

NORTH LODGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held at Park View School, Lombard Drive, Chester-le-Street on Tuesday 15th October 2024.

PRESENT: Chairman: Councillor Patrick Driscoll.
Councillors: Sue Brown, Margaret Caygill, Jackie Gregory, Maureen May, Dennis Hall, Craig Martin.
County Councillor: Craig Martin.
Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman commenced the meeting at 6.30pm by welcoming everyone.

Item 1. 24/96 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Chris Veitch.

Item 2. 24/97 Declarations of Interest

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

Item 3. 24/98 Report of the County Councillor

The Chairman invited the County Councillor to give his report which included the following matters-

- a) The County Council had introduced automatic enrolment for those eligible for free school meals.
- b) The County Council will introduce food waste recycling for all residential properties.
- c) Re celebration trees for Vigo Lane, the County Cllr advised that various County Council officers were considering this.
- d) Cllr May advised of several outstanding matters involving the County Council. The County Cllr advised that there had been efficiency savings in every department except for adults, children and social care. Consequently, in some areas, there was a lack of funding and less was being achieved. Cllr May will provide the County Cllr with a list of the outstandings to chase up.
- e) Cllr Gregory considered that the recent Farmer's Market in the town had been very disappointing. The County Cllr advised that the market contractor had had success in other towns where business and community groups had joined in.
- f) Cllr Gregory considered that the County Council did very little to promote the County north of Durham City. The County Cllr advised that he agreed and always looked for opportunities to push the case for the area.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 24/99 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 17th September 2024, 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 Chairman.

Item 5. 24/100 Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report included the matters contained in his written report below -

This month there have been communications between the Parish Council and the Co- Op customer service department at the Drum Industrial Estate. This is after a site meeting on Thursday 19th of September at the path between Low Flatts and the industrial estate entrance, where both parties looked at possible weed clearance on this overgrown link route. The Co- op kindly offered to provide the resources and workers to make this happen, hopefully in the week commencing 14/10/2024, possibly with other Drum Estate business volunteers. Refreshments for those participating would be the Parish Council's part of the arrangement. This type of local business and council liaison on a common cause to benefit both workers, and walkers, is something that the Parish Council will always pursue, for the benefit of residents.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.
Regarding outstanding matters -
There were no matters to up-date.

Item 6. 24/101 Portfolio Holders' Reports
a) Communications and Media Development

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

Only 3 posts for this month. One a reminder for residents to test their smoke alarms, one regarding the Have Your Say: Police and Crime Plan Pop-Up Consultations and the main post was regarding the proposed removal of the seat at the Lambton Worm bus stop. This gained a lot of interest and every comment posted by the public highlighted that residents either do not want the existing one removed or a new seat put in its place and this should be looked at again by the Parish Council.
Litter pick
A litter pick for the end of the year will be arranged for end of October/November time. Update will be provided via email.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report and invited Cllr Gregory to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

b) Crime and Community Safety

Crime

Please refer to Police UK for crime reports in the area.

Community Safety

Durham Constabulary

Mental Health

A problem shared is a problem halved.

Do you need to speak to someone? Call The Samaritans on 116 123 any time, day or night.

As the dark winter nights approach this is a reminded to make sure your property is secure, including stationary motor vehicles (remove all valuables from sight), garden sheds and garages.

Consider using light timers to give the impression that the property is occupied.

Please refer to Durham Constabulary's social media accounts for more information.

For non emergency incidents, use telephone number 101

For all emergency incidents, use telephone number 999

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue service (CDDFRS)

Remember, fire doors play a vital part in protecting life and property, so make sure to keep yours shut and never leave them wedged open.

CDDFRS firefighters won the regional UKRO Extrication Challenge.

The event, held in Manchester. The group competed against nine other teams from across UK to demonstrate their skills in a rescue scenario.

CDDFRS fire fighters competed against 30 fire and rescue services across the UK in the national United Kingdom Rescue Organisation (UKRO) Extrication Challenge.

The event was hosted by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service.

It saw the group demonstrate their skills in a complex rescue scenario involving two casualties.

The team was awarded sixth place.

CDDFRS has established a new part time (18.5 hours per week) Creative Content Officer post.

