

## 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 21<sup>st</sup> October 2025.

PRESENT Chairman: Councillor Craig Martin.

Councillors: Suzanne Brown, Margaret Caygill, Jackie Gregory, Patrick Driscoll, Darren Hawkes, Chris Veitch.

County Councillor: Craig Martin.

Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone.

### **Item 1. 25/104 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Maureen May and Dennis Hall. Councillor Graham Watson was not in attendance and had not given apologies.

### **Item 2. 25/105 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 Chairman of the North Lodge Remembrance Group. Councillors Jackie Gregory and Darren Hawkes declared interests as members of the North Lodge Remembrance Group.

### **Item 3. 25/106 Report of the County Councillor**

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

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#### **Vigo Lane 30mph Petition**

I've launched a petition to review the speed limit of Vigo, with the hope that the Council will reduce the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph.

During the planning application for the housing on the former chemical works, it was promised that a complete review of Vigo Lane would be done. Now that the development has been completed, this petition is to spur on our local authority to fulfil its commitment.

This is being pushed out alongside Councillors in Birtley, with the petition being displayed in Barley Mow Village Hall. The plan is to submit the petition to both Durham County Council and Gateshead Council.

#### **Urgent Care Shotley Bridge Closure**

The urgent care centre has 'temporarily' been closed, midnight to 8.00am. This is due to difficulties in staffing the facility, with no firm date as to when it will reopen.

The reason I'm feeling the need to report this is my concerns about the never-ending pressures North Durham University Hospital's Accident and Emergency are facing. I'm meeting more and more families that have a story of a loved one waiting in A/E in excess of 6 hours.

I'm adding my voice to the pressure to ensure that this is reopened, there have been previous attempts to shut this facility by the NHS. Although they argue that this only results in one additional visit to our local A/E, I believe this measure is flawed. Not taking into the account those that don't

even bother to attempt and go straight to A/E.

The situation is getting worse North Durham University Hospital's Accident and Emergency. We don't need our local NHS to make decisions that add to the pressure.

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In addition, a) Cllr Gregory reminded the meeting that should the speed limit in Vigo Lane be reduced to 30mph, then the 40mph limit along the short stretch of North Road would appear to be an anomaly. The County Cllr confirmed that he intended to turn his attention to this once the Vigo Lane speed limit was resolved, b) Cllr Hawkes had concerns about the possible installation of road humps. The County Cllr considered that the County Council would not agree to this, c) Cllr Gregory advised re signage, which seemed to be fly-posting, that had recently appeared at Northlands roundabout. Councillors also considered that, because of the traffic flow problems at the roundabout, the County Council should refuse all advertising signs there. The County Cllr kindly agreed to take these matters forward to the County Council, d) Cllr Brown advised that the County Council-owned bus shelter near Lintfort, Picktree Village was in a very dirty condition and appeared not to have been cleaned for many years. The County Cllr advised that he was working with a resident to make a complaint to the County Council. The resident had also written to the Parish Council asking if the Parish Council would consider cleaning the bus shelter. Councillors discussed this and agreed that as the Parish Council bus shelters, seats and some other assets were cleaned on a voluntary basis it was not possible to extend this to assets not owned by the Parish Council. The Clerk will advise the resident accordingly. Councillors thanked the County Councillor for his report.

#### **Item 4. 25/107 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025, draft copies of which had been previously circulated, were adopted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting, except for an addition to be made of a Declaration of Interest by Councillor Darren Hawkes as a member of the North Lodge Remembrance Group, and were duly signed by the Chairman.

#### **Item 5. 25/108 Chairman's Report**

The Chairman advised that all matters he wished to report would be covered elsewhere in the meeting.

