

## **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 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

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

**As a mark of respect for the recently deceased Councillor Elsie Forrester, Councillors and the Clerk observed a minute's silence.**

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

### **Item 1. 25/17 Apologies for Absence**

There were no Apologies for Absence.

### **Item 2. 25/18 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. 25/19 Report of the County Councillor**

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

a) A report from the Planning Department was awaited re the status of the stables at Low Flatts. The Environmental Health department was also now involved. The County Cllr thanked all residents who had reported their concerns.

b) No reply had been received from the Outdoor Facilities Co-ordinator re outstanding play areas matters. The County Cllr was to escalate this to a higher level.

c) On Wednesday, County Councillors would be voting on the County Council budget proposals.

d) Before the next item, the following resolution was passed -

That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

Following this item, the meeting returned to open session.

e) Cllr Gregory enquired why the County Cllr had been quoted in the press re the former cement works in Weardale when he was not the Member for the area. The County Cllr advised that several Councillors on the Planning Committee had made statements and it was his that the press had chosen to publish.

f) Cllr Gregory enquired re the County Cllr's comments re the Police in his recent Focus leaflet. The County Cllr advised that the comments were made relating to Police priorities.

g) Cllr Veitch advised that there had been a further complaint re the litter bin on the opposite side of the road to the Wheatsheaf. The County Cllr will again take up this matter with the County Council.

h) Cllr Caygill enquired re the purpose of the large frame above the road at the approach to Barley Mow roundabout from the east. The County Cllr advised that it was framework for a road sign that could not be installed until the developers had handed over the land to the County Council.

i) Cllr Caygill advised that the road markings at the entrance to Low Flatts Road had worn away and the junction was now difficult to see, especially in the dark. The County Cllr will take this forward with the Highways Department.

j) Cllr Caygill considered that the County Cllr should give more recognition in his Focus leaflets to the Parish Council's input on projects. The County Cllr outlined the constraints that he was under re the content of the leaflet.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Councillors agreed to take Agenda Items 8a and 8c next.

#### **Item 8a. 25/20 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration**

##### **Planting at Northlands Roundabout**

Councillors were concerned about the poor appearance of planting at Northlands roundabout. Cllr Gregory suggested that, as the roundabout was on a major road route used by many visitors to the area, there should be sustainable planting carried out by the County Council Clean and Green Team. Cllr Hall had concerns over how the Team might be making budget spending decisions. Councillors agreed with the Chairman's proposal for a visit to the Clean and Green Team to discuss the planting. The County Cllr will arrange this but will first request access to the Team's budget policy documents.

#### **Item 8c. 25/21 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration**

##### **Four Year Financial Plan**

Cllr Martin was thanked for preparing the Plan with input from Cllr Veitch and the Clerk. Matters discussed included the General Reserve, potential budget deficits and future Precepts. Cllr Martin suggested the establishment of a Capital Budget and Cllr Hall proposed that consideration should be given to shared projects with other organisations. Councillors agreed that the Plan should be considered when making future financial decisions.

At this point, Councillor Martin left the meeting.

#### **Item 4. 25/22 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025, 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. 25/23 Chairman's Report**

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

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It is with great sadness that I need to report the passing of Councillor Elsie Forrester, on Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2025.

Elsie was co-opted on to North Lodge Parish Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2007, and was Vice-chairwoman in 2015/16. Around this year Elsie was Chairwoman from 2012/13 to 2018/19. In terms of other Parish responsibilities, Elsie had the "Publicity Portfolio" from 2010 to 2012, then 2016 to 2021/22, which then merged into the current "Meetings of Partnership Organisations" in 2022, until the present day.

Elsie represented the Parish Council , usually alongside Councillor Maureen May, at meetings of the AAP and CDALC, chairing many meetings of the latter. Her interests also included involvement with the Guides, and a role within the Durham Diocesan Synod. Elsie was also a regular attender at Chester-Le-Street Remembrance Sunday services, and its North Lodge equivalent. Alongside her years of public service, Elsie was always positive about the role of the Parish Council, and forthright in promoting the values it tried to impart. Councillor Forrester will be sadly missed by her many relatives, friends, and colleagues.

