know someone who is wanted and their whereabouts? Call police now on 101. Alternatively, call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

For information on any of the above topics or to find out what is happening around Co Durham, please visit Durham Constabulary's social media accounts.

For non emergency telephone calls to police, use telephone number 101

For all emergency telephone calls to police, use telephone number 999

Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)

Lakes, Rivers and Streams

If you're heading to any water spots, please don't be tempted to take a dip.

Even when the weather is warm, the water can be cold enough to cause Cold Water Shock which can affect your breathing and movement.

Would you know what to do if you saw someone struggling in the water ?

Remember, 'Phone, Tell, Throw' to help someone in a water emergency.

Phone 999 and ask for the fire and rescue service. You can use the 'what3words' app to help emergency services accurately pinpoint where you are.

Tell the person in the water to stay calm and float on their back.

Throw rescue equipment to help them float and hold onto the end to pull them in.

Never enter the water yourself to help someone or a pet in distress.

For more information on the above topics, and to find out about what is happening in Co Durham, please visit Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service's social media accounts.

For all emergency telephone calls to the Fire service, please use telephone number 999

Durham County Council (DCC)

Looking for a career change?

Durham County Council has lots of vacancies available right now.

Apply today <https://www.durham.gov.uk/CurrentJobVacancies>

For more information about what is happening in Co Durham, please visit Durham County Council's social media accounts.

To contact DCC, use telephone number 0300 026 0000 or email help@durham.gov.uk

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

c) Finance

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Veitch had provided the written report below -

I have inspected the financial information for our Bank accounts, I can confirm that everything appears correct.

The internal auditor (Ian Herberson) has signed off the accounts. They are now ready to go for Council approval in June and then on to the external auditor for final approval.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report.

d) Highways and Community Assets

Cllr Driscoll's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

The monthly bus shelters inspection was completed on Friday the 1st of May 2026. All shelters appeared to be in good order.

Significant seat cleaning was again required, particularly for the "Lambton Worm" seat, plus cleaning of glass cabinets. In addition, the top of the bushes at the side of the "Ambleside Court" shelter needed trimming before it becomes overgrown.

In addition, following the recent bus on fire at the Northlands bus stop, the Clerk is to contact JH Coaches to ask that they arrange to clean associated damage from the bus shelter.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

e) Horticulture

Cllr May's report included the matters contained in her written report below -

SUMMARY / UPDATE

Raised Flower Beds (Throughout Parish)

These beds will shortly be emptied - in preparation for the planting of Summer Bedding plants.

Picktree Lodge

Stephen Makepeace has formed two flower beds at the entrance of Picktree Lodge and prepared them for the planting of next season's plants.

Longdean Park Shrub Bed

Clerk is awaiting funding to be sent from Durham County Council. Stephen Makepeace will be informed and he will then begin work on the shrub bed.

Northlands Bus Shelter

Stephen Makepeace is in the process of cutting back shrubs around this bus shelter. The Sub Group is communicating with Stephen re the height of the shrubs required.

Tree Plaques

Just awaiting confirmation that the plaques are ready for collection from Marmax design company. Councillor Hawkes has kindly offered to collect the plaques from the company when ready.

The King's Seat

An area for the siting of the King's seat has been identified - on grassy area in front of old police houses. To be discussed at Parish Council meeting.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

No report was given.

g) Picktree Village

Cllr Brown's report included the matters contained in her written report below -

This has been a frustrating year in the village as no action is promised regarding our concerns of traffic, litter, dirty bus shelter, graffiti and the surface damage to the lane. Apparently data outweighs concern by residents. I will continue to raise these concerns in the hope that persistence prevails. Could signage to prevent HGVs using the lane as a shortcut to the A1? That would at least have some impact on the problem. Thanks go to residents who regularly pick litter by lazy users driving usually as a shortcut to and from the Washington Highway.

Residents look after their homes and the natural environment and flower beds look colourful all through the year.