Regarding outstanding matters -

- a) Re Minute 25/96. Cllr Brown asked if there had been any further progress re the proposed Riverside sports facilities development. The County Cllr advised that sources of funding were still being investigated.
- b) Re Minute 25/96 section c). Re the apple tree at North Road, Cllr Gregory considered that the fallen apples would attract vermin and was therefore a health and safety risk. Cllr Caygill advised that there were two apples trees in the vicinity and fallen apples posed a risk to footpath users. The County Cllr kindly agreed to take these concerns to the County Council Environmental Health department.
- c) Re Minute 25/98 section a). Re sightlines at the junction of Lombard Drive and Leander Avenue, the Chairman advised that he continues to seek a discussion with Cllr Watson.
- d) Re Minute 25/99 section e, sub-section a). The Chairman confirmed that he is still attempting to consult with residents re the proposed planting of trees in Vigo Lane.
- e) Re Minute 25/99 section i, sub-section b). Cllr Caygill provided an update re possible direction signage to Low Flatts play area and kindly agreed to continue researching possible sites. This matter will be included in a future Agenda.

## **Item 6. 25/109 Portfolio Holders' Reports**

### **a) Communications and Media Development**

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

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#### **Social Media**

Since the September Meeting there has been posts relating to the following placed on our social media:

- Lumiere
  - Durham Book Festival
  - Public Accountability Meeting with Joy Allen
  - Fire Alarm Testing advice
  - Banking App Fraud advice
  - Public Sector Careers Fair
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The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report.

### **b) Crime and Community Safety**

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

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#### **Police**

##### **Crime.**

For any reported crimes for North Lodge, check website [Police.uk](http://Police.uk)

##### **Community Safety.**

Vehicle speed monitoring continues in Blind Lane.

##### **Internet Group Chats**

A new trend is circulating where people/children are being added to group chats without their consent or knowledge.

These chats can sometimes include harmful or inappropriate content that's not suitable for children.

If you're a parent or carer, it's a good time to:

Have an open conversation with your child about online and phone safety.

Check privacy settings and parental controls on their devices and apps.

Remember: most games and social media platforms have multiple communication features including text and voice chats, private messages, image sharing, video calls, and live streaming.

While some platforms have moderators to remove harmful content, not all do.

With technology now easily accessible, help keep safe online.

If you believe one of your or your child's accounts has been hacked, report it to Action Fraud:

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk>

##### **Romance Scams**

Criminals can use AI to create fake profiles, photos and videos. They're also experts at social engineering and building trust to exploit their victims.

Don't trust everything you see online. Learn how to protect yourself and others here

[www.actionfraud.police.uk/romance-fraud](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/romance-fraud)

##### **Exploitation**

Criminals often target vulnerable adults and young people, befriending them and then threatening them into dealing drugs, hiding weapons, laundering money or carrying out violent attacks.

If you know or suspect who is involved, contact Crimestoppers. You stay 100% anonymous.

Always.

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/.../help-tackle-crime...>

### Courier Fraud

Courier Fraud and Postal Courier Fraud is a national issue and offenders typically target elderly or vulnerable people and purport to be from a trusted institution such as a bank or the police. They prey on people's trust and exploit it for illicit gains.

Please speak to elderly relatives and explain the dangers of fraud. Remember banks or police officers will NOT contact you to withdraw money from your account."

If you think a phone call could be a scam, hang up, **wait a few minutes**, and then call your bank's Fraud Team by dialling 159.

To report fraud, contact your local police force or visit [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

### Autumn/Winter dark nights

This is the time when there is a rise in burglary and theft as the winter nights draw in. Please make sure your house is secure.

The police thermal drone has capabilities similar to that of a traditional police helicopter in that they can be used to trace and track criminals in the dark.

### Recruitment

24 student police officers attended their attestation ceremony, marking the start of their journey with Durham Constabulary.

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

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

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

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

### Fireworks/Bonfire Night

Adverts are now appearing for fireworks on sale in the run up to Bonfire Night. It is very important to know which ones are safe to buy.

You are encouraged to attend an organised fireworks display, but if you do decide to have your own, only buy fireworks from a licensed retailer such as a supermarket.

Make sure the fireworks have the CE mark or UKCA mark on the box to make sure they're safe to use and only buy fireworks up to Category 3.

Only adults can buy fireworks and set them off.

Many Halloween costumes can be highly flammable.

This is because many of them are classed as toys, so they are less fire resistant than normal clothes.

Make sure to always check the label for a UKCA or CE mark, which means that they have been fire safety tested.

If your costume does catch fire, remember to STOP, DROP and ROLL.

