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 15th September 2026.

PRESENT	Chairman:	Councillor Craig Martin.
	Councillors:	Suzanne Brown, Margaret Caygill, Maureen May, David Dinsley, Patrick Driscoll, Darren Hawkes.
	County Councillor:	Craig Martin.
	Clerk:	David Murrell.
		21 Residents

The Chairman commenced the meeting by welcoming everyone, particularly the residents.

Item 1. 26/82 Apologies for Absence
Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Dennis Hall and Chris Veitch.

Item 2. 26/83 Declarations of Interest
Councillor Craig Martin declared interests as a County Councillor and as a Trustee of Park View Academy. Councillor Darren Hawkes declared an interest as a member of the North Lodge Remembrance Group.

Item 3. 26/84 Application for Co-option – David Dinsley
Mr Dinsley had applied to be co-opted to the Council. His application form had been previously circulated by the Clerk to all Councillors. Mr Dinsley left the meeting whilst Councillors discussed his application which was approved unanimously. Cllr Dinsley then returned to the meeting and was welcomed to the Council.
(**Resolved** – to co-opt David Dinsley to the Council)

Councillors agreed to take Agenda Item 9a) next.

Item 9a). 26/85 County Durham Plan – Picktree Village Green Belt
The Clerk outlined the latest correspondence between the Parish Council and the County Council Planning Policy Manager, the latter's email of 4th August 2026 having been previously circulated by the Clerk to those residents on the Parish Council's Picktree Village Green Belt Contact List and to all Councillors. The County Councillor outlined the processes of the County Council towards completion of the County Durham Plan. Councillors and residents were in agreement that the inclusion of the Green Belt as development land in the Plan would be unacceptable to the community. Ways to present to the County Council the strength of feeling on this matter were discussed and the County Councillor kindly agreed to develop these.
At this point, all the residents left the meeting.

Item 4. 26/86 Report of the County Councillor

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

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Residents have become extremely concerned about a long-term empty property located on Kingsmere. I organised a site visit, with Council staff and residents.
The purpose so that residents had the chance to directly question the Empty Homes Team and put across the strength of feeling everyone has. While also getting an update on what progress is being made on moving the property on.
The Empty Homes Team have been corresponding with the owner. Who stated they intend to put the house on the market so that it can be sold. We continue to wait and see if this will happen.
Residents expressed a concern that rats are coming from the property and that the Council's pest control team aren't treating this as a serious matter. I'm going to be working with the community to organise rat diary sheets so we can put together comprehensive information together for the pest control team and encourage them to be proactive.

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In addition, Councillors discussed the recent assault by two males on an individual on the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) route. The County Councillor advised that law breakers should not be challenged but the Police should be informed as soon as possible.

Item 5. 26/87 Adoption of Minutes of Council Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 21st July 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 6. 26/88 Chairman's Report

1) The Chairman thanked all those who had attended his summer social event. Councillors and the Clerk thanked the Chairman for a very enjoyable afternoon. 2) The Chairman reported on a very successful event to unveil the Remembrance Artwork. Should Councillors wish to install lighting to the Artwork then a costed project plan would be needed for consideration.
Councillors thanked the Chairman for his report.
Regarding outstanding matters -
a) Re Minute 26/76 section b). Cllr Driscoll reported that the fallen large tree branch at Merlin Drive play area had now been removed. Councillors had observed another fallen branch near to the entrance to Lombard Drive. The Clerk will request the County Council to remove this.
b) Re Minute 26/77 section d). Re new displays for the bus shelters' cabinets, Cllr Caygill had discussed this with George Nairn who would be able to provide designs showing historical North Lodge. A quote was to be obtained from Mr Nairn. Cllr Hawkes kindly agreed to have posters printed from these designs.
c) Re Minute 26/79 section a). Cllr May advised that the Newsletters had now been printed and the Clerk had distributed them to Councillors to be delivered to all households in the Parish. Councillors thanked Cllr May for all her work on the production of a very informative Newsletter.

Item 7. 26/89 Portfolio Holders' Reports

a) Communications and Media Development

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

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Since the last Meeting in July there have been 5 posts. These were relating to the following and placed on our social media.

1. Mailing list for residents who wish to receive information regarding the Parish Council meetings, agendas, minutes, finances etc.
2. The unveiling of the Remembrance Artwork
3. Dances Classes available at Park View School
4. Information regarding dead rabbits/birds being found throughout the parish and how to report to DCC
5. Delivery of Annual newsletter to residents.

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report.

b) Crime and Community Safety

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

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Information received from PCSO Paige Goodwill:

Off-road bike operation C2C

As part of Operation Endurance, Police had some great results recently, with:

- 2 mopeds seized
- 1 quad bike seized
- 4 Surron bikes seized
- 4 Fixed Penalty Notices issued

Further operations in the near future are planned.
Unfortunately one of our residents was assaulted by one of these off road bikers recently whilst walking his dog on the C2C line adjacent to Low Flatts Field. The Ambulance Service and Police both attended and an investigation is ongoing.

