

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 19th November 2024.

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

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

Item 1. 24/106 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Dennis Hall.

Item 2. 24/107 Declarations of Interest

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

Item 3. 24/108 Report of the County Councillor

The Chairman invited the County Councillor to give his report which included the matters contained in his written report below -

Effect of the Budget on the Council's Finances

- We haven't received the final funding settlement but from the chancellor's announcements we can estimate the below.
- DCC will receive an additional £13 million that is raised from the increase in employer's national insurance contributions.
- It is also positive that the government is expected to provide additional compensation for the increased costs DCC will have to pay in employer national insurance contributions, so all the additional funding can be used on services.
- But this will still not cover all the increased costs for adult social care and looked after children.
- These will be even higher now because care provider's will have higher staffing costs from the national insurance increase.
- Funding for special educational needs continues to be a big concern, a deficit of tens of millions of pounds sits on the council's books (which is same across most local authorities).
- There is some additional funding for this but does not fix the problem.

In addition a) Cllr Gregory asked about Employability Durham. The County Cllr explained its purpose and its sources of funding.

- b) Cllr May asked about the lack of planting at Northlands roundabout. The County Cllr will raise this with the Clean & Green department.
 - c) Cllr Gregory commented on declining service standards of the number 21 bus route. The County Cllr will take this up with the Bus Community Engagement Officer.
 - d) The County Cllr confirmed that he was working through Cllr May's list of outstanding matters. He reminded Councillors that the County Council had asked nearly all departments to cut staffing levels by approx 10%.
- The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 24/109 Adoption of Minutes of Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 15th October 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. 24/110 Chairman's Report

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

Once again, it was an honour and a privilege for me to lay the wreath from the Parish Council at the Remembrance Sunday ceremony on the 10th of November, in Chester- le-Street marketplace. These feelings were repeated at the North Lodge Remembrance Group ceremony, next to the " Lambton Worm " public house, on Armistice Day, the 11th of November. The weather was cold but clear on both days, and the public turnout for both events said everything about local respect and sentiment for these occasions.

Thanks and gratitude must be sent to Councillor Veitch and the Remembrance Group, for inviting councillors to their ceremony, and for providing such a well organised event, which was as visually stunning as ever.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

- a) Re Minute 24/101 section e, sub-section 7). Re the "For Sale" board, Cllr May stated that this was still in place. The County Cllr advised that the Enforcement function had been merged into Clean & Green. The Clerk will write again to pursue the removal of the sign.
- b) Re Minute 24/101 section g, sub-section a). Re reports received from residents about fires and antisocial behaviour, an item is to be posted on social media advising residents that they must report incidents themselves to the relevant authority and not to the Parish Council as the authorities need first-hand information.
- c) Re Minute 24/105 section a). The waste bin near the Wheatsheaf pub had now been moved but to an unsuitable site. The County Cllr will follow this up.

Item 6. 24/111 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

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

Social Media

A number of posts this last month including Annual Competition for Young Musicians, Bonfire advice, Durham Fire Station Open day, Remembrance Service on North Road, Christmas Lights Switch On in CLS, Litter Pick and Chester le Street Police launch Operation Drive

Litter Pick

The last litter pick of the year will be on held Tues 26th Nov at The Lambton Worm at 11am.

In addition, the Clerk advised that a contract renewal questionnaire had been received from Madhouse Media. Councillors agreed to renew the contract for a further twelve months. 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 information in your area.

Community Safety

Police

Operation 'Sceptre'

Bin that knife

This is a national campaign. Commencing on Monday, November 11, unlicensed weapons can be safely surrendered - no questions asked - at police stations across County Durham and Darlington. Remember, this amnesty is anonymous but not an excuse to dispose of weapons involved in crime. Any knives suspected of being used unlawfully may still be investigated.

Operation Dark Night

This operation was launched for one week from Oct 30th. Officers were conducting roadside vision screening - inviting drivers to stop and read a number plate from 20m away. All drivers who took part passed the test.

