

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

**Present: Councillor J Miller (Chair)  
Councillors J Huntington, L Johnson,  
B Miller, L Stewart, C Stogdale**

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Carr, N Craggs and L White.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 The Minutes of the last meeting held on 10 November 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 to the meeting.

**5 POLICE MATTERS**

There was no Police report.

**6 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT**

There was no County Councillors report.

**7 CORRESPONDENCE**

**Article 4 Direction**

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Durham County Council advising that the County Council had confirmed a non-immediate Article 4 Direction. The Article 4 Direction would remove permitted development rights that currently allowed the conversion of dwelling houses into 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 Article 4 Direction would come into force on 17 August 2026 and would cover the remainder of County Durham. Planning permission would be required for any new HMO conversions from that date onward.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**8 PLANNING**

**(1) Application**

**DM/25/03178/AD – Display of various illuminated and non-illuminated signage on the building and within the site boundary at Wheatley Service Station, Durham Road, Wheatley Hill**

(2) Approval

DM/25/02619/FPA – Single storey extension to form babies' room at Wheatley Hill Primary School, Wheatley Hill

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

9 CLERKS REPORT

(1) Allotments

The Clerk provided an update on the annual allotment rents.

Members were advised that due to the non-payment of the annual rent plot 18 was vacant and it was suggested that it be re-allocated from the waiting list.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and plot 18 be re-allocated from the waiting list.

(2) Precept and Budget Setting 2026/2027

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from Durham County Council advising of changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant and tax base for the forthcoming 2026/27 financial year.

Members were advised that in 2024/25 Durham County Council implemented a three-year phased reduction of 50% of the LCTRS grant paid to local councils. The staged cuts, running from 2024/25 to 2026/27, were intended to gradually reduce the support originally provided by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, introduced in 2013 to reduced local tax bases.

The County Council had now changed its position and proposed to cease all LCTRS grant payments entirely from 2026/27. This proposal was part of the County Council's response to its wider financial pressures.

Members were advised that the LCTRS grant received in 2025/26 was £5,969 and the tax base was 787.00. The Parish Council would receive no grant in 2026/27, and the tax base had been reduced to 784.00.

The Clerk advised that due to the loss of the LCTRS grant and the reduced tax base the Parish Council must consider how to balance its budget for 2026/27.

The Clerk provided Members with options and a range of figures for consideration. It was pointed out that in the past the Parish Council had used reserves to keep the precept low. Members were advised that reserves could no longer be used to keep the precept artificially low. It was suggested that a budget be set based on an approx. 8% increase to the precept. The increase was necessary to make up for the loss of the LCTRS grant.

RESOLVED that the Clerk prepare the draft 2026/2027 budget based on an approx. 8% increase to the precept.

(3) Dog Bags

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had purchased 20,000 dog bags at a cost of £313.44 inclusive of VAT.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Ex Gratia Christmas Payments

The Chair suggested that an ex-gratia Christmas payment of £300 be made to J Davies, E Leigh and J Thompson.

**RESOLVED** that approval be granted for an ex-gratia payment of £300 to J Davies, E Leigh and J Thompson from the Chair’s Account.

(5) Updates

(1) Footpath

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting the footpath at the top of Burns Street heading past Pizza Nova was reported to Durham County Council. The path was covered in mud and required cleaning and quad bikes had also been across the area and churned up the grass.

Members were advised that Durham County Council had initially advised that the footpath was located on private land they were unable to clean it. They subsequently advised that the footpath had been cleaned but stressed it was not their responsibility as the land belonged to Believe Housing.

(2) Street Sign

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting the “Private Road” sign to the rear of First Street was reported to Durham County Council with a request that it be removed as the road was adopted.

The County Council had acknowledged the request but to date had not responded.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**10 PAYMENTS**

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure at 30 November 2025.

PAYMENT	TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL
Direct Debit	E-on Next	Gas - Heritage Centre	101.82	5.09	106.91
Direct Debit	E-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	57.66	2.88	60.54
Internet Banking	MKM	Cemetery Supplies	112.40	22.48	134.88
Internet Banking	JRB Enterprisse Ltd	Dog Bags	261.20	52.24	313.44
Debit Card	Amazon	Ink	31.70	6.34	38.04
Internet Banking	NGT Heating Ltd	Boiler Service - Cemetery Bungalow	66.67	13.33	80.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	Co-Op Funeralcare	Gravedigging	80.00		80.00
Internet Banking	J Davies	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	300.00		300.00
Internet Banking	E Leigh	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	300.00		300.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Ex Gratia Christmas Payment	300.00		300.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Reimbursement - Stamps	48.72		48.72
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - December 2025	5,782.34		5,782.34

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Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - December 2025	4,106.33		4,106.33
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - December 2025	37.50	7.50	45.00
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	37.02	7.40	44.42
Invoice 103	Co-Op Bank	Charges	24.02		24.02
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,672.38</b>	<b>117.26 11,789.64</b>

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

**11 RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

..... Signed

.....Dated