

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Present: Councillor J Miller (Chair)
Councillors E Carr, N Craggs,
J Huntington, B Miller, C Stogdale

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Johnson, L Stewart and L White.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors E Carr and C Stogdale declared an interest in item number 7(1).

3 The Minutes of the last meeting held on 14 July 2025, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair welcomed M Goyns and S Facey to the meeting.

S Facey expressed concern at the on-going problem of youths riding motorbikes at high speed through the village causing a nuisance as well as a danger. Reference was also made to the increasing problem of dog fouling on the footpaths, particularly around East View and Woodlands Avenue.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and the issues raised be reported to the Police and Durham County Council.

5 POLICE MATTERS

There was no Police report.

The Clerk reported the following updates in relation to Police matters.

(1) Cuppa with a Copper

The Clerk reported that Cuppa with a Copper would be held at 2pm in Wheatley House on the following dates.

Thursday 2 October 2025

Thursday 30 October 2025

Thursday 27 November 2025

(2) Parking – Front Street

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting concern was raised at the number of vehicles parked along the Front Street and around the entrance to the Community Centre. Whilst the vehicles were taxed and tested they were making it difficult for residents to get parked and were causing an obstruction at the junction leaving the Community Centre.

The Police were made aware of the issue and had advised that the parking problems were not a

Police matter unless the vehicles were causing an obstruction.

(3) PACT Meeting

The Clerk reported that the next PACT meeting would be held on 18 September 2025 at 6pm in the Community Centre.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

County Councillor N Craggs provided a report on the following issues.

- Arriva 58 bus service – Durham County Council had advised that it was not viable, based on passenger numbers, to alter the current route of the Arriva 58 bus service.
- The planning application for a new housing development at Quilstyle Road was recently considered by the County Planning Committee and deferred pending further investigation into outstanding issues related to the development.
- Durham County Council had received a planning application for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on land to the northwest of High Crows House, Wheatley Hill. The application fell under the Easington and Shotton Division and the parish of Shadforth.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Request for Financial Assistance - Wheatley Hill Mothers Club

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request from Wheatley Hill Mothers Club for financial assistance towards the cost of hiring a brass band at a fundraising concert.

RESOLVED that a donation of £330 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

(2) Heritage Centre

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the Wheatley Hill Heritage Society advising of their winter opening hours at the Heritage Centre.

Members were advised that the Heritage Centre would be closed from 18 December 2025 to 10 March 2026.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) HMOs – Article 4 Direction

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Durham County Council advising of a consultation on a proposed non-immediate Article 4 Direction that would remove permitted development rights that currently allowed the conversion of dwelling houses into small Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) for between 3 and 6 residents without the need for planning permission.

The County Council had already introduced this measure for smaller HMOs in areas where there was a concentration of student properties. The proposed Article 4 would cover the remainder of County Durham.

Following the consultation, the County Council would consider all the responses before deciding

whether to confirm the Article 4 Direction. If confirmed, it was expected the Direction would come into force on 17 August 2026, and planning permission would be required for any new HMO conversions from that date onward.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Wheatley Hill Mothers Club

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from the Mothers Club which gave details of the following free events to be held at Wheatley Hill Workingmen's Club.

- Dragged Up Proper – A book by Pip Fallow - 17 September 2025 – 6.30pm
- Patons and Baldwins : Wonder Factory – A presentation on Patons and Baldwins, the world's largest wool factory based in Darlington by Chris Lloyd, Chief Feature Writer with the Northern Echo - 8 October 2025 – 6.30pm

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

8 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(1) DM/25/01975/FPA – Sub-division of property into 2 separate flats at 9 Alexandra Terrace, Wheatley Hill

Members discussed the above planning application at length and raised the following concerns.

- To allow a three bedroom family property to be sub divided into two separate flats would add to the existing problems on the Front Street. The Front Street was a mix of residential and commercial properties and had a history of persistent anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. The Police, Neighbourhood Wardens and Fire Service were repeatedly called to deal with incidents on the Front Street. There were on-going problems associated with youths congregating and causing a disturbance/nuisance on the Front Street.
- The application was to convert an existing three bedroomed two storey terraced dwelling into a ground floor one bedroom flat and a first floor one bedroom flat. There was a history of vulnerable people who lived in the vicinity of the Front Street being targeted by local youths and taken advantage of, this left them vulnerable to crime and anti-social behaviour. There was concern that these flats would be offered to vulnerable people who would in turn be targeted.
- The property was owned by a landlord who was unable to manage the properties he already owned in Wheatley Hill. The owner had multiple rental properties in Wheatley Hill that were either in a state of disrepair, empty or occupied by tenants who were poorly supported, often resulting in anti-social behaviour, criminal activity, untidy gardens and a general sense of neglect around the properties.
- The Front Street suffered from many empty, abandoned and boarded up properties. The Parish Council was concerned that this property would end up neglected and not properly managed.
- Families living on and in the vicinity of the Front Street were concerned about the number of absentee landlords that were buying up property and not managing them properly.
- The property was currently one dwelling and the application proposed to divide it into two separate flats. This risked adding additional vehicles onto the already busy highway. Wheatley Hill Front Street had seen an increase in the number of businesses in the area,

which had positively attracted additional traffic and parked vehicles. However, should this application be approved, it would see the traffic flow and number of parked vehicles increase, which would create extra risks on the highway. Junctions were already difficult and dangerous to pull out of, without additional vehicles.

