

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 18th March 2025.

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

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

Item 1. 25/29 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Dennis Hall and Chris Veitch.

Item 2. 25/30 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. 25/31 Report of the County Councillor

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

- a) Durham Women Football Club was relocating to the Riverside, Chester-le-Street.
- b) The County Council budget had been approved by just two votes. Severe cuts in services were to be expected.
- c) The County Cllr continued to press the Clean & Green team for production of their budget policy document.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillor for his report.

Item 4. 25/32 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 18th February 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. 25/33 Chairman's Report

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

As an update to last month's report on the passing of councillor Elsie Forrester, the actual funeral was held at St. John the Evangelist Church at Birtley, on Friday the 21st of February at 1.15 p.m. There was a large congregation, including North Lodge Parish Councillors and the Clerk, plus representatives from other organisations linked to Elsie. This highlighted the love and respect given to her at this sad time for family and friends.

On another note, the vandalism inflicted in the parish this month, has parallels with the damage and theft in two glass cabinets at roughly the same time in March 2024. As Winter turns into Spring, and some better weather comes along, it seems to be a catalyst for this type of behaviour.

In this current instance it is most likely inflicted from perpetrators from outside the parish. All residents could help by being vigilant in these instances, and reporting damage, littering, or vandalism, to the relevant authorities, as well as the Parish Council Clerk, and councillors.

Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.

Regarding outstanding matters -

- a) Re Minute 25/19 section a). Re the Low Flatts stables, the County Cllr advised that it had now been established that the planning permission had been breached and action was being taken.
- b) Re Minute 25/19 section g). Re litter bins, the County Cllr understood that Cllr Veitch would present a case to a future meeting with the Clean & Green team.
- c) Re Minute 25/19 section i). Re repainting of road markings at Low Flatts Road, the County Cllr will pursue this with the Highways Department.
- d) Re Minute 25/24 section d, sub-section b). Cllr Caygill advised of progress with new artwork for the display cabinets. Councillors agreed that posters should carry an acknowledgement of the artist and the art society but not publicity for retail sales. Cllr Caygill will shortly meet with the project organiser at the society.
- e) Re Minute 25/24 section e). Cllr May confirmed that a third bed at Picktree Lodge was agreed in principle but would only be undertaken after completion of two outstanding projects.

Item 6. 25/34 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

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

Social Media

Very little social media activity over the last month. As always if any Councillor has anything they would like placed on our social media please email me with details.

Litter Pick

The next litter pick will be held in April to coincide with the Big Spring Clean Initiative currently being ran by DCC. Details will be emailed to all councillors and posted on our social media once confirmed.

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

POLICE

Crime

Please refer to Police.uk for any recorded crime.

Anti social behaviour

North Lodge : Lombard Drive bus shelter, Kingsmere bus shelter and two other items of street furniture have all been marked with graffiti.

Police are investigating.

Community Safety.

Speed Monitoring Vehicle.

The vehicle has visited North Lodge Parish area on numerous occasions during this month. Tyres.

A recent accident in Co Durham revealed the vehicle involved had bald tyres.

Please check your vehicle tyres.

For more information refer to www.tyresafe.org

Spring security.

Making your garden equipment, shed and garage are secure when unattended.

More information on durham.police.uk

PC Recruitment

Applications now open until 30th March.

For more information refer to policerecruiting@durham.police.uk

22 Police Officers successfully completed the 3year Police Constable degree course apprenticeship.

12 Special Constables completed a 12 week learning programme.

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

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

Refer to Durham Constabulary's social media accounts for more news around the county.

Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)

Smoke Alarms

To arrange a free safety visit to check your smoke alarm, please use telephone number 0345 223 4221

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

Refer to CDDFRS's media accounts for more news from around the county.

Durham County Council (DCC)

Fraud Alert

A recent planning application was deemed to be a false entry. This entry is now under investigation by the authorities.

Garden Waste Collection

Check to make sure that there is still time to register for the Garden Waste collection scheme.

Refer to durham.gov.uk/gardenwaste

Check on DCC's social media accounts for various vacancies and more news from around the county.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

c) Finance

In the absence of Cllr Veitch from the meeting, he had provided the written report 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 undertaken on Monday the 10th of March, and the majority of shelters appeared to be in good order.

On the negative side, sometime during the hours of darkness between the 8th and 9th of March, vandalism was incurred. The southbound shelter on North Road, near to the Lombard Drive entrance, had a large blue paint spray "tag" painted on the rear wall, and there was further graffiti on the bottom of the glass cabinet at the northbound shelter near Kingsmere, on North road. In this same vicinity, a similar sports themed "tag" was painted on the communications cabinet on North Road, near the opening to Lombard Drive, plus further graffiti on the bus timetable display near Lombard Drive entrance.

There will therefore need to be some cleaning, or re - painting, to repair the areas concerned.

