

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2026**

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

- 1** The Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 July 2026, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.

- 2** **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

- (1)** **A181 Traffic Calming Zone Proposals**

The Chair welcomed M Hill who was present at the meeting to give an update on the proposal to introduce 40MPH traffic calming zones on the A181.

M Hill advised that since the last meeting Cassop cum Quarrington Parish Council had agreed to support the proposals.

Members were advised that the initiative would be launched at a public meeting on 28 September 2026 at Thornley Village Centre. A survey was also available for residents to complete which would provide data to support the petition which would be presented to G Morris MP to seek a National Highways Review of the proposals for traffic calming zones on the A181.

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

- (2)** **New Community Woodland**

The Chair welcomed R George, Woodland Creation Officer, Durham County Council and B Kelly, North East Community Forest who were present at the meeting to provide an update on the creation of a new community woodland on land between Wheatley Hill and Thornley.

Members were advised that the new woodland would be designed and planted in consultation with the community so that it provided potentially life enhancing elements for residents from informal recreation, venues for group activities, educational features and cleaner air. The woodland would be planted on an 80-acre site over the next 2 years, starting in winter 2027. It would be planted with native broadleaved trees, have lots of new paths, and would be protected from misuse using many boundary features aimed at preventing access by unauthorised motor vehicles.

The Chair had previously raised concerns related to the maintenance of the new woodland given the history of primary fires at Gore Burn. R George advised that fires had become an increasingly serious issue although it was linked to other anti-social behaviour issues such as unlawful quads and motorbikes.

It was intended to enclose a large part of the woodland behind an earth mound and ditch to deter the quads and motorbikes. To make this as effective as possible, they would design the entrances such that the deterrence was repeated at the entrances as well as the woodland boundaries using boon gates, large boulders, kissing gates and stiles where appropriate.

It was essential that if fires did occur, they were dealt with quickly. To minimise the spread of fire they would include in the design forest rides across which the fires were less likely to spread. They

would also ensure that the design left a significant distance from existing hedges.

Additionally, they would be working with environmental education organisations to go into local schools to help educate children about the enjoyment and safety of woodlands and they would also work with the fire service to organise talks in local schools about the dangers of starting fires.

It was felt that the best approach was to be collaborative, and a questionnaire had been prepared for the community to complete. It was also intended to host an open day where residents could drop in and discuss the proposals or any concerns they had.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

3 POLICE MATTERS

There was no Police report.

4 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

County Councillor Craggs provided an update on the following issues.

- Complaints related to excessive dust at the new housing developments.
- Flooding on the Front Street – drains had been cleared.
- Yellow lines were to be introduced at various locations throughout the village.
- Problems related to speeding at various locations had been reported to the Police.
- Road markings on the A181 were now complete.
- Issues related to footpaths had been reported to Durham County Council.
- Update on actions undertaken by Durham County Council on the Front Street.
- Working with Neighbourhood Wardens on various issues.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5 CORRESPONDENCE

(1) Wheatley Hill (Parking and Waiting Restrictions) Traffic Regulation Order

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting Members considered proposals from Durham County Council to amend the Wheatley Hill, Wingate, Quarrington Hill & Deaf Hill (Parking and Waiting Restrictions) Traffic Regulation Order.

At the meeting it was pointed out that whilst the proposals were welcomed there was concern that unless adequate resources were available to police and enforce the restrictions, they would be ineffective.

The concerns were forwarded to Durham County Council who advised that parking contraventions were experienced countywide and the County Council did not have the resources to permanently station Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) at each site. However, should the proposed restrictions be introduced, they would request a period of subsequent targeted enforcement to ensure the new arrangements were adopted by drivers. As part of this, CEOs would visit the sites sporadically over a condensed period thus ensuring drivers could not anticipate or predict their attendance. CEOs would then continue to visit the area as part of their routine thereafter.

The County Council advised that following a review of the responses they were proposing the following amendments in Wheatley Hill.

Front Street, Wheatley Hill

To introduce 'no waiting at any time' restrictions either side of the junction from the B1279, Front Street into Stephen's Terrace to address obstructive parking and improve visibility for safe ingress/egress.

The Avenue, Wheatley Hill

The extent of the proposed restrictions had been increased on the eastern side of the carriageway to address issues of footway obstruction and maintain accessibility for all highway users.

Wheatley Hill Primary School

To introduce 'no waiting at any time' restrictions on either side of the junction from Wheatley Terrace north onto Peter Lee Cottages to address obstructive parking and improve visibility for approaching road users.