For further information and to view the full job description, visit North East Jobs

<https://www.northeastjobs.org.uk/.../Creative.../270418>

Please refer to CDDFRS's social media accounts for more information

For all emergency incidents, use telephone number 999

Durham County Council (DCC)

From 1 October DCC 's Household Waste Recycling Centres move to their winter opening hours as usual at this time of year.

Most will be open 9am to 3.30pm, check www.durham.gov.uk/HWRC to find your nearest one. You can also continue to book bulky waste collections - find out more at

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/bulkywaste>

Park and Ride service runs 7am-7pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays from Belmont and Sniperley.

DCC has vacancies for a wide range of jobs. You can find details of all our current vacancies and how to apply on our website:

<https://ow.ly/ygBw50Rf78z>

In addition, Cllr Caygill reported on advertising stickers on numerous lampposts in the area, put there apparently illegally. The stickers had been removed by a resident and the Police informed.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

c) Finance

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

I have inspected the financial information supplied to me by the clerk and can confirm that everything appears correct.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report. Cllr Driscoll then gave his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

d) Highways and Community Assets

The monthly bus shelters inspection was completed on Monday the 7th of October 2024. All the shelters appeared to be in an appropriate condition, and the most significant extra task was to provide leaf clearance at nearly every shelter, due to the seasonal profusion of leaves in these areas. Minor tasks were involved in some seat cleaning and removal of litter, plus a good clean of all the glass cabinets in the relevant shelters.

Councillors thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

The Chairman invited Cllr May to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

e) Horticulture

1. **Raised flower beds**
Extra soil has been added
The Millennium bed is now tidy and will be refurbished shortly. Winter bedding is presently being planted and bulbs to be added. Suggestion of heuchera be planted in beds under trees.
2. **Large shrub beds in North Road** need colour of heuchera and more bulbs. Stephen Makepeace will take photographs and do audit when spring planting.
3. **Picktree Village.** Ivy growing over wall close to Ash Meadows has been removed by the gardener.
4. **Walls within our parish.** We need to look at ownership of the wall that require maintenance (especially old stone walls).
5. **Shrub bed in Longdean Park** looking tired and needs replacing. Stephen will price up for small low maintenance colourful shrubs.
6. **In North Road** close to Christmas tree, we need an attractive ornament e.g. wheelbarrow. Stephen will investigate and report back.
7. **Estate agents for sale board** at North Lodge. Clerk to contact County Council for removal.
8. **Daffodils.** Continuation along North Road to be planted against the wall from Longdean Park entrance to end of grassed area.
9. **Millennium bed refurbishment-** in the process of being agreed.
10. **Three celebration trees.** DCC agreement required asap as planting needs to be complete by end of November.
11. **Clearing of path at Drum Industrial Estate- ongoing.**

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

In the absence of Cllr Forrester, Cllr May reported on the recent Area Action Partnership meeting. The Chairman thanked Cllr May and invited Cllr Caygill to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

g) Play Areas

MERLIN DRIVE

Equipment appears to be in good order.

LOW FLATTS

Equipment appears to be in good order.

It has been brought to our attention that the bases for the original goal posts are standing proud and could be a safety hazard. This has been reported to DCC.

No action yet on the climbing frame puddles.

The Co op responded to my request for help in clearing the footpaths around this play area and a meeting resulted and they are keen to help. They hope to commence on Wed. 16th October.

In addition, a) Concerns had been raised about suspected anti-social behaviour at a holding near

to Low Flatts play area. The County Cllr advised that the Police and the Neighbourhood Wardens were aware of this and were taking action. b) Cllr Hall considered that the football pitch at Low Flatts was underused and he presented some ideas to increase its usage.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report and invited Cllr Hall to give his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

h) Policy and Governance

Policy paper. Planning Reform Working Paper: Brownfield Passport. (27 September).

This paper invites views on further action the government could take through the planning system to support the development of brownfield land in urban areas.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-reform-working-paper-brownfield-passport>

Centre for Cities: What are metro mayors' expectations of the new Government? (2 October).

<https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/what-are-metro-mayors-expectations-of-the-new-government/>

Cllr Hall considered that the many empty properties in the town centre had a negative effect. The County Cllr was of the opinion that there needed to be a change in the law regarding the taxation of empty properties.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall for his report and invited Cllr Martin to give his report.

i) Project Development, Business and External Relations

a) Cllr Martin thanked all those who had attended the recent remembrance artwork site meeting.

b) The greyhound stadium was about to be sold. The prospective new owners intended to revitalise the business and promote it within the community.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin for his report and invited Cllr Brown to give her report which included the matters contained in her written report below -

j) Picktree Village

The twin concerns of speeding vehicles and commercial lorries and litter everyday on the lane continue unabated.