Remember the three C's when it comes to treating a burn.

COOL it down with running water for 20 minutes.

CALL 999 or 111 if it is larger than a 50p.

COVER it loosely with cling film or a clean, non-fluffy cloth.

### **Remember the Firework Code**

Only adults should light the fireworks and should do so at arm's length.

Set them off, one at a time and then stand well back.

NEVER return to a firework once it has been lit.

After your firework has gone off, leave it for 30 minutes and then place it in a bucket of water for 24 hours.

Then put the wet firework in a plastic bin bag, tie the bag closed and put it in the appropriate bin.

### Safety of Firefighters

Firefighters are joining forces with police officers during the busiest time of year - Bonfire Night.

During the fireworks season, there is a rise in anti-social behaviour from a minority of young people who, are deliberately setting fires and in the worst cases throwing objects at crews attending incidents.

Thankfully, no firefighters have been injured yet, but last year one fire engine was badly damaged. CDDFRS are uniting with Durham Constabulary. A Police Constable (PC) and a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) will be stationed at local fire stations across the region during several separate action evenings.

The initiative, which started this week and runs until November 8, will see these officers accompany fire crews to incidents, following behind fire engines in police vehicles and providing on-the-ground support.

This partnership aims to deter anti-social behaviour and keep our communities safe.

### Smoke Alarms

CDDFRS recommends you test any smoke alarms in your property, every week by pressing the test button until the alarm sounds.

If it fails to go off, you may need to replace the batteries.

Smoke alarms save lives and CDDFRS advises that you should have one on every floor of your home.

CDDFRS firefighters can install alarms for FREE in your property.

Please call on 345 223 4221 to arrange a visit.

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm, or leave a voicemail out of hours and CDDFRS will return your call.

### Recruitment

Next month is a public sector careers fair in Durham.

CDDFRS will be there alongside colleagues from North East Ambulance Service, NHS Foundation Trust, Durham Constabulary and other key public sector organisations. Come along to chat about a career in the fire service or other organisations.

Free Entry

Speak directly with employers.

Find out about real vacancies.

Get practical advice on how to apply - and succeed.

Whether you're starting out or thinking of switching careers, please visit the fair.

**Date:** Wednesday, November 12, 2025.

**Venue:** Durham Cricket, Banks Homes Riverside, Chester Le Street, County Durham, DH3 3QR.

**Times:** 2pm to 7pm. To book a time slot to attend, visit: <https://orlo.uk/ad9ej>

[#PSCF25](#) [#CareerFair](#) [#PublicSectorCareers](#) [#PublicSectorJobs](#) [#DurhamJobs](#)

CDDFRS has teamed up with New College Durham to offer a brand new course called Fire Futures Preparation Pathway, to help people prepare for a career in the fire service.

The 13-week programme is open to those aged 19 plus and will see participants gain a Level 2 qualification in Safeguarding and Prevention.

You could qualify for a guaranteed interview during any future recruitment process if you successfully complete the programme and pass the fire service recruitment process.

Seven new apprentice firefighters are set to start work at stations across County Durham and Darlington after completing months of intensive training.

For further information on the subjects mention or for any information from around the county, please visit CDDFRS'S social media accounts.

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

### Durham County Council

Household Waste Recycling Centres have now made their seasonal switch to winter opening hours.

To find your nearest HWRC or check current opening times and queue wait times, visit:

[www.durham.gov.uk/HWRC](http://www.durham.gov.uk/HWRC)

Please note, Lumiere Festival 2025, is ticketed all night (between 17:00 - 22:00). However, you can enjoy more than half of the artworks outside of the central ticketed zone.

Durham County residents (anyone living at a County Durham postcode) will be able to book tickets on the Lumiere website from 30 September 2025.

Tickets will go on general release to the wider public from 1 October 2025.

Actual date for Lumiere Durham is 13 - 15 Nov from 17:00 - 22:00, Durham.

Register for an account now via :

<https://www.lumiere-festival.com/book-tickets/>

<https://www.lumiere-festival.com/account/>

#### Recruitment

There are many vacancies at Durham County Council. For more information please check out the council's social media accounts.