- Linked to the above, dividing this property into two, risked additional vehicles being parked long term in the vicinity. The application does not propose adding additional parking spaces. Therefore, tenants who may have vehicles, would need to park in the already busy area. This would cause extra risks on the highway.

RESOLVED that;

- (i) the Parish Council object to the application on the grounds outlined and the County Council be asked to refuse planning permission.
 - (ii) the County Council be asked to refer the application to the Area Planning Committee and a site visit be held to allow Members of the Planning Committee the opportunity to view the site and the surrounding area.
- (2) DM/25/02005/FPA – Change of use of lounge in dwellinghouse (Class C3) to shop for the sale of mobile phones and vapes (Class E), remove existing lounge window, install new shop front window/door at Halcon House, Front Street, Wheatley Hill

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

- (3) DM/25/02094/FPA – Proposed single-storey extension to existing building to provide early years learning space including classroom, toilets, group room, storage, cloakroom, and erection of external canopies at St Godric's RC Primary School, Thornley Road, Wheatley Hill

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

9 CLERKS REPORT

(1) Allotments

(i) Annual Rents

The Clerk reported that the annual rent letters would be issued at the end of September 2025.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) Applications for an Allotment

The Clerk reported the receipt of two applications for an allotment.

RESOLVED that applicant numbers 2/2025 and 3/2025 be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment.

(2) Cemetery

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council required a skip to remove the spoil from graves dug for burials.

Members were advised that quotations were sought, and R Maddison Fuels had agreed to remove the soil at a cost of £300 inclusive of VAT.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) Cemetery Bungalow

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request from Social Services to undertake adaptations to the bathroom in the Cemetery bungalow at no cost to the Parish Council.

RESOLVED that the necessary adaptations be approved.

(4) Racist Graffiti

The Clerk reported that racist graffiti in Wheatley Hill was reported to Durham County Council and removed.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Update - Co-Op/Vincents Court

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting Members reported overgrown grass and weeds at the steps adjacent to the Co-Op and Vincents Court.

Durham County Council had advised that they were unable to assist as the area was not under their management or ownership. Members advised that the area had been cut back and cleared.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

10 MEMBER ISSUES

(1) Fly Tipped Rubbish

Members reported fly tipped rubbish on land adjacent to Greenhills Terrace.

RESOLVED that the matter be reported to Durham County Council.

(2) Rubbish in Gardens

Members reported rubbish in the gardens of properties at Granville Terrace and Greenhills Terrace.

RESOLVED that the matter be reported to Durham County Council.

11 PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure at 31 August 2025.

PAYMENT	PAYABLE TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL
Direct Debit	E-on Next	Gas - Heritage Centre	17.58	0.88	18.46
Direct Debit	E-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	55.33	2.77	58.10
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - August 2025	6,474.60		6,474.60
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - August 2025	4,642.50		4,642.50
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - August 2025	37.50	7.50	45.00

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Direct Debit	British Telecom		Telephone/Internet			37.02	7.40	44.42
Invoice 99	Co-Op Bank		Charges			19.10		19.10
Direct Debit	E-on Next		Gas - Heritage Centre			17.67	0.88	18.55
Direct Debit	E-on Next		Electric - Heritage Centre			52.91	2.65	55.56
Internet Banking	MKM		Cemetery Supplies			63.11	12.62	75.73
Internet Banking	Horns		Cemetery Supplies			8.33	1.66	9.99
Internet Banking	CDS Security & Fire		Annual Maintenance Contract			591.51	118.31	709.82
Internet Banking	R Maddison Fuels Ltd		Removal of Cemetery Soil			250.00	50.00	300.00
Internet Banking	Wheatley Hill Mothers Club		Section 137 Donation			330.00		330.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson		Telephone Allowance			25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson		Reimbursement - Stamps/Paper/Envelopes			22.19		22.19
Internet Banking	Payroll		Wages - September 2025			5,861.94		5,861.94
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC		PAYE/Pension - September 2025			4,026.73		4,026.73
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited		Payroll Services - September 2025			37.50	7.50	45.00
Direct Debit	British Telecom		Telephone/Internet			37.02	7.40	44.42
Invoice 100	Co-Op Bank		Charges			12.25		12.25
					TOTAL	22,644.79	219.57	22,864.36

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and the payments be approved.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

..... Signed

.....Dated