

## 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 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

PRESENT Chairman: Councillor Craig Martin.

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

County Councillor: Craig Martin.

Clerk: David Murrell.

The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone.

### **Item 1. 26/22 Apologies for Absence**

There were no Apologies for Absence.

### **Item 2. 26/23 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Craig Martin declared interests as a County Councillor and as a Trustee of Park View Academy. Councillors Jackie Gregory and Darren Hawkes declared interests as members of the North Lodge Remembrance Group. Councillor Chris Veitch declared an interest as Chairman of the North Lodge Remembrance Group.

### **Item 3. 26/24 Report of the County Councillor**

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

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#### **Budget 2026/2027**

Durham County Council are going to charge residents a 2% council tax rise as opposed to going for the maximum allowable 5%. They were able to do this from a greater than usual government grant, cutting services, and increasing charges on council services.

The Council benefited from an uplift addressing the long-standing financial disparity in council tax-raising powers: because County Durham has a high proportion of Band A properties—while southern areas tend to have higher-band properties—any increase in council tax here generates significantly less income. A rebalancing of the funding formula will occur over three years.

However beneficial the funding change is, the government has not acted to reverse the significant cuts to local government imposed by previous governments. Looking ahead, the government's longer-term funding plans still fail to keep pace with the escalating financial pressures in children's services. Durham County Council's need to provide care for children and vulnerable adults is rising, and central government has squeezed local government over the past decade or more by not recognising that.

The Council is proposing a series of cuts to valued services, including reductions in litter picking, neighbourhood wardens, and grass cutting. They also propose significant increases in charges, including for garden waste collection and parking fees. We have challenged the Council on the impact these increases will have on struggling local businesses, particularly given the substantial,

inflation-busting rise in the cost of parking permits for such organisations.

The Council will also be charging poorest working age residents council tax for the first time. They are also withdrawing all financial support provided to parish and town councils that compensates them for residents who do not pay a precept. Parish and town councils are especially concerned that this cut is not being phased in, forcing them to make immediate and difficult financial decisions in a hurry.

These cuts are being implemented to avoid increasing council tax to the maximum permitted level. Instead, the Council will increase it by 2% through the Adult Health and Social Care precept.

In particular I spoke on two matters, firstly I proposed a motion to provide every councillor with additional funding for highways safety measures. Highlighting the concerns resident's raise with me alongside the parish council. Utilising the money that Local Networks haven't spent in the last year through not being active. The motion failed to convince the council's administration to implement additional highways safety measures. With the relevant portfolio holder stating that any highways safety measures will only implemented on the back of data as opposed to residents see on a day to day basis.

Secondly, I spoke on the 5% reduction in County Councillor's Neighbourhood Budgets, which is particularly disappointing. This being one of the few ways Durham County Council ensures every corner of the council gets some funding. Directed towards the communities' priorities. As opposed to the few choice areas that keep getting the funding.

#### **Refurbishment of Northlands Play Area**

There will be a full refurbishment of the Northlands play area. This will include replacing the existing play equipment and renewing the safety surfacing. The play area has fallen into a concerning state of disrepair compared with other local facilities.

It is being funded using our local S106 allocation, got in and approved before the rowing club. No doubt it will take some time to work through the necessary processes and install the new equipment – including a form of consultation – the funding is in place and this project will go ahead.

I am passionate about ensuring our young people have access to the best possible facilities (perhaps with a little bias, as I have a three-year-old myself). Once completed, this project will mean that all of North Lodge electoral division's play facilities have been refurbished in the last few years.

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In addition, a) re the apple tree at North Road, the County Cllr will put to the County Council that the Parish Council would be satisfied if the tree was cut back rather than removed entirely. The County Cllr considered that, after this, the next course of action might be to make a formal complaint to the County Council over its handling of this matter, b) Cllr Hawkes presented some details of the County Council Budget (see Appendix 1 below), c) the County Cllr explained the distinction between elected County Councillors and employed officers of the County Council in respect of their roles, responsibilities and powers.