To contact Durham County Council by telephone use telephone number 03000 26 0000

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

#### **c) Finance**

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

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

The Chair, Clerk and I have undertaken some work regarding the proposed 4 year budget and this will be placed on the agenda for the November meeting. The financial information will be shared with Councillors well in advance of November's meeting for each Councillor to study. A planned presentation of the budget will be given to the Councillors and hopefully a fruitful discussion, decision and action will follow.

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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 -

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The monthly bus shelters inspection was undertaken on Monday the 6<sup>th</sup> of October. All the shelters appeared to be in good condition, with the main task being to clean out leaves in general, after storm "Amy" had concluded.

The "Lambton Worm" shelter needed the largest clear out as usual. The glass cabinets were washed and dried, and seat cleaning was minimal.

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In addition, Cllr Gregory advised that promised road markings had still not been put down by the County Council. The Clerk will chase this up.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

#### **e) Horticulture**

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

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#### **SUMMARY**

##### WINTER BEDDING

Makepeace Landscapes are presently preparing the Parish Councils' Flower Beds for planting of winter bedding.

##### QUEEN'S CANOPY TREES

Makepeace Landscapes have now been requested to plant the above trees.

##### LONGDEAN SHRUB BED

Still on **HOLD** until financial year 2026

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In addition, Councillors discussed the poor appearance of the Picktree Lodge beds. The Chairman advised that he hoped that this would be a matter for inclusion in the budget discussions at the

November meeting.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

**f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations**

Although there was not at present a Portfolio Holder, it was known that Cllr May continued to attend CDALC meetings on behalf of the Council and the Chairman advised that there had been no recent meetings of the Local Network. Cllr Gregory considered that there could be more community use made of the School land and buildings during weekends and initial enquiries are to be made.

**g) Picktree Village**

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

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It has been a relatively quiet September to October in the village. As usual the toxic two remain-litter and speeding and the volume of vehicles with a noticeable increase of commercial light and very heavy traffic. The red speed beacons are of no use whatsoever and need replacing with ones that register actual speed. Cushion ramps at both ends of the village would help as a deterrent to some but of course not all.

A bungalow that has been empty and an eyesore for many years is now fenced off and renovation/demolition is underway. I presume planning permission was granted some time ago. I will monitor the progress and speak to someone on site if I can gain access. It is in the row north of Ash Meadows.

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In addition, Cllr Brown advised that she does not intend, at present, to contact the Police re a Community Speed Watch due to the short times that speed cameras are on site.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report.

**h) Planning**

Cllr Hawkes outlined a new planning application DM/25/02772/FPA. Councillors discussed this and were asked by the Chairman to submit any comments to Cllr Hawkes for onward inclusion to the Planning Department. Cllr Gregory considered that the extent of Neighbour Notifications by the Planning Department varied from case to case. The Clerk will ask the Planning Department for its policy on this.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hawkes for his report.

**i) Play Areas**

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

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**MERLIN DRIVE**

All equipment appears to be in good order.

**LOW FLATTS**

All equipment appears to be in good order.

DCC have removed the old goal post stumps as requested.

As Play Area Dept. are unable to help with the directional signage as requested, we will need to discuss further at the meeting.

Network Rail have covered the graffiti on the stone bridge at Low Flatts with white paint?

Mole damage is once again emerging at both areas.

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In addition, many residents had complained re the white paint on the Low Flatts bridge. The Clerk will contact Network Rail to ask for a finish more in keeping with the overall appearance of the bridge.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

## **j) Policy and Governance**

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

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### **KEY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Deprived areas of the UK will be given tens of millions of pounds each from a new fund that Keir Starmer hopes will help Labour tackle the threat posed by Reform UK.

The prime minister launched the regeneration initiative on Thursday, gambling that an updated version of “levelling up” will address anger about Britain’s broken communities.

Press release Communities to seize control over high streets and restore pride (26 September)

Local communities will be handed new powers to revitalise their high streets and restore pride in their towns.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-to-seize-control-over-high-streets-and-restore-pride>

and see...