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Councillors endorsed the Chairman’s comments and thanked him for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 25/10 section a). Re the service standards of the number 21 bus route, Cllr Gregory advised that the introduction of new buses was expected to be in 2026.

b) Re Minute 25/11 section h). Re the Devolution White Paper, Cllr Hall outlined the great size of some of the new local authorities. Re the overhaul of planning committees, Cllr Hall advised that this would lead to more decisions being made by planning officers and fewer by planning committees.

## **Item 6. 25/24 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 -

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A number of posts including CAP offering a free course for CV writing and interview techniques, “Ask Angela” safety advice on Valentines Day, anti social behaviour of dog owners at Low Flatts Park and the latest Litter pick with particular mention of the major issue of dog fouling within the Parish. (We picked up over 100 lumps/bags whilst litter picking). The potential of warden patrols needs to be discussed to combat this upsetting trend of behaviour identified.

Dog fouling in North Lodge Parish has been highlighted on other social media. On the Nextdoor website - a resident highlighted an issue at the back of the houses on Picktree. An irresponsible dog owner is letting their dog foul the area and leaving the mess behind.

The post regarding the anti-social behaviour of dog owners in Low Flatts park, the mess at the children's play area with a mention of NLPC considering the future use of the park drew a number of residents to comment in both positive and negative ways on other Facebook pages with a particular mention of NLPC not allowing comments on our posts. This was highlighted by the same local resident from previous social media posts.

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Councillors discussed the issue of dog mess not being picked up. The Clerk is to contact the Neighbourhood Wardens to request that they patrol the area. Cllr Veitch will provide a suggested route to be taken by the Wardens.

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**

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#### **Police**

##### **Crime**

Please refer to Police UK for details of any reported crimes.

##### **Community Safety**

##### **Silent Solution**

If you need urgent police help but can’t speak due to your circumstances or speaking would put you in more danger, you can use the **Silent Solution**.

It allows the operator to know you are in danger.

You should:

1. Dial 999
2. Listen to the questions from the operator
3. Respond by coughing or tapping your device, if you can
4. If prompted, press 55 to let the operator know it's a genuine emergency and you'll be put through to police
5. The call handler will attempt to communicate with you by asking simple yes and no questions

#### Operation Limit

Nearly 1,500 roadside checks were carried out under the specialist operation which targeted those who choose to put others at risk over the festive period.

A total of 42 drivers were arrested for drink driving and 64 were locked up for drug driving.

A further 18 drivers were arrested for being unfit to drive through drugs and six people were arrested for failing to provide a specimen.

#### Recruitment

Police Constable recruitment is opening soon.

There is a police officer discovery event on Tuesday, 25 February at 6pm, at Police HQ in Durham. At the event there will be police officers, HR, learning and development, well-being, our DEI team, and representatives from Northumbria University available to chat to.

Sign-up using <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx...>

#### Apprenticeships

Durham Constabulary offer a range of apprenticeships across different roles, giving you the chance to gain hands-on experience while working towards a qualification.

You must be 16+ to apply, and all roles are subject to pre-employment checks, including vetting.

Register your details here, and the police will be in touch when applications open

<https://forms.office.com/e/cFWCdY0jPR>

For further information please refer to Durham Constabulary's social media accounts.

For non emergency telephone calls to Police, please use telephone number 101

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

#### **Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)**

##### Smoke Alarms.

A safety visit to check fire alarm/s at your property by CDDFRS can be arranged. Please see contact details for further information.

Safety info call 0345 2234221 or submit a request [www.ddfire.gov.uk/free-safe-and-wellbeing-visit](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk/free-safe-and-wellbeing-visit)

For more information regarding the day to day activities, please visit CDDFRS social media accounts.

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

#### **Durham County Council (DCC)**

##### North Road, North Lodge

New zigzag road markings have been painted at the entry/ exit approach to the pedestrian crossing on North Road, near the entrance to Lombard Drive, North Lodge.

##### Neville's Cross, Durham

From Monday (17 February), An Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera will be introduced at the yellow box junction at Neville's Cross.