A resident has reported that Police speed monitoring in the village has been observed on 4 occasions over the last few weeks. I await the monitoring data.

Thank you to DCC Councillor Craig as the requested litter bin next to the bus top near Lintfort is in place.

Flower beds are still colourful.

Work on the damaged road surface has yet to begin. White kerb markings are in place.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report.

Item 7. 24/102 Correspondence

The Clerk advised that there were no items to report to the meeting.

Item 8. 24/103 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) Public Seating - Retention or Disposal of the Seat near to the Lambton Worm

The potential removal of the seat had been the subject of a post on the Council's Facebook page for the previous month and Councillors discussed the replies that had been given. It was agreed to monitor the condition of the seat during the next twelve months and reconsider its retention should it decline to an unacceptable state.

b) Public Seating and Noticeboards - Cleaning and Maintenance

Councillors discussed the maintenance of metal seats and agreed that the seats should be replaced, not repaired, as and when they decayed. Councillors discussed the possibility of

appointing an individual or a business to regularly clean the Council seats around the Parish. The Chairman advised that he was happy to continue to volunteer, as a concerned resident, to clean the seats without any responsibility on behalf of the Parish Council. Councillors thanked the Chairman for the kind offer of volunteering his time as a resident.

c) County Council Consultation on 2025/2026 Budget

Councillors discussed the consultation questions and the issues behind these. Agreed to submit a comment that the Parish Council is deeply concerned at the proposed budget cuts and proposed increases in Council Tax with the prospect of lower service standards.

d) Parish Council 2025/2026 Budget - Forward Planning

The Clerk advised Portfolio Holders that they needed to submit to him, by mid-December, their requested budget figures for inclusion in the precept setting discussion to be held during the January 2025 Council meeting.

Item 9. 24/104 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 615.14	Salaries October 2024	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses October 2024	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 3010.39	Horticulture October 2024	£501.73
Durham County Council	£ 1474.80	Supply & Installation of Goal Posts	£245.80
Total of Above Payments	£ 5210.33		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Oct 2024	£ 7.71
Poppy Shop	£ 200.00	Wreaths and Donation	£ 7.16
Costco Wholesale Ltd	£ 38.77	Refreshments for Path Clearing	£ 0.69
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 285.02		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 10. 24/105 Other Matters for Information

- a) Cllr Gregory reminded Councillors that the replacement litter bin for the Wheatsheaf area was still awaited. The County Cllr confirmed that he would continue to chase this up.
- b) Cllr Gregory gave an update on communication with the County Council re the pollution monitor at North Road. Further reports would be made as this matter developed.
- c) Cllr Brown reported on an Autumn Fayre that had been held at Lambton Castle. Gates near to the Castle on North Drive had been refurbished to a high standard.
- d) Cllr Gregory noted that there was an apparent business link between Lumley Castle and Raby Castle. The County Cllr advised that the County Council had facilitated the formation of a group of castle owners to promote themselves.
- e) The County Cllr advised that, in his contacts with people coming to the Parish from elsewhere, the Parish was generally held in high regard and the work done by the Parish Council was an important factor in this.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.15pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 19th November 2024.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries November 2024	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses November 2024	
Salaries	£	Back-dated Salary Increase	
Makepeace Landscapes	£	Horticulture November 2024	£
Durham County Council	£ 699.94	Festive Lighting	£116.66
Madhouse Media Ltd	£ 90.00	Domain Transfer Fee	£ 15.00
Society of Local Council Clerks	£ 150.00	Annual Membership Fee	
Total of Above Payments	£		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Nov 2024	£ 7.71
Dobbies Garden Centres	£ 110.91	Tree Lights and Batteries	£ 18.49
Post Office Ltd	£ 39.60	Postage Stamps	
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 196.76		

Balance to 31st October 2024

Balance b/f	£57960.59	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - October 2024	<u>£ 5210.33</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 605.85
	£52750.26	Instant Account	<u>£51907.11</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 285.02</u>	Total	£52512.96
	£52465.24		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 47.72</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ Nil</u>
Balance c/f	£52512.96		£52512.96