[https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/sep/24/starmer-gambles-on-levelling-up-style-initiative-to-tackle-reform-threat?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/sep/24/starmer-gambles-on-levelling-up-style-initiative-to-tackle-reform-threat?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

and ...

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/high-street-closures-vape-shops-uk-b2832877.html>

and...

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/62333-government-promises-new-powers-for-communities-as-part-of-pride-in-place-programme>

Collection Pride in Place (25 September)

Documents and guidance relating to the government’s Pride in Place Strategy, which will help build stronger communities, create thriving places and empower local people.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/pride-in-place>

Neighbourhood Governance Survey: (16 September)

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment (EDCE) Bill brings a new requirement for all local authorities to make appropriate arrangements for effective governance of any neighbourhood area. It provides the Secretary of State with the power to make regulations which define a neighbourhood area, and to specify the criteria that these arrangements must fulfil.

MHCLG are reviewing local authority-led neighbourhood governance models in England, to inform this work. This survey has been designed to gather evidence to review existing local authority-led neighbourhood governance structures and to explore different approaches and their effectiveness.

This closed on 7 October

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reform-and-strategy/34514a08/>

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

## **k) Project Development, Business and External Relations**

Cllr Martin advised that he and Cllr Veitch continued to work with the artist re the Remembrance Artwork and progress was being made.

Councillors thanked Cllr Martin for his report.

## **Item 7. 25/110 Correspondence**

1) From Durham Constabulary  
email re graffiti on plinth at Picktree Lodge.

2) From Forvis Mazars LLP

Completion of limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2025.

The auditors advised that there were no significant matters arising from the review. Councillors thanked the Clerk for his work on maintaining the accounts of the Council in good order.

- 3) From County Durham Association of Local Councils  
email re recent engagements with Durham County Council.
- 4) Various planning applications, approvals and refusals from Durham County Council, of which the following applications were within North Lodge Parish:-
- Application for tree works, at 19 Blind Lane.
  - Application for first floor rear infill extension, at 17 Longdean Park.
  - Application for construction of first-floor extension with new pitched roof, single-storey extension to the eastern elevation, replacement of flat roof with pitched elevation to the western elevation, at Broadway House, 2 North Road.

**Item 8. 25/111 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration**

**County Council Consultation on 2026/2027 Budget**

The Clerk had previously circulated a request from the County Council to make a response re the County Council’s budget-setting deliberations. Councillors discussed this and agreed that there were so many variables and potential forthcoming changes to Local Authority financing that a definitive response could not be provided at present. However, all residents, including Councillors, were urged to make individual responses when circumstances became sufficiently clearer.

**Item 9. 25/112 Payment of Accounts**

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 664.76	Salaries October 2025	
Expenses	£ 115.00	Expenses October 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1976.51	Horticulture October 2025	£ 329.42
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£ 2756.27</b>		

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

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - Oct 2025	£ 7.71
Poppy Shop	£ 199.98	Wreaths and Donation	£ 6.66
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>	<b>£ 246.23</b>		

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

**Item 10. 25/113 Other Matters for Information**

- Councillors agreed with Cllr Gregory that aspects of the facilities provided by the school for Council meetings were not of an acceptable standard. The Chairman, as a Trustee of the Academy, kindly agreed to take this matter forward.
- Cllr Brown remained disappointed that a suitable site for a Coronation Bench had not yet been identified and hoped that Councillors would continue to bear this project in mind.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00pm.

**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> November 2025.**

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries November 2025	
Expenses	£ 115.00	Expenses November 2025	
Makepeace Landscapes	£	Horticulture October 2025	
Madhouse Media Ltd	£ 90.00	Domain Renewal Fee	£ 15.00
<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 - Nov 2025	£ 7.71
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>	<b>£ 46.25</b>		

**Balance to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025**

Balance b/f	£54225.44	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - October 2025	<u>£ 2756.27</u>	Community Account	£ 617.50
	£51469.17	Commercial Instant Access	<u>£50626.35</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 246.23</u>	Total	£51243.85
	£51222.94		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 26.66</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ NIL</u>
	£51249.60		
Deduct Bank Charges	<u>£ 5.75</u>		
	£51243.85		
 Balance c/f	 £51243.85		 £51243.85