The camera will monitor any vehicles that stop in the yellow box and are not using the junction in line with the highway code.

Those caught not using the junction in line with the highway code will be issued with a £70 Penalty Charge Notice.

#### Scams

Electoral Register emails - DCC has been alerted to phishing emails targeting those registering to vote. These emails request personal documents like passports or proof of address. These fake

emails may come from addresses such as electoral@register-to-vote.electoral.agency, but other similar addresses could also be used.

More information about current scams can be found:

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

#### Business Food Waste

From April 2025, the legislation on business food waste is changing. Businesses must have a separate food waste collection in place by April 2025 alongside a separate refuse and recycling service.

The new legislation applies to businesses who employ more than 10 full time members of staff.

For full details: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/.../Food-waste-for-businesses>

#### The North East Transport Plan

The consultation is now open. Help shape the future of the regions transport. Complete the online survey here <https://www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/localtransportplan>

#### Recruitment

DCC resourcing team will be attending Durham Careers Fair to chat about the huge variety of career opportunities available at the council, as well as explore the current vacancies.

They can also support with application and interview guidance too.

Venue: Durham County Cricket Club, Chester-le-Street. DH3 3QR, 26<sup>th</sup> February 10am- 2pm

For more info about the event: <https://www.ukcareersfair.com/event/durham-careers-fair>

#### Lumière Durham

The hugely popular event will take place over three evenings this autumn, from Thursday 13 to Saturday 15 November 2025.

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/.../News-Save-the-date-Lumiere...>

For further information, please refer to DCC's social media accounts

To contact DCC use telephone number 03000 260 000.

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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**

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

I welcome the agenda item on the four-year financial plan for the parish council, produced by Cllr Martin, in conjunction with myself and the clerk. I look forward to the discussion and robust debate in determining how the parish council continues to be financially sustainable for the wider community.

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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**

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The monthly bus shelters inspection was carried out on Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2025. All the shelters appeared to be in good order, plus glass cabinets, which just needed the usual clean. There was a requirement to remove some minor graffiti from the shelter on North Road, just past the Lombard Drive entrance, and to clean down the rear wall at that shelter, and the one across the road from the "Lambton Worm" public house. These may need further cleans when required, to prevent the expense of regular re-painting.

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In addition, a) Cllr Driscoll advised that the seat near to the Lambton Worm remained in good order but would continue to be monitored. b) Cllr Caygill considered that ideas were needed for new posters to replace the existing ones in the bus shelter display cabinets and she would take this

forward.

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**

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**SUMMARY**

**Millennium Bed.**

The go ahead has been given for Gardener Stephen Makepeace to complete repairs/replace as soon as weather warms up.

**Queen's Canopy etc Trees. X3**

Gardener Stephen Makepeace to give written estimates to Clerk for work to be carried out after April 2025, Itemised estimate needed

This work is no longer being funded by County Councillor Craig Martin.

**Longdean Park shrub bed**

New itemised estimate required for clearance, cleaning and renewal of soil and re planting from Stephen Makepeace.

Small colourful shrubs to be planted e.g. magnolia, azalea, hydrangea or similar dogwood. Xmas box hebe. Plenty to choose from to add colour and interest

**Horticultural budget.**

Gardener contract needs updating. Projected cost =£26,765

**Picktree village Xmas tree.**

Funded out of General budget. More powerful lights needed for Xmas 2025

**Picktree lodge shrub bed.**

Our gardener to maintain annually after March 2025

**Summer bedding.** More strong colour needed More plants to be used eg scarlet geraniums silver leaf and salvia. Beds to be plant edged for impact. List given to Gardener

**AOB**

Discussion re lack of road markings on A1 roundabout approach from Picktree Village

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In addition, Cllr Gregory suggested that a third bed at the entrance to Picktree Lodge would help to improve the appearance. The Horticulture Committee will discuss this.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her Horticulture report and invited her to give a Partnership Organisations report which included the following matters -

**f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations**

Cllr May advised that the forthcoming Area Action Partnership meeting will be the last one before being replaced by Local Networks. Cllr May outlined the structure of the Networks.

