

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 9 MARCH 2026**

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 The Minutes of the last meeting held on 9 February 2026, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair welcomed M Gilbank to the meeting.

M Gilbank advised that he was present at the meeting to discuss his concerns related to parking in the vicinity of Wheatley Hill Primary School.

M Gilbank outlined the issues related to parking at the school and stated that vehicles were parking on the footpaths which was forcing pedestrians onto the road. Residents with a pushchair, or anyone using a walker or a wheelchair were being forced onto the road as there was no room to pass on the footpath. The problem was particularly bad when parents were dropping off and picking up children at the start and end of the school day.

M Gilbank pointed out that whilst the school continued to expand the number of parking spaces for staff had not increased. Many of the cars parked on the footpaths belonged to staff but it was acknowledged that some did belong to residents living nearby. M Gilbank suggested that if yellow lines were introduced around the school enforcement action could be taken.

It was pointed out that the problem was exacerbated by the new housing development and whilst this was not a long term issue the new development would generate additional traffic so it was unlikely the situation would improve.

County Councillor Craggs advised that the Police were aware of the problem and would be present at the school this week to deter people from parking on the footpaths. Councillor Craggs had discussed the problems with Mr Scarr, the Head Teacher who was looking into the possibility of providing additional parking at the rear of the school. However, this was dependant on finance.

The Chair summarised by stating that the Police would be present at the school all week and County Councillor Craggs was speaking to the relevant organisations to try and resolve the problems. It was suggested that the matter be a standard item on the agenda for the foreseeable future and an update be provided at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and an update be provided at the next meeting.

5 POLICE MATTERS

The Police provided a report which included the following.

- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) at the CO-OP. Police were monitoring and reviewing the relevant CCTV.
- Multiple thefts from the CO-OP.
- Increase in the number of car fires in the area. Police were reviewing CCTV but there was a lack of CCTV and people willing to provide footage to help secure evidence.
- Youths were caught in an abandoned building in Wheatley Hill. They were dealt with accordingly and referred to the ASB Team.
- A vehicle driving in Wheatley Hill with no insurance was lifted under OP TAKEAWAY.
- Police were encouraging people to sign up to Keep in the Know which was a way for residents to raise concerns and the Police to share news with the local community.
- Police were being made aware of youths causing criminal damage, but it was not being reported at the time it was happening. They were urging people to ring 999 when this behaviour was happening and the youths were still on scene. This would likely be a blue light response, and the problem could be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Police were in discussion with County Councillors for the area to fund a drone. A drone specifically for the Peterlee NPT would help secure better results, particularly those related to off-road bike issues.
- Police were working with Gleasons at the site around Pizza Nova where there were ASB issues. Crime Prevention had assisted to help secure the site more effectively.
- Police were working with Wheatley Hill Primary School to resolve parking issues at the school. The Police had asked Durham County Council for Traffic Wardens to assist and patrol the area following complaints by residents. The Police were working with County Councillor Craggs and the Head Teacher regarding this problem.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

County Councillor Craggs provided a report on the following issues.

- Front Street Parking – Police were aware of the problem and were checking vehicles that regularly parked on both sides of the road. Vehicles were also being checked to ensure they were taxed and insured. The white lines had been extended at the community centre junction, to improve visibility for cars leaving the junction. If motorists continued to ignore the white lines yellow lines would be considered as a last resort.
- Speeding – Councillor Craggs was looking into funding a camera for Wheatley Hill and Thornley.
- Land at Greenhills – Councillor Craggs was seeking a meeting with all interested parties.
- Fly tipping at the Old Soldiers House. This was private land and the landowner's responsibility.
- Durham County Council had increased Council Tax by 3.1%.
- Millburngate – Durham County Council had sold the site.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Requests for Financial Assistance

(i) We Made it from Scratch Productions

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from We Made it from Scratch Productions.

RESOLVED that no donation be made.

(ii) Friends of the North East War Memorials Project

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from Friends of the North East War Memorials Project.

RESOLVED that a donation of £15 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

(2) Royal Garden Party 2026

The Clerk reported that the County Durham Association of Local Councils had advised that Chilton Town Council and Burnhope Parish Council had been successful in the draw to attend a Royal Garden Party in 2026.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) Coal Tub - Cemetery

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request to install a coal tub in Wheatley Hill Cemetery in memory of a volunteer from the Heritage Centre.

The Clerk advised that following discussion with the Head Groundsperson there was nowhere suitable for an additional tub in the Cemetery. It was suggested that the family could install a plaque on the coal tub located outside the Heritage Centre.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

8 PLANNING

There were no planning matters.

9 CLERKS REPORT

(1) Allotments

(i) Plot 6

The Clerk provided Members with an update in relation to plot 6.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) Plot 23

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting it was agreed that communal plot 23, which was a large plot, be divided into 3 individual plots.

Following the meeting the tenant from the adjacent plot 22 contacted the Parish Council with a request to extend his plot.

Members were advised that discussions were being held with the tenant to determine how much extra land he would like and if it was feasible.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and further developments be awaited.