Councillors thanked the County Councillor for his report.

#### **Item 4. 26/25 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026, 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. 26/26 Chairman's Report**

The Chairman advised that all matters to be reported would be raised elsewhere in the meeting. Councillors thanked the Chairman.

Regarding outstanding matters -

a) Re Minute 26/16 section d). Re a replacement table for the school conference room, the County Cllr advised that he expected to meet soon with the school's Facility Manager and he would raise this matter then.

b) Re Minute 26/17 section d). Re posters for the bus shelter display cabinets, Cllr Caygill advised that she was in contact with the Art Society to discuss the possibility of new artwork.

## **Item 6. 26/27 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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Since the last Meeting in February there have been posts relating to the following placed on our social media.

- CLS PACT Meetings at Lambton Worm
- Speed camera activity on Blind Lane
- DCC - Kids go free on the Bus during Half Term
- Our Parish Play areas map/directions
- Online Fraud advice
- Birtley Community pool information for half term
- Planting of Celebration Trees on Vigo Lane
- Dog fouling issues
- North Lodge Remembrance Group sites 2 Bleed Control kits in the parish
- Latest Litter pick advert - Big Spring Clean
- Durham Constabulary message - Rural crime within Chester le Street

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In addition, Cllr Veitch advised that some posts were now receiving over one thousand views. 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 -

#### **Crime**

Please refer to website Police.uk for recorded crime in the North Lodge Parish area.

Reports of rural thefts surrounding Chester-le-Street have been received. If the perpetrators decide to move into the Chester-le-Street urban area, please ensure your property is secured. Making sure vehicles are locked and valuables are removed or hidden from sight. Care should be taken to lock garden sheds and secure garden furniture too.

#### **Community Safety**

##### **Police**

A PACT (Police and Communities together) meeting was held in the The Lambton Worm, 25th February. Well attended by members of the public.

Various issues were discussed.

It is a chance for residents to chat to Police Officers and Neighbourhood Wardens.

Next meeting is at The Lambton Worm pub - 25th March 6pm-7pm.

##### **Speed Monitoring Vehicle A693 Blind Lane**

During the 5 visits made to the location in January, 171 drivers triggered the safety cameras:

2 drivers fell within the Process Level (Court action)

15 drivers fell within the Conditional offer level (fine and points)

154 drivers fell within the Speed Awareness Course level.

To put this in some context, 34 triggers per visit with each visit lasting approx. 1 hour 31 mins.

### County Lines (Drugs) Intensification week

Recently, Police Officers have made 18 arrests and seized more than £100,000 in cash following a series of pre-planned warrants carried out across County Durham.

As part of a crackdown on county lines drug networks, officers recovered a number of items from addresses, including mobile phones, drugs, a pistol and other weapons.

The activity supported a national effort to disrupt drug supply networks that often exploit children and vulnerable people.

The work forms part of ongoing activity alongside the North East Regional Organised Crime Unit, which during the intensification week saw 84 arrests made, 12 drug dealing lines shut down and 16 vulnerable people safeguarded.

Anyone with information about drug activity or suspected county lines exploitation is encouraged to contact police on 101.

Information can also be reported anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or online at [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

### Seat Belts

Did you know, if you have a crash while driving, you're twice as likely to die than if you don't wear a seatbelt.

Every week, four young people aged 17 to 29 are also either killed or seriously injured on the UK's roads when not wearing a seatbelt.

Seat belts take less than 30 seconds to put on, but could mean the difference between life and death.

During a recent targeted operation the Durham Roads & Armed Policing officers, with assistance from Durham County Council, issued 50 tickets to drivers who were not wearing a seatbelt.

An additional six were given words of advice, while two were summonsed to court.

Worryingly, officers also found a number of children who weren't wearing seatbelts or weren't in appropriate car seats for their age and height.