Reports of Air rifle use at Low Flatts park and C2C

The Police have received reports regarding 2 to 3 youths having been seen with air rifles in the area and also a middle aged man and his son walking around Low Flatts Park and the C2C with air rifles out of the sleeve ready to be used. It is suspected that they maybe responsible for the increase in dead birds and rabbits being found by dog walkers. Investigations are ongoing.

Community Speed Watch

Police are currently receiving training on a new Community Speed Watch process. Once fully trained they are to invite residents to join then during speed watch sessions and have a go at using the speed gun themselves.

Park View School road markings

Police still waiting for some of the road markings outside Park View School to be refreshed. Once this has been done, they will be able to issue parking tickets where appropriate.
The speed enforcement van statistics for June and July has been requested.
The next PACT meeting at the Lambton Worm is planned for October (date to be confirmed). With the darker nights approaching, the Police will also be bringing along some Safer Homes and target hardening equipment for residents.

Fire

There has been a spate of fires with the Parish. These have been reported to and dealt with by D&DFRS. These have been located in the woodland adjacent to the A693 near Low Flatts Park and the pond to the rear of Drum Industrial estate. Numerous youths have been spotted in the vicinity at the time.

This summer has seen Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service see a big rise in Deliberate and accidental Wildfires. This follows a disturbing trend started on Tik Tok in which youngsters film themselves starting fires. Advice has been given via their social media. Recruitment for On Call crews across the County continues and an upcoming Wholetime Recruitment Campaign has been announced. This can be viewed on their website and social media.

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch.

c) <u>Finance</u>

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

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I have inspected the financial information for our Bank accounts, and as always I can confirm that everything appears correct.

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In addition, the Chairman advised that he would soon be starting to draft a budget for the next financial year and Councillors should approach him with any ideas for projects for consideration in the budget.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Veitch for his report.

d) <u>Highways and Community Assets</u>

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 Wednesday the 9th of September 2026. The shelters appeared to be in a good condition after the Summer recess.

Due to the early Autumn winds most shelters needed leaf clearance, and the adjacent seats a minimal clean. The shelter at Ambleside Court required trimming of foliage to present a clear view of the "North Lodge Parish" signage on the outer wall of the shelter.

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The Chairman thanked Cllr Driscoll for his report.

e) <u>Horticulture</u>

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

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<u>SUMMARY / UPDATE</u>

<u>Tree Stump North Road</u>

Cost for removal of the tree stump by Stephen Makepeace = £1.200
Cost for removal of the tree stump by Michael Bailey = £250.00
Cost for removal of the tree stump by Durham County Council = £ ? David Wales-
Awaiting reply.

<u>Proposed concrete seat base and access path by Makepeace Landscapes</u>

Following completion of the stump grinding works, construct a new concrete seat base and access path between the two existing stone planters.
Cost : £2750 + Vat
Durham County Council – Cost: Awaiting reply.

<u>Flower Beds (Throughout Parish)</u>

Majority of flower beds are flourishing well.

<u>Planting of entrance bed at Lombard Drive</u>

Cost £325.00 plus Vat

<u>Jubilee tree in Lombard Drive</u> – preparation and slate finish has begun and Stephen Makepeace will plant when winter bedding available.
Cost £425.00 plus Vat

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Re the planting of the entrance bed at Lombard Drive, Councillors agreed to fund the amount of £325 from the Community Improvement Fund.
Re the Jubilee Tree bed, Councillors agreed that consideration of this would be held over to the next financial year.
In addition, the land in front of the Lambton Worm pub fence was untidy. The Clerk is to contact the pub manager to request that the land be tidied up.
The Chairman thanked Cllr May for her report.

f) Meetings of Partnership Organisations

No report was given.

g) Picktree Village

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

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It has been a colourful summer in the village with the flower beds looking their best as are residents gardens. Our regular nuisances continue but I have noticed an increase in the scooter s roaring through the village along our lovely straight lane It is perfect for the speed merchants on e bikes and in cars and vans. A police speed monitoring van was seen in mid August in front of the farm cottages. No doubt the data will show no area of concern. The road surface in one area was patched in August. The traffic controls certainly highlighted the volume of traffic using the lane. Queues built up very quickly. An abandoned car outside of White House has been reported to Police and DC Council. There are 2 notices on the front and back windscreens. Apparently the car will be left for 3 months in the hope the owner will remove it. As of today it remains. At the request of a resident I have contacted Lambton Estate manager about the overgrown hedges down from the village towards the motorway. This is the only path for pedestrians and it is narrow. Hopefully pruning will happen soon. I have also highlighted the coping stores on the boundary wall as quite a few need replacing and maintenance of the wall is needed in a few places.