Police encourage all drivers to get their eyes checked regularly. Drivers should make sure to wear glasses if required, whilst driving.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Neighbourhood officers and PCSO's work alongside residents and local partners to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and other community concerns.

Different ASB issues require different solutions. Some are dealt with by police, some issues are dealt with by the local council and some by other agencies.

For more information, visit Durham Constabulary's Facebook account.

Stalking

One in five women and one in ten men will experience staking in their adult lives. Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which cause someone to feel distressed or afraid.

The four key signs of stalking are when behaviour becomes

Fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated.

Please call the local police if you feel you are being stalked using telephone number 101 or in an emergency 999.

Recruitment

14 new Special Constables were officially sworn in before a magistrate and are now helping to protect the communities of Co Durham and Darlington.

Durham Constabulary has a vacancy for and an auto electrician who, will be based in Peterlee.

Interested, find out more here <https://www.durham.police.uk/.../jobs/Auto-Electrician/>

Apply by sending your completed application form to recruitment@durham.police.uk before 5pm on December 4.

Dark nights

Here are a few tips to help protect your home and vehicle:

Lock all windows and doors (even when you're home).

Keep valuables out of view and remove items from your vehicle each night.

Secure your vehicle and never leave keys in the ignition.
Use lights or timer switches to keep your home well-lit.
Secure outbuildings and gates and consider a security light or CCTV.
Don't leave keys in locks or near windows.
If you drive a keyless car, keep the fob in a Faraday bag to prevent signal copying.
Look out for elderly neighbours and use a house alarm if you have one.
If you see anything unusual, report it via 101 or 999 in an emergency.
For all non-emergency calls to police - use telephone number 101
For all emergency calls to police - use telephone number 999.
For further information, please visit Durham Constabulary's social media accounts
Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)

Recruitment

CDDFRS award winning Firefighter Apprenticeship opened on October 25th
Are you ready to take your place?
Please contact CDDFRS recruitment @ ddfire.gov.uk for further details.

Social

Calling all former members of the CDDFRS control room!
To celebrate 50 years of our Service this year, CDDFRS invite former control room staff to HQ on November 25 from 1.30pm to 3pm. If any former member of control wishes to attend on November 25, please email comms@ddfire.gov.uk
For further information please refer to CDDFRS social media accounts.
For emergency calls use telephone number 999

Durham County Council (DCC)

Scams

There are a number of scams currently targeting residents across County Durham including:
Winter fuel payments - Residents are receiving text messages from telephone numbers beginning with +485, claiming to be from DCC, and providing a link to claim a winter heating subsidy benefit.
New NHS dentists opening up - Fake Facebook posts are claiming new dentists are opening up across County Durham accepting NHS patients.
Outstanding parking fines - Residents are receiving 'outstanding parking fine' scam texts with a link to a 'gov' phone number.
QR code to pay for parking - QR codes have been left in council car parks or parking places as an option to pay for parking. Our car parks do not have any on or off street parking place that is payable by QR code.

More information about current scams can be found:

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

Energy Bills

If you live in a household where you struggle to pay your monthly energy bills or keep your home warm enough, you may be entitled to help.

Find out more:

www.durham.gov.uk/saveonyourenergybills

Recycling Centres

Just a reminder that the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) are operating on winter opening hours.

Most are open 9am to 3.30pm but please visit www.durham.gov.uk/HWRC to find opening hours of your nearest one.

DCC's website also has a handy map so you can check how busy your local recycling centre is before you set off.

Recruitment

Please find details of all current vacancies with DCC and how to apply on our website:

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

Consultations

Help shape the future of transport in the region. #NorthEastLTP

Do you want a more sustainable and integrated transport system? DCC as part of the North East Combined Authority want your views on how to make the North East Local Transport Plan work for you.

The consultation will run until Sunday, 26 January 2025. You can share your views through an online survey, by post or phone.

<https://www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/localtransportplan>.