### Domestic Violence - Community Guardians scheme

A new project designed to empower those who work in customer-facing roles to spot the signs of domestic abuse.

The scheme will offer free, online training to enable people to help them spot the signs of abuse, and how to support someone who may be experiencing it.

The scheme is open to all businesses and isn't gender specific.

To register your interest in becoming a Community Guardian, click here

<https://online1.snapsurveys.com/.../be0c2b48-6709-432e..>

If you are suffering domestic abuse, please know you are not alone - there are people who can and will help you.

Call 101, or 999 if you are in immediate danger.

Reports can also be made online at <http://www.police.uk/.../domest.../a1/report-domestic-abuse/>

If you don't want to speak to the police, there are other helplines available:

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline is available 24 hours a day on telephone number 0808 2000 247.

The local service, Harbour, is also available 24 hours a day on 03000 20 25 25.

The above services support both men and women.

### BikeSafe

As part of the BikeSafe initiative which looks to provide advance riding skills to motorcyclists to reduce potential collisions on our roads, this year Durham Police Road Safety unit is holding 18 workshops with dates from March to November.

The one-day course will see participants tutored by advanced riders, giving you the chance to bridge the gap between skills you learned when you gained your initial licence and those used by operational officers.

Theory will be covered in the morning, followed by a three-to-four-hour assessment ride in the afternoon.

To participate you will need:

A road-worthy bike in excess of 125cc

Your driving licence

Proof of insurance

Appropriate clothing, including an approved helmet and visor, a motorcycle jacket and gloves

The course costs £78 and all information, including how to sign up, can be found here:

[www.bikesafe.co.uk/durham](http://www.bikesafe.co.uk/durham)

#### Durham Constabulary Dogs Support Unit

The department is urgently in need of new training venues. Police rely on the goodwill of local businesses, landowners and other organisations to allow them use of their premises for training police dogs.

Having access to various premises allow police officers to train and develop both the operational teams and the next generation of four-legged crime fighters.

Police need land (pasture and woodland) for training our general-purpose dogs (the big guys) to track and search in a wide variety of different environments and large empty buildings.

These could be disused factories, warehouses, hotels or office buildings for police dogs to search.

Police are also looking for occupied buildings and venues, such as conference centres, sports arenas, office buildings and hotels to train our specialist search dogs (the little guys).

By offering you would be making a real and meaningful contribution to keeping the communities safe.

Please email: [Darren.smith@durham.police.uk](mailto:Darren.smith@durham.police.uk) if you can help.

#### Recruitment

25 new student police constables attended their attestation ceremony, marking the start of their journey with Durham Constabulary.

The new recruits will now undergo 18 weeks of intensive training before joining local response teams where you live.

9 officers have successfully completed their two-year Degree Holder Entry Programme in partnership with Northumbria University, alongside their active police duties.

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

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

All emergency telephone calls, use telephone number 999

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

##### VAPES

CDDFRS is urging business owners and residents across Durham and Darlington to remain vigilant when it comes to using vapes, storing and disposing of vapes/equipment

Most vape fire incidents relate to the lithium-ion battery and are more likely when a device is damaged, overheated or charged incorrectly.

Top vape safety tips.

DO

Store vapes and batteries in a cool, dry place away from heat and sunlight.

Use manufacturer chargers, unplug when done, and only charge while awake on a flat surface.

Recycle used and damaged vapes properly - don't bin them.

Store spare batteries in a plastic battery case and keep them away from coins and keys.

Ensure you have working smoke alarms.

DON'T

Never store vapes on escape routes or bedrooms, especially when charging.

Don't charge overnight, unattended, or under pillows, beds or soft furnishings.

Don't use if device has damaged or hot batteries.

Don't bin vapes or loose batteries in general waste and recycling.

## Training

Recently CDDFRS firefighters along with other regional Fire Services, Police, Ambulance and staff and students from New College, Durham took part in a multi-agency training exercise at Beamish Museum.