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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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W/E 24/07/26
No applications within the parish, however one for tree works in North Lodge ward has been submitted.

North Lodge/

No Parish/ East North	DM/ 26/0183 2/TPO	Brown	11 Castle View Chester-le-street Chester-le-Street DH3 3XA	Cherry (T1) - crown reduce whole canopy by 1.5m, crown raise by 1m, all branch severance to be no greater than 75mm diameter, Beech (T2) – felling and removal to ground level, Silver Birch (T3) - crown reduce by 2m, crown clean to include deadwood and lesser of any crossing branches, Beech (T4) - crown reduce south side canopy by 1.5m, crown clean to include deadwood and lesser of any crossing branches

W/E 31/07/26
No applications within the parish.
W/E 07/08/26
No applications within the parish.
W/E 14/08/26
No applications within the parish.
W/E 21/08/26
No applications within the parish.

W/E 28/08/26
No applications within the parish.
W/E 04/09/26
No applications within the parish, details of approved application for tree works below.

North Lodge/North Lodge/East North	DM/ 26/0169 1/TPO Mr David Gray	Land To The South West Of Castle View Private Day Nursery Blind Lane Chester-le-street DH3 4AF	Beech (T8, T86) - crown clean and deadwood, Conifer (T45)and Willow (T54) - crown lift to 5m, Willow (T56) and Ash (T65) - fell as close to ground level as practical, Willow (T64, T67) and Beech (T89) – crown lift to 4.5m

W/E 11/09/26
No applications within the parish, however, details below of further applications from Lidl as the site on Picktree progresses.
Chester-le-Street North/

No Parish/ East North	DM/ 26/02225/ AD	Lidl GB Ltd	Lidl Picktree Terrace Chester-le-Street DH3 3ST	2no internally illuminated canopy signs, 2no internally illuminated flagpole signs, 2no wall-mounted externally illuminated billboard signs, 1no internally illuminated poster display unit and 1no non-illuminated trolley bay sign

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For those of you interested, an application has also been submitted in Chester le Street North reference the old Catholic Club for demolition, to build 4 houses with parking.
Chester-le-Street North/

No Parish/ East North	DM/ 26/0230 0/FPA	North Heights Ltd	St Cuthberts RC Social Club Lumley Terrace Chester-le-street DH3 3NQ	Demolition of existing social club and erection of two pairs of semi-detached houses with parking to the rear for six vehicles.

Also, for your information, please see below.
Although not within DCC boundaries, obviously decisions made in neighbouring areas may have an impact on our parish.
Subject: Sunderland Local Plan Scoping Consultation
Dear Sir/Madam,
The Council is preparing a new Local Plan for Sunderland. Local Plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities across a range of topics, including housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure.
Before we formally commence the 30-month plan preparation period for the new Local Plan, we are carrying out a scoping consultation to gather views from members of the public, statutory bodies and other key stakeholders on what the plan's vision and objectives should contain and if we are gathering the right evidence. We would also like to know how we should communicate and engage with you as we prepare the new Local Plan.
A comprehensive scoping consultation document has been prepared which sets out the vision and strategic priorities of the current adopted Local Plan and identifies potential opportunities and challenges for the new Local Plan against these each of these priorities. A high-level, simplified version of the document is also available online together with an online survey which asks a series of questions based around each of the current strategic priorities. As part of the consultation, an

interactive map has also been made available which allows consultees to identify sites or areas where they would like development to take place.
All documentation is available to view online at:https://sunderlandcitycouncil.info/local-plan.
Hard copies of the comprehensive report are available to view in City Hall and all Council libraries throughout the city during normal opening hours.
The consultation will commence on Tuesday 1 September 2026 and cover a four-week period, **closing at 5pm on Tuesday 29 September 2026.** We welcome your views.
Please note that the Council's ongoing Call for Sites exercise will also close at **5pm on Tuesday 29 September 2026.** If you would like to submit a site for consideration, please complete and submit the form available online at: https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/Call-for-Sites.
The Council encourage use of the online survey for responses where there is easy access to both the comprehensive document and the high-level simplified version of the consultation document. However, any additional representations can be made in writing to planningpolicy@sunderland.gov.uk or Planning Policy Team, Sunderland City Council, Sunderland City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AA.
All representations received will be taken into consideration when drafting the new Sunderland Local Plan. A summary of the responses received will be made available following formal commencement of the plan which is anticipated in late October 2026.
If you have any queries relating to this consultation, please don't hesitate to contact the Planning Policy Team at this e-mail address.
Regards
Gary Baker
Strategic and Sustainable Plans Manager
Economy, Culture and Sustainability
www.sunderland.gov.uk
Sunderland City Council