(2) Internal Audit 2025/2026

The Clerk reported that the annual internal audit would be undertaken by Mr Fletcher on 20 April 2026.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) Assertion 10 Compliance - Annual Governance and Accountability Return

Consideration was given to the report of the Clerk which provided details related to Assertion 10 which was a new requirement introduced for the 2025/2026 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

Members were advised that Assertion 10 mandated that the Parish Council demonstrate compliance with modern standards for secure communication, accessible digital services, and data protection.

The Clerk took Members through the report which outlined the requirements of Assertion 10 and provided a framework for documenting compliance activities.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Policies and Procedures – Annual Review

The Clerk reported that a review had been undertaken of the following policies and procedures and where necessary minor amendments and/or updates were made.

Child Protection Policy
Code of Conduct
Complaints Policy
Data Protection Policy
Document Retention Policy
Equal Opportunities Statement
Financial Regulations
FOI Publication Scheme
Fraud and Corruption Policy
Grants and Donations Policy
Health and Safety Statement
Internal Audit Policy
Public Filming, Recording and Reporting at Council Meetings
Public Participation Policy
Respect and Dignity at Work Policy
Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Strategy
Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy
Standing Orders

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Cuppa with a Copper

The Clerk reported that the next meeting would be held on 19 March 2026 at 1.30pm in Wheatley House.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(6) Updates

(1) Woodlands Avenue

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting the uneven surface of the road at Woodlands Avenue, just before the zebra crossing at Vincents Corner, was reported to Durham County Council. The County Council had advised that following investigation the road was not considered to be

hazardous, dangerous or in need of essential maintenance and they would not be undertaking any work at this location. They would continue to monitor the highway through routine safety inspections, and any repairs would be made if deemed necessary.

(2) Mud - Footpaths and Roads

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting Members reported the footpaths and roads around the re-development at the garage on the A181 and the new housing development required cleaning as they were covered in mud and in a deplorable state.

Following the meeting County Councillor Craggs had advised that he was aware of the problems and was in discussion with Durham County Council to resolve the issues.

(3) Dog Fouling

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting the increase in dog fouling throughout the village, particularly around Burns Street and East View was reported to Durham County Council.

The County Council had advised that the Neighbourhood Wardens were aware of the issue and would take this into consideration when undertaking their routine patrols. The areas reported were cleansed.

(4) Illegally Parked Vehicle – Quilstyle Road

The Clerk reported that following the last a vehicle that was constantly parked on the footpath between the Working Mens Club and the Co-Op Funeral Parlour, on yellow lines was reported to Durham County Council and the Police.

Durham County Council had advised that the matter would be added to their enforcement request list for review.

The Police advised they would attend the area and if they could see the vehicle they would speak with the owner.

(5) Potholes

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting the 4 deep potholes to the rear of 15 – 17 Gable Terrace were reported to Durham County Council.

The County Council had advised that the potholes had been added to the ongoing work programme and would be processed in line with the repairs policy. Repairs were based on the severity of the defect and the type of road or footpath on which they were situated. In this case the works would be completed within 14 days.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

10 MEMBER ISSUES

(1) Potholes

Members reported potholes at the top of Moore and Byron Street. The road was needed to be cleaned.

RESOLVED that the matters be reported to Durham County Council.

(2) Rubbish

Members reported an increase in the amount of rubbish around Pizza Nova.

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 28 February 2026.

| PAYMENT | TO | DETAIL | COST | VAT | TOTAL |
|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Direct Debit | E-on Next | Gas - Heritage Centre | 123.49 | 6.17 | 129.66 |
| Direct Debit | E-on Next | Electric - Heritage Centre | 60.80 | 3.04 | 63.84 |
| Debit Card | Amazon | McAfee Total Protection | 13.42 | 2.68 | 16.10 |
| Debit Card | Amazon | High Pressure Washer Hose Set | 11.66 | 2.33 | 13.99 |
| Debit Card | Jet Garage | Machine Fuel | 177.27 | 35.46 | 212.73 |
| Debit Card | Amazon | Allotments - Tape | 9.04 | 1.80 | 10.84 |
| Debit Card | The Family Cobbler | Keys | 9.00 | | 9.00 |
| Internet Banking | Carr's Billington | New Machinery | 320.45 | 64.09 | 384.54 |
| Internet Banking | MKM | Cemetery Supplies | 28.17 | 5.63 | 33.80 |
| Internet Banking | MKM | Cemetery Supplies | 10.14 | 2.03 | 12.17 |
| Internet Banking | North East War Memorials Project | Section 137 Donation | 15.00 | | 15.00 |
| Internet Banking | J Thompson | Telephone Allowance | 25.00 | | 25.00 |
| Internet Banking | Payroll | Wages - March 2026 | 5,782.34 | | 5,782.34 |
| Internet Banking | HMRC/DCC | PAYE/Pension - March 2026 | 4,106.33 | | 4,106.33 |
| Internet Banking | JAC's Accountancy Limited | Payroll Services - March 2026 | 37.50 | 7.50 | 45.00 |
| Direct Debit | British Telecom | Telephone/Internet | 40.83 | 8.16 | 48.99 |
| Invoice 106 | Co-Op Bank | Charges | 13.05 | | 13.05 |
| TOTAL | | | 10,783.49 | 138.89 | 10,922.38 |

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