The museum was closed to the public while the vital training was undertaken at the attraction's 1900s town and the 1950s town.

14 learners have taken their first steps towards a career in the fire service after successfully completing CDDFRS's brand new Fire Futures - Preparation Pathway course

Delivered in partnership with New College Durham, the programme gave people aged 19 plus the opportunity to gain a Level 2 qualification in Safeguarding and Prevention, alongside valuable insight into life in the fire and rescue service.

## Recruitment

We're recruiting on-call firefighters around the county.

On-call firefighters are paid and the role is open to residents aged 17 years and six months who must be able to attend the station within five minutes.

For more information and to apply contact CDDFRS.

## Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

CDDFRS need your views on a new four-year plan to keep our communities safe.

The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) covers everything from how to prevent fires to how to respond to emergencies.

CDDFRS want to hear as many views as possible, so please spare a few minutes to complete the survey here: <https://orlo.uk/KD0Wc>

Those who take part can opt into competitions with some special prizes to win

<https://orlo.uk/MZ5wO>

## Awards and Recognition

CDDFRS has once more been named UK Fire and Rescue Service of the Year at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards.

CDDFRS was named among the top 100 apprentice employers in the UK by The Sunday Times last year

CDDFRS is dedicated to training staff at every level and in a variety of roles.

Since 2017, the Operational Apprenticeship Programme has trained 80 new firefighters with the most recent recruits completing their initial training last Christmas. They are now working on stations helping to protect the communities of County Durham and Darlington. CDDFRS has also implemented a success civilian apprenticeship scheme.

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

For all emergency telephone calls, please use telephone number 999.

## Durham County Council (DCC)

With the introduction of the new food waste collections, which will be rolled out across spring and summer, DCC will no longer be emptying your green boxes from 31 March.

From the start of April, all glass should be placed with your other dry recyclables in your blue lidded recycling bin only.

Any glass left at the side of the bin will **not** be collected.

Any additional household packaging recyclables such as plastics, cans, paper, and cardboard can be put in clear bags next to the bin if your blue bin is full.

Residents can reuse their green boxes; you do not need to return them.

More information on our new kerbside collection changes can be found at:

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/BinCollections2026>

## Discount on County Council Tax

If you are the only person in your household over 18, DCC may be able to take 25% off your council tax bill.

To see if you're eligible for that discount and other discounts, visit <https://www.durham.gov.uk/>

Vacancies

You can find details of all current vacancies including 2026 apprenticeship programme and how to apply on the council's website:

Find out more about any of these opportunities: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/.../Career-opportunities>.

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

To contact the County Council by telephone, use telephone number 03000 26 0000

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In addition, 1) Cllr Gregory outlined her sources of information for the monthly report, 2) Councillors discussed the newly introduced Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025, 3) Councillors encouraged all residents to attend the PACT meeting on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March. The Chairman thanked Cllr Gregory for her report.

**c) Finance**

In his absence from the meeting, Cllr Veitch had provided the 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.

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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 completed on Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2026. All shelters appeared to be in good order, apart from the shelter near the Barley Mow mini roundabout. Over the weekend of 21/22 of February, the poster had been taken from the glass cabinet by forcing the lock. It was still possible to re-lock the door, which now leaves an empty cabinet until a possible new display of Art Society posters this year. In general, the only other work required was minor leaf clearance and some light cleaning of seats.

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

**e) Horticulture**

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

**SUMMARY**

**Raised Flower Beds**

Spring has arrived! The winter bedding is now flourishing well.

**Picktree Lodge**

Stephen Makepeace has been asked to form two flower beds at the entrance of Picktree Lodge which was discussed and agreed at February 2026 meeting.

**Longdean Park Shrub Bed**

On hold, until further discussion and finance available.

**Blind Lane Flower Beds**

Extra plants will be planted in these beds - to produce more colour.