We have good correspondence with the Estate manager at Lambton Park and issues are resolved fairly quickly.

An extra observation is that the surface of Bonemill lane is damaged and pot holed jointly owned by DCC and Sunderland City Council. It is hoped re surfacing can take place asap.

Thank you to DCC Councillor Craig for his lobbying on behalf of our residents especially regarding the traffic issue.

Finally, here's to a safe and sunny summer time.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report..

h) Planning

Cllr Hawkes's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

W/E 15th May

No applications within the parish.

W/E 8th May

No applications within the parish.

W/E 1st May

No applications within the parish, however the planning for change of use for The Queens Head, Front Street, to a Children's Nursery was approved.

W/E 24th April

North Lodge/ North Lodge/ East North	DM/26/00721/FPA	Mrs Mariacclare Sangster	Sangere 2 Napier Close Chester-le-Street DH3 4BN	First floor side extension with balcony to rear
--	-----------------	-----------------------------	---	---

In addition, Cllr Hawkes and other Councillors had noticed that large signage had been erected just inside the boundaries of Park View School. The Clerk is to check with the County Council Planning Enforcement Department that any necessary permissions have been given.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hawkes for his report.

i) Play Areas

Cllr Caygill's report included the matters contained in her written report below -

I am pleased to report that all equipment at both Low Flatts and Merlin Drive Play Areas appear to be in good working order.

We still await new signage for both areas.

It is good to see that both areas are proving very popular with young families and it important that we do our utmost to retain, maintain and improve these areas for the welfare of our children.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

j) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall advised that there were no matters to report.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall.

k) Project Development, Business and External Relations

Cllr Martin had, earlier in the meeting, given an update on the Remembrance Artwork.

Item 10. 26/54 Correspondence

From the North East War Memorials Project - Thank you for donation.

Item 11. 26/55 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) The Annual Newsletter

Cllr May outlined progress to date and thanked all those who had submitted articles. Cllr Hawkes suggested an article from the North Lodge Remembrance Group and Cllr Caygill suggested an article thanking the Chester-le-Street Art Society for the artwork supplied for the display boards. Councillors thanked Cllr May for all her work on this matter.

b) An Alternative Venue for Council Meetings

Councillors agreed with Cllr Hall that the present room being used for Parish Council meetings was not satisfactory for a number of reasons including size and accessibility. The Chairman asked Cllr Hall and the Clerk to investigate any potentially more suitable venues and make a report to a future meeting of the Council.

Item 12. 26/56 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 664.56	Salaries May 2026	
Expenses	£ 115.00	Expenses May 2026	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1976.51	Horticulture May 2026	£ 329.42
I. Herberson	£ 50.00	Internal Audit Fee	
Zurich Municipal	£ 915.08	Annual Insurance Premium	
Total of Above Payments	£ 3721.15		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - May 2026	£ 7.71
Post Office Ltd	£ 3.60	Postage	
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 49.85		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 13. 26/57 Other Matters for Information

Councillors discussed with the residents in attendance various matters including the condition of roads and footpaths and inconsiderate parking at School leaving time.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.30pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 16th June 2026.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries June 2026	
Expenses	£ 115.00	Expenses June 2026	
Makepeace Landscapes	£	Horticulture June 2026	£
Craig Martin	£	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
Total of Above Payments	£		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit			
TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - June 2026	£ 7.71
HM Revenue & Customs	£	P.A.Y.E.	
HM Revenue & Customs	£	Employer's N.I.C.	
Total Card and D/D Payments	£		

Balance to 31st May 2026

Balance b/f	£77018.85	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - May 2026	<u>£ 3721.15</u>	Community Account	£ 584.59
	£73297.70	Commercial Instant Access	<u>£72690.13</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 49.85</u>	Total	£73274.72
	£73247.85		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 33.12</u>	Deduct cheque not yet presented	<u>£ Nil</u>
	£73280.97		
Deduct Bank Charges	<u>£ 6.25</u>		
Balance c/f	£73274.72		£73274.72