To introduce 'no waiting at any time' restrictions on either side of the junctions from Wheatley Terrace north through the Caine Terrace crossroads to address obstructive parking and improve visibility for approaching road users.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Heritage Open Days

The Clerk reported that the Heritage Centre would be open 17 – 19 September 2026 between 11am and 3pm for the last weekend of Heritage Open Days.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted

(3) Invitation to Visit Wheatley Hill Primary School

The Clerk reported the receipt of an invitation from Wheatley Hill Primary School for Members to visit the school. Members would be advised once a date was arranged.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Durham City Youth Project - Annual Report 2025/2026

The Clerk reported the receipt of the annual report from Durham City Youth Project (DCYP), a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that DCYP had asked that if the Parish Council held any fundraising events would it consider DCYP as one of the beneficiaries. Any funds raised would go towards a joint project with Sacriston Youth Project to take a group of 15 young people to Disneyland Paris.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

6 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

DM/26/01608/FPA – Reconstruction of the existing flat-roofed double garage, including the addition of a dormer roof and first floor extension at 14 Jack Lawson Terrace, Wheatley Hill

DM/26/01961/HRN – Removal of 6M hedgerow to facilitate housing development (DM/24/01404/FPA) at land west of St Godrics Primary School, Thornley Road, Wheatley Hill

DM/26/01974/FPA – Single storey rear extension at 98 Marley Fields, Wheatley Hill

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

7 CLERKS REPORT

(1) Allotments

(i) Annual Rents

The Clerk reported that annual rent letters would be issued at the end of September 2026.

Tenants that had taken on a tenancy in the last 3 months would not be issued a further rent demand for 2026/2027.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) Application for an Allotment

The Clerk reported the receipt of an application for an allotment.

RESOLVED that applicant number 3/2026 be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment and allocated plot number 24.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) Allocation

The Clerk reported that applicant number 4/2025 had accepted the tenancy of allotment number 26.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(2) Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the Year Ending 31 March 2026

The Clerk reported that Forvis Mazars LLP had completed the annual audit for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Members were advised that Forvis Mazars had reviewed Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and in their opinion the information was in accordance with proper practices and no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(3) PACT Meeting

The Clerk reported that the next PACT meeting would be held on 29 October 2026.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Cuppa with a Copper

The Clerk reported that the Police had advised that the Cuppa with a Copper meetings were unsustainable and there would be no further meetings.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Update - Overgrown Hedges

The Clerk reported that Wheatley Hill Primary School had advised that the overgrown hedges on the track running adjacent to the school field had been referred to their contractors.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

8 MEMBER ISSUES

(1) Speeding

Members reported the on-going problems related to speeding in the village. There was concern that the increase in traffic from the new housing developments would only make the situation worse.

RESOLVED that the issue be reported to the Police.

(2) Traffic Management

Members reported problems related to traffic management at the new housing development at the top of Shakespear, Burns, Byron and Moore Street. The road was closed but the lack of any signage advising of the closure was causing problems for motorists.

RESOLVED that the issue be reported to Durham County Council.

9 PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure at 31 August 2026.

PAYMENT	TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL
Direct Debit	British Gas	Electric - Heritage Centre	59.96	2.99	62.95
Direct Debit	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	16.57	0.83	17.40
Internet Banking	Horns	Grow Bags/Compost/Weedkiller	175.76	35.15	210.91
Debit Card	Amazon	Ink	31.74	6.35	38.09
Debit Card	Jet Retail Uk Ltd	Machine Fuel	118.10	23.62	141.72
Debit Card	Euro Car Parts	Trailer Light	19.99	4.00	23.99
Debit Card	East Durham Signs	WHPC Sign for Planter	30.00	6.00	36.00
Internet Banking	NeuroAware CIC	Section 137 Donation	120.00		120.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - August 2026	5,823.34		5,823.34
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - August 2026	3,756.05		3,756.05
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - August 2026	38.75	7.75	46.50
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - Enrolment Declaration	6.05	1.21	7.26
Direct Debit	British Telecom	Telephone/Internet	33.68	6.74	40.42
Invoice 111	Co-Op Bank	Charges	16.65		16.65
Direct Debit	British Gas	Electric - Heritage Centre	61.48	3.07	64.55
Direct Debit	British Gas	Gas - Heritage Centre	21.94	1.10	23.04
Internet Banking	Carr's Billington	Cemetery Supplies	28.33	5.67	34.00
Internet Banking	CDS Security & Fire	Annual Maintenance Contract	609.84	121.96	731.80

Wheatley Hill Parish Council – 14 September 2026

Debit Card	Amazon		Ink		31.10	6.22	37.32
Debit Card	Peterlee Cobblers		Keys - Allotments		10.00		10.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson		Reimbursements		32.79		32.79
Debit Card	Jet Retail Uk Ltd		Machine Fuel		151.54	30.31	181.85
Debit Card	Jet Retail Uk Ltd		Machine Fuel		130.16	26.03	156.19
Internet Banking	J Thompson		Telephone Allowance		25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	Payroll		Wages - September 2026		6,935.21		6,935.21
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC		PAYE/Pension - September 2026		4,801.24		4,801.24
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited		Payroll Services - September 2026		38.75	7.75	46.50
Direct Debit	British Telecom		Telephone/Internet		33.68	6.74	40.42
Invoice 112	Co-Op Bank		Charges		14.45		14.45
					TOTAL	23,197.15	303.49 23,500.64

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

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

..... Signed

.....Dated