**North Road Shrub Beds**

These beds will be assessed later in the year. Will be maintained at present.

**Northlands Bus Shelter**

Shrubs at back of shelter will be cut back and tidied.

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In addition, 1) The County Cllr was pleased to advise that he would fund the refurbishment of the

Longdean Park shrub bed from his Neighbourhood Budget, 2) the Horticulture sub-group would discuss the possible planting of daffodil bulbs in Vigo Lane.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

**f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations**

Cllr May advised that she had attended the recent Special General Meeting of County Durham Association of Local Councils and draft Minutes of that meeting had been circulated to Councillors.

The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

**g) Picktree Village**

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

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Picktree Village flower beds are looking particularly colourful at the moment with winter flowering and spring daffodils bringing some joy after a cold and very wet winter

Thank you clerk David for your enquiry to planning regarding the bungalow demolition. My only concern still is the ugly black plastic sheeting that is now the border of the site. It looks dreadful and I feel for residents beside and opposite who look after and showcase their front gardens and homes having to look at this daily. It is not totally secure and an eyesore. Is it possible to find the owner of the site David so that I can approach him to determine his future plans and his intended timescale?

A neighbour of mine has approached the local MP about the shaking in his property due to heavy traffic on the lane. He has also met with DCC re the same issue. I understand from him that the MP is requesting some information regarding the road composition and suitability for heavy traffic.

This matter is ongoing.

Thank you again to residents who continue to clean up litter on the lane.

I engaged DCC employees who were waiting for a meeting with my neighbour and the MP by accident on the lane and expressed my concerns to them. No particular understanding of the problem was forthcoming and I felt I was flogging a dead horse. However one member of the group admitted the unsuitability of the signage up from the motorway to go dramatically from no restriction to 30mph. He intimated that issue could be looked at. I have no idea if any conversations have taken place. Perhaps Craig could enquire for me. This was not a formally arranged meeting and I have no idea of who I was talking to except Maxine Stubbs who quickly justified the monitoring of vehicle speeds to me as data identifying no problem.

Road markings near the roundabout are virtually unreadable but I presume their painting is on some sort of schedule.

It appears that DCC has no fixed penalty cameras anywhere in the County unlike every neighbouring Council. How strange. They would make a fortune on Picktree Village lane.

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown for her report.

**h) Planning**

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

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Since our last meeting, it has been relatively quiet, however the following planning applications have been received. Please note, on the weekly list for 20th February, although 1 Castle View, is not within the parish, it does fall within North Lodge Ward.

Weekly list 13th March

North Lodge/ East North	DM/ 26/00558/ TPO	Mr Kang	Garden House Picktree Lane Picktree Washington NE38 9HH	1. Beech - Remove 3x lowest limbs to main stem 5. Holly, Yew and Portuguese Laurel - Crown lift to 3m 6. 2x Holly - Crown reduce/reshape by 2m and crown lift to 4m 6. Yew - Crown lift to 4m	Jess White  Delegated
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Weekly list 6th March

NA

Weekly list 27th February

NA

Weekly list 20th February

No Parish/ East North	DM/ 26/00371/ TPO	Mr Jon Downes	1 Castle View Chester-le-Street DH3 3XA	T3. Lime - fell as close to current ground level as practical	Michelle Penman  Delegated
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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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I did my final play areas inspection of the month this afternoon and am pleased to report all equipment appears to be in good order on both sites.

It is pleasing to see these areas being enjoyed in this better weather and when speaking to a young family this afternoon, they tell me that a visit to Low Flatts on a Saturday is a highlight for their young children.

I am pleased that Craig shares the importance of these areas for the development of our children and is currently involved in the regeneration of the Northlands site.