In addition, Cllr Gregory advised that empty vodka bottles were being found behind houses on Picktree Lodge. The Clerk will advise the Neighbourhood Wardens.

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

SUMMARY

1 MILLENNIUM bed.

The refurbishment of this bed is currently in progress.

2. Queen's Canopy etc Trees. X3

3. Longdean Park shrub bed.

The above two projects are on hold. Proposal for work will be brought forward after May 2025

4. Daffodils

Stephen Makepeace has some daffodils which he will plant now as well as new ones later in year.

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 she had attended the final Area Action Partnership meeting. Following the forthcoming elections, the new Local Network will be open with a first formal meeting likely to be in September. Cllr May had also attended a recent CDALC meeting. Councillors discussed several matters which had been raised at that meeting including the security of attendees at meetings.

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

MERLIN DRIVE

All equipment appears to be in good order.

The Mole infestation is very bad and the grass cutting season can't come soon enough to flatten these Mole hills.

LOW FLATTS

All equipment appears to be in good order.

The perimeter hedge has been cut by DCC but branches have been left behind. The Clerk has asked for this to be cleared.

Craig has asked James Young to expedite the new signage and gates for both areas.

Moles are also a problem in this area.

Neighbourhood Wardens have been asked for help in addressing the dog fouling problem.

In addition, Cllr Caygill advised that the new gate at Low Flatts had now been installed.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

h) Policy and Governance

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Hall had advised the Clerk that there were no matters to report.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall and invited Cllr Martin to give his report which included the following matters -

i) Project Development, Business and External Relations

1) The planning application for the Remembrance Artwork was now under way. A public consultation would be held soon.

2) The Drum Business Group was seeking to broaden its geographical scope beyond the Industrial

Estate for business to business organisations.

3) The Group had resurrected the dormant artwork project for the Estate. A new design was being sought.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin for his report.

j) Picktree Village

Cllr Brown was not in attendance but had provided the written report below -

There is nothing new to report re the twin scourges of litter and speeding vehicles through the village. It is confirmed that Lambton Estate manager Hugo Mallaby will leave at the end of March. I will message him to thank him for his prompt attention to matters in the village that I have raised with him. I look forward to having the same good relationship with his successor.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report.

Item 7. 25/35 Correspondence

1) From a Resident

Advice of death of a former Parish Councillor.

The Chairman had sent a message of condolences.

2) From Alzheimer's Society

Thank you for donation in memory of Elsie Forrester.

3) From npower Business

Advice of reduction in electricity prices.

4) From CDALC

a) Advice re the pre-election period.

b) email re Local Networks

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

Demolition of existing garage and replacement triple garage, at Garden House, Picktree.

Item 8. 25/36 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

A Replacement Seat for the Barley Mow Bus Stop

Cllr Driscoll outlined the need to replace the present seat which was in a poor condition. The Clerk had circulated to Councillors quotes from the County Council for a replacement seat and had also circulated a photo of the present seat. Councillors agreed that a replacement was required and agreed that the seat quoted by the County Council at £596.58 was approved.

Item 9. 25/37 The Annual Risk Assessment

Councillors discussed the Annual Risk Assessment, copies of which had been previously circulated by the Clerk, and agreed to approve the Assessment in the form provided.

(Resolved - to approve the Annual Risk Assessment in the form provided).

Item 10. 25/38 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 644.28	Salaries March 2025	
Expenses	£ 110.00	Expenses March 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1882.39	Horticulture March 2025	£313.73
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 4020.00	Refurb of Millennium Bed	£670.00
P. Driscoll	£ 195.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
Total of Above Payments	£ 6851.67		

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	£ 566.06	P.A.Y.E.	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 76.66	Employer's N.I.C.	
Total Card and D/D Payments	£ 887.37		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

Item 11. 25/39 Other Matters for Information

Cllr Gregory enquired if it was known whether or not the County Council had made a decision re the advertising sign affixed to the "Prince Bishops" sign at Barley Mow. The Clerk will chase this up.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.08pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 15th April 2025.

	TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries		£	Salaries April 2025	
Expenses		£ 110.00	Expenses April 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes		£	Horticulture April 2025	£
DSJ Property Services		£ 190.00	Removal of Graffiti	
CDALC		£ 551.76	Annual Subscription	
Total of Above Payments		£		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

	TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd		£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - April 2025	£ 7.71
Total Card and D/D Payments		£ 46.25		

Balance to 31st March 2025

Balance b/f	£41157.71	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - March 2025	<u>£ 6851.67</u>	Community Account	£ 841.24
	£34306.04	Commercial Instant Access	<u>£32603.13</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 887.37</u>	Total	£33444.37
	£33418.67		
Add Bank Interest Received	£ 31.45	Deduct cheques not yet presented	Nil
	£33450.12		
Deduct Bank Charges	<u>£ 5.75</u>		
Balance c/f	£33444.37		£33444.37