In addition, Cllr Gregory will contact the Police to find out the current position with appointing a new PCSO for this area.

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

c) Finance

I have inspected the financial information supplied to me by the clerk and can confirm that everything appears correct including the agreed pay rise for the clerk.

The clerk has informed me that Lloyds Bank saying that they are going to start charging the Council's current account. I suggest the Council discuss a possible move to another bank. The Co-op for example offer free banking but there would be several things to take into account should we consider swapping to them eg could they offer the same on-line facilities that we have with Lloyds and a debit card.

Councillors agreed that the Clerk should make enquiries about alternative banking providers.

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 Wednesday the 6th of November 2024. All the shelters appeared to be in good order, and the main task in hand was to give them the biggest leaf clearance of the year, whilst seat cleaning and litter removal were at a minimum.

The glass cabinets were also cleaned, to take a smart appearance into the new Year.

In addition, Cllr Driscoll advised that two noticeboards, at Vigo Lane and North Road, had been broken into and a poster had been taken from the Vigo Lane board. The Clerk is to arrange for the noticeboards to be repaired.

Councillors thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

The Chairman invited Cllr May to give her report which included the following matters -

e) Horticulture

a) The flower beds had been planted for the winter.

b) Refurbishment of the shrub bed in Longdean Park, planting of more daffodil bulbs on the verge between Longdean Park and Lambton Park and a planter for North Road were to be discussed by the Horticulture Committee.

c) Re the planting of three celebration trees in Vigo Lane, the Clerk advised that the County Council had now provided a Licence Application for which their fee would be £153. Councillors agreed to this charge.

d) The Clerk advised that the Gardener intended to increase his charge for the regular monthly horticulture work by 5% for the next financial year. Councillors agreed to this.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

In the absence of Cllr Forrester, Cllr May advised that she would be attending the forthcoming Area Action Partnership meeting and would give a report in due course. The Clerk had circulated a report from the recent CDALC 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.

The Co-op group carried out an excellent clearance of the path around this play area. I understand they are looking at a possible barrier at the culvert drop. Our thanks have been sent.

No news of the old goal post bases yet.

Some work may have been carried out on the junior climbing frame platforms and they will be inspected after the next rain.

In addition, the County Cllr kindly agreed to chase up the Outdoor Facilities Co-ordinator re replacement signs and gates.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

h) Policy and Governance

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

LGA Conference: Government Announcements

The Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner MP, announced in her speech that the government will consult on:

- **Changes to the standards regime** include removing the requirement for councillors' home addresses to be published and introducing sanctions.
- Allowing councils to use **virtual attendance at council meetings**. A consultation paper has been published with a closing date of 19 December. NALC will be responding, and all parish and town councils, county associations, and individual councillors and clerks are encouraged to participate in this important consultation. Your responses are vital in demonstrating the strong support for this flexibility, building on the momentum from the previous call for evidence.

In the keynote address of the conference, Angela Rayner announced that the Government will consult on reform of the **local government standards framework**, including a proposal to allow for the suspension of members who violate codes of conduct.

Angela Rayner said: 'I've been made aware of cases of persistent bullying and harassment by councillors, even in some cases leading to victims' resignations. We don't have a system that protects victims or empowers councils to deal with unacceptable behaviour. And this cannot go on.'

Links:

Speech:

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/local-government-association-conference?utm_campaign=Chief%2Bexecutive%2527s%2Bbulletin%2B-%2B25%2BOctober%2B2024%2B%2528Special%2Bedition%2529&utm_medium=email

Consultation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-remote-attendance-and-proxy-voting-at->

[local-authority-meetings?utm_campaign=Chief%2Bexecutive%2527s%2Bbulletin%2B-%2B25%2BOctober%2B2024%2B%2528Special%2Bedition%2529&utm_medium=email](https://www.local-authority-meetings?utm_campaign=Chief%2Bexecutive%2527s%2Bbulletin%2B-%2B25%2BOctober%2B2024%2B%2528Special%2Bedition%2529&utm_medium=email)

LGA:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-response-deputy-prime-minister-announcement-virtual-attendance-council-meetings>

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 was progressing with the Remembrance artwork.
- b) Cllr Martin had taken the opportunity at the recent Drum Business Group meeting to thank all those who had taken part in the path clearance project.
- c) The proposed artwork, using Section 106 money, for the Drum Industrial Estate was not progressing. Councillors were asked to give consideration to the Parish Council taking over the project including its funding.