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

**j) Policy and Governance**

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

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**Government Policy**

**New Litter Guidance**

Statutory guidance Litter enforcement powers: when and how to use them (10 March)

Guidance for local authorities on the consistent use of their litter enforcement powers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-enforcement-powers-when-and-how-to-use-them>

Statutory guidance Litter and refuse: code of practice (10 March)

This code of practice outlines what a court of law might consider as applicable to different types of land.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-on-litter-and-refuse>

**New Litter Code**

Statutory guidance Litter and refuse: code of practice (3 March)

This code of practice outlines what a court of law might consider as applicable to different types of land.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-on-litter-and-refuse>

**New Election Trials**

Press release Weekend voting and shopping centre polling stations to be trialled (2 March)

Some voters in May local elections to cast their ballot in a shopping centre and on weekends as part of plans to make voting easier

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/weekend-voting-and-shopping-centre-polling-stations-to-be-trialled>

### **New Fly Tipping Initiative**

Press release Councils urged to crush more fly-tippers' vehicles (25 February)

New government guidance outlines how offenders' vehicles should be searched, seized and destroyed

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/councils-urged-to-crush-more-fly-tippers-vehicles>

### **New Vehicle Seizure Guidance**

Defra issues guidance for councils for first time on how to seize and crush vehicles used for fly-tipping (25 February)

[https://nftpg.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Vehicle Seizure Powers Guidance-Feb-2026.pdf](https://nftpg.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Vehicle%20Seizure%20Powers%20Guidance-Feb-2026.pdf)

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall for his report.

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

Cllr Martin and Cllr Veitch gave an update on the progress of the Remembrance Artwork including that the County Council would soon be laying the concrete bases and the two existing seats at the site would be temporarily removed. Re the lease for the land, the Clerk advised that this was still awaited from the County Council. Cllr Hall suggested that an interim licence should be requested and the Clerk will follow this up.

Councillors thanked Cllr Martin and Cllr Veitch for the report.

### **Item 7. 26/28 Correspondence**

1) From Daft as a Brush

Thank you for donation.

2) From St Cuthbert's Hospice

Thank you for donation.

3) From Durham Constabulary

email re mobile speed cameras in Blind Lane.

4) From Durham County Council

email re consultation on Discount Market Sale Supplementary Planning Document.

5) 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 Garden House, Picktree Village.

### **Item 8. 26/29 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration**

#### **The Annual Newsletter**

Cllr May outlined requirements for the input of articles including the limited space per article, the desirability for photos and a deadline of mid-May.

Councillors thanked Cllr May for all her work on this matter.

### **Item 9. 26/30 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).

In addition, a) the Clerk will request the County Council to provide a structural survey of the bus

shelters, b) the Horticulture Portfolio Holder will request a copy of the horticulture contractor's public liability insurance certificate.  
Councillors thanked the Clerk for his work on this matter.

**Item 10. 26/31 Payment of Accounts**

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 664.76	Salaries March 2026	
Expenses	£ 115.00	Expenses March 2026	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 1,976.51	Horticulture March 2026	£ 329.42
Craig Martin	£ 203.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
Graeme Hopper Ltd	£12000.00	Part Payment, Artwork Installation	£2000.00
<b>Total of Above Payments</b>	<b>£14959.27</b>		

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

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription - March 2026	£ 7.71
Information Commissioner's Office	£ 52.00	Data Protection Renewal Fee	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 585.10	P.A.Y.E.	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 250.89	Employer's N.I.C.	
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>	<b>£ 934.24</b>		

(Resolved - the payments be approved as submitted).

**Item 11. 26/32 Other Matters for Information**

- a) Cllr Veitch advised that the next litter-pick would be on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March at 11am, meeting at the Lambton Worm.
- b) Cllr Hawkes advised that there was a lot of litter in Drum Lane, so much that it looked like fly-tipping.
- c) Cllr Gregory advised that she had reported to the County Council the accumulation of litter on the north verge of Blind Lane.
- d) Cllr Gregory asked that if anyone was sending an email to the Police, she be copied in as the Crime and Community Safety Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.59pm.

**Appendix 1 (see Item 3. 26/24)**

Thank you to Councillor Martin, for his report.