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 latest inspection of the Play Areas today and found all equipment in good condition in both areas. It was delightful to see both areas were busy, well used and enjoyed by many.
Thank you to Councillor Veitch for dealing with the wildlife killing in Low Flatts and surrounding area.
Also at Low Flatts lots of holes have appeared in the ground around the fencing and seats. I suspect this is dogs.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Caygill for her report.

j) Policy and Governance

Cllr Hall had advised the Clerk that there were no matters to report.
The Chairman thanked Cllr Hall.

k) Project Development, Business and External Relations

Cllr Martin advised that now the big project of the Remembrance Artwork had been completed, he would welcome any ideas for future projects. He also advised that the Drum Business Group now covered a wider area and had become the North Durham Business Group.
Councillors thanked Cllr Martin for his report.

Item 8. 26/90 Correspondence

1) From the National Association of Local Councils
   Notification of Salary Award 2026-27.
2) From Forvis Mazars LLP
   Notification of completion of limited assurance review for the year ended 31st March 2026.

The Clerk advised that the external auditors had raised no matters with the annual return. Councillors thanked the Clerk for all his work in achieving this clean audit report.

Item 9. 26/91 Proposals, Reports and Requests for Consideration

b) An Alternative Venue for Council Meetings

In the absence of Cllr Hall from the meeting, this item was deferred to the next meeting of the Council.

c) A Defibrillator for Picktree Village

The County Councillor had circulated to Picktree Village residents a consultation letter. There had been only one written reply which was neutral in opinion but there had been several verbal replies in favour. Councillors discussed this and agreed that a finance proposal for the project should come forward.

d) Adoption of a Social Media Policy

The Clerk had previously circulated a draft Social Media Policy based on a National Association of Local Councils model policy, from a link kindly provided by Cllr Hall. Councillors discussed this and agreed to adopt the Policy in the form provided.

(**Resolved** – to adopt a Social Media Policy in the form provided)

Item 10. 26/92 Payment of Accounts

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£ 664.16	Salaries August 2026	
Expenses	£ 118.00	Expenses August 2026	
Salaries	£ 686.80	Salaries September 2026	
Expenses	£ 118.00	Expenses September 2026	
Back-Dated Salary Increase	£ 113.68	Back-Dated Salary April-Aug inc.	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 2144.51	Horticulture August 2026	£ 357.42
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 2144.51	Horticulture September 2026	£ 357.42
Swinburne Maddison LLP	£ 477.00	Fee for Artwork Land Lease	£ 72.00
Whitfield Fella Ltd	£ 100.00	Catering for Artwork Event	
Graeme Hopper Ltd	£43424.10	Remembrance Artwork	£7237.35
Zurich Municipal	£ 710.64	Insurance for Artwork	
Durham County Council	£ 2901.85	Groundwork for Artwork	£ 483.64
Durham County Council	£ 2147.69	Public Seating	£ 357.95
Craig Martin	£ 209.00	Chair's Quarterly Allowance	
Total of Above Payments	**£ 55959.94**		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription – August 2026	£ 7.71
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription – Sept 2026	£ 7.71
Jak HQ Ltd	£ 522.00	Design and Print of Newsletters	£ 16.00
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 621.32	P.A.Y.E.	
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 277.82	Employer's N.I.C.	
Amazing God Ltd	£ 94.99	Purchase of Printer/Scanner/Copier	£ 15.83
Total Card and D/D Payments	**£ 1608.63**		

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

Item 11. 26/93 Other Matters for Information
There were no other matters raised.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.36pm.

North Lodge Parish Council

Accounts for the month as submitted to the Meeting of North Lodge Parish Council held on Tuesday 20th October 2026.

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
Salaries	£	Salaries October 2026	
Expenses	£ 118.00	Expenses October 2026	
Makepeace Landscapes	£ 2144.51	Horticulture October 2026	£ 357.42
Total of Above Payments	**£**		

Payments Made by Debit Card and Direct Debit

TO	AMOUNT	REASON	VAT
ANS Group Ltd	£ 46.25	Monthly Subscription – Oct 2026	£ 7.71
Poppy Shop	£ 46.00	Poppy Wreaths	£ 7.67
Total Card and D/D Payments	**£ 92.25**		

Balance to 30th September 2026

Balance b/f	£66209.54	Balances at Bank:-	
Deduct Payments – Sept 2026	£55959.94	Community Account	£ 698.17
	£10249.60	Commercial Instant Access	£48303.56
Deduct Card and D/D Payments	£ 1608.63	Total	£49001.73
	£ 8640.97		
Add Bank Interest Received	£ 56.22	Deduct cheque not yet presented	£ Nil
	£ 8697.19		
Deduct Bank Charges	£ 12.50		
	£ 8684.69		
Add Grants Received	£40317.04		
Balance c/f	£49001.73		£49001.73