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

Patching has been completed on the Lane within timescales and little disruption to residents apart from queuing traffic. A very welcome side effect of the work instead of the usual racetrack motorists and large vehicles

I messaged Estate manager Hugo at Lambton Park regarding the Autumn Fayre and possible future developments. The Estate are in talks with DCC about future events and developments on the site

My son is a resident on the new development and tells me that residents have been informed that amendments to the retail /cafe plans are agreed and work can now proceed

After consultation with the Clerk my need of a budget allocation could perhaps be the cost of the Village Christmas tree and lights.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report.

Item 7. 24/112 Correspondence

1) From Lloyds Bank

Letter re changing Treasurers' Account to Community Account.

2) From County Durham Association of Local Councils

email re Royal Garden Party 2025.

Councillors agreed to put forward the name of Cllr Hall.

3) From Durham County Council

Letter re Tax Base for 2025/2026.

4) Various planning applications, approvals and refusals from Durham County Council, of which the following application was within North Lodge Parish:-

Application for tree works at 1 North Road.

Item 8. 24/113 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

a) Confirmation of Status of Finance Committee

The Clerk advised that it had been many years since the Finance Committee had sat and there had been several amendments to the Standing Orders in that time. It was, therefore, advisable to confirm the constitution of the Committee under Standing Order section 42. Councillor discussed

this and agreed to confirm the continuation of the Committee.
 (Resolved - that the Finance Committee is established under Standing Order section 42).

b) Parish Council Budget - Forward Planning

The Clerk reminded 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 Finance Committee meeting in January 2025.

Item 9. 24/114 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 615.14	Salaries November 2024	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses November 2024	
Salaries	£ 233.72	Back-dated Salary Increase	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture November 2024	£313.73
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	
S. E. Harrison & Sons	£ 156.00	Tree for Picktree Village	£ 26.00
Total of Above Payments	£ 3937.19		

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		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 10. 24/115 Other Matters for Information

The County Cllr gave an update on the former Red Lion site, and the bus garage site, in the town.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.10pm wishing everyone a very enjoyable Christmas recess.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 21st January 2025.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 644.48	Salaries December 2024	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses December 2024	
Salaries	£	Salaries January 2025	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses January 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1568.66	Horticulture December 2024	£313.73
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1568.66	Horticulture January 2025	£313.73
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 320.00	Picktree Village Tree and Lights	£ 64.00
P. Driscoll	£ 195.00	Chairs Quarterly Allowance	
Forvis Mazars LLP	£ 378.00	Audit Fee	£ 63.00
Total of Above Payments	£		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Dec 2024	£ 7.71
DSJ Property Services	£ 40.00	Fitting Locks to Noticeboards	
Greenbarnes Ltd	£ 45.12	Locks for Noticeboards	£ 7.52
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 716.62	Employer's N.I.C.	
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Jan 2025	£ 7.71
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 894.24		

Balance to 30th November 2024

Balance b/f	£52512.96	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Nov 2024	<u>£ 3937.19</u>	Treasurers Account	£ 1121.90
	£48575.77	Instant Account	<u>£47454.64</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 196.76</u>	Total	£48576.54
	£48379.01		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 47.53</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 150.00</u>
Balance c/f	£48426.54		£48426.54

One cheque not yet presented -
£150.00 cheque number 1639 dated 19/11/24 payable to Society of Local Council Clerks for annual membership fee.