As the Councillor has already stated as part of his report, the DCC Budget Report is 200 pages long, so I thought it would be good to pass on some of the highlights contained in the budget report which I believe may be of interest, if the Councillors will let me.

With reference to cuts to services

Garden waste collection has gone up a small amount, but you do get an extra collection.

Grass cutting, I believe the frequency of cutting has decreased by 2 days which will be nominal, maybe 2-3mm.

Crossing patrols, I believe these roles were not being applied for due to the nature of the role (hours etc) so were removed from the vacancy list.

Finance.

+ 200 NEW SCHOOL PLACES FOR SEN:

£26m for a new high-spec Villa Real School, £13.5m for Fyndoune, £44.3m repairing and maintaining our maintained school portfolio

## CARE IN OUR COMMUNITY:

£7m expanding support of the Durham Cares, alleviating pressure on looked after children.

£1m extra investment in EXTRA CARE capacity for adults, £22.5m in disabled facilities to help people live independently

### Highways:

£47m highways maintenance including pothole repair, £15m highway structure repairs, £4m in footpaths, £1.5m in drainage works

### Communities

£2.6m in temporary accommodation to combat homelessness, £5m town and village enhancements,

£5.2m in our Local Networks scheme

### IT and Infrastructure

£20.1m in digital systems and core infrastructure, £6m in demolition budgets to address vacant and derelict sites

### Reduction in Town and Parish Council grants

As part of the 2024-2025 budget proposals, it was agreed that there would be a 50% reduction in the quantum of grant provided to Town and Parish councils, phased in over three years from 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Payments currently being made to Town and Parish councils totals c £1 million in 2025/26, with 54 of the 110 Town and Parish Councils including North Lodge receiving nothing but still managing to balance the books. The remaining 56 plus the City of Durham Charter Trust receive some element of grant payment - ranging from £190,455 (Peterlee TC, who had a precept of £1.919 million in 2025/26) to £4 (Castle Eden Parish Council, who had a precept of £10,000 in 2025/26). 30 of the 56 Town and Parish Councils in receipt of grant payments receive less than £1,000 per annum, with / (Peterlee TC [£190,455], Gt Aycliffe TC [£145,256], Ferryhill TC [£122,467], Seaham TC [£122,122], Horden PC [£87,544], Stanley TC [£373,099] and Easington Colliery PC [£50,053]) receiving more than £50,000 currently and accounting for 79% of the overall grant paid in 2025/26.

As part of the 2026/27 budget and MTFP(16) there was a proposal to cease these payments entirely from 2026/27 to assist the Council in meeting its significant budget challenge next year. Pelton Parish Council have recently advertised for a litter picker in a paid role, and have actually employed 2, as they both came across well in the interviews! That is two lots of wages, National Insurance and holiday pay etc, that the residents are paying for in their precept.

**North Lodge Parish Council**

**Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026.**

	TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries		£	Salaries April 2026	
Expenses		£ 115.00	Expenses April 2026	
Makepeace Landscapes		£	Horticulture April 2026	£
Cty DhM Assn of Local Councils		£ 571.17	Annual Subscription	
<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 - April 2026	£ 7.71
<b>Total Card and D/D Payments</b>		<b>£</b>		

**Balance to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026**

Balance b/f	£35063.60	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments - March 2026	<u>£14959.27</u>	Community Account	£ 1230.73
	£20104.33	Commercial Instant Access	<u>£28881.34</u>
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	<u>£ 934.24</u>	Total	£30112.07
	£19170.09		
Add Bank Interest Received	<u>£ 13.73</u>	Deduct cheques not yet presented	<u>£ Nil</u>
	£19183.82		
Deduct Bank Charges	<u>£ 5.75</u>		
	£19178.07		
Add Grant Received	<u>£10934.00</u>		
	£30112.07		
Balance c/f	£30112.07		£30112.07