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

**g) Play Areas**

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**LOW FLATTS**

All equipment appears to be in good order.

A post has been put on social media regarding the anti social behaviour of dog owners in this park. As this is a children's play area it will be necessary for NLPC to consider the future use of the area for dog exercising should this behaviour continue.

**MERLIN DRIVE**

All equipment appears to be in good order.

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In addition, re dog fouling, Cllr Veitch suggested that the Neighbourhood Wardens might be able to assist in providing a large sign warning that the Wardens patrolled the area.

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

**h) Policy and Governance**

Cllr Hall advised that there were no matters to report.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall.

**i) Project Development, Business and External Relations**

In the absence from the meeting of Cllr Martin, Cllr Veitch provided an update on progress with the Remembrance Artwork. It was hoped that a planning application would be made by the end of February.

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

**j) Picktree Village**

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This last month has been as usual affected by speeding drivers and litter louts. I feel the only way to reduce irresponsible driver behaviour is to actually fine drivers who exceed the speed limit. If DCC will not consider speed bumps or chicanes, as seen on many many other residential roads, I feel this is the only solution. The road signage at the bottom of the lane to and from the A1 roundabout needs repainting. To banish the weather gloom snowdrops are now blooming.  
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The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report.

**Item 7. 25/25 Correspondence**

- 1) From Durham Constabulary  
Donation Application.

This application is to be considered at the June meeting of the Council.

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

- a) Change of use to a collision repair facility with the installation of spray booths requiring extraction and chimneys protruding from the roof of the building, at Unit 1, Angel Park, Drum Industrial Estate.  
b) Erection of 1no. self build detached bungalow, at land to the south east of 27 Blind Lane.

Cllr Gregory advised that this application was in place of an earlier one which had been incorrectly submitted.

**Item 8b. 25/26 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration**

**Donation Request - Wag & Company**

Councillors considered this request and agreed to make a donation of one hundred and fifty pounds.

Councillors also considered making a donation to the Alzheimer's Society in memory of the recently deceased Councillor Elsie Forrester and agreed to make a donation of two hundred pounds.

**Item 9. 25/27 Payment of Accounts**

<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
Salaries	£ 644.28	Salaries February 2025	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses February 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture February 2025	£313.73
Madhouse Media Ltd	£ 480.00	Website Hosting	£ 80.00
Wag & Company	£ 150.00	Donation	
Alzheimer's Society	£ 200.00	Donation	
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£ 3466.67</b>		

**Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit**

<b>TO</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>REASON</b>	<b>VAT</b>
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Feb 2025	£ 7.71
DSJ Property Services	£ 60.00	Maintenance Works	
ValueShop.co.uk	£ 38.17	Printer Ink	£ 6.36
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>	<b>£ 144.42</b>		

**(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).**

**Item 10. 25/28 Other Matters for Information**

There were no other matters raised.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.44pm.



**North Lodge Parish Council**

**Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025.**

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries March 2025	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses March 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£	Horticulture March 2025	£
P. Driscoll	£ 195.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£</b>		

**Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit**

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - March 2025	£ 7.71
Shaw & Sons Ltd	£ 134.40	Receipts and Payments Book	£ 22.40
Information Commissioner's Office	£ 52.00	Data Protection Renewal Fee	
Sainsbury's	£ 12.00	Copy Paper	£ 2.00
HM Revenue & Customs	£	P.A.Y.E.	
HM Revenue & Customs	£	Employer's N.I.C.	
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>	<b>£</b>		

**Balance to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

Balance b/f	£44729.24	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - Feb 2025	<u>£ 3466.67</u>	Community Account	£ 1286.03
	£41262.57	Commercial Instant Access	<u>£40071.68</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 144.42</u>	Total	£41357.71
	£41118.15		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 39.56</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ 200.00</u>
	£41157.71		
Balance c/f	£41157.71		£41157.71

One cheque not yet presented -  
£200.00 cheque number 1653 dated 18/02/25 payable to Alzheimer's Society for Donation.