

**Minutes of the Hurworth Parish Council meeting Held on
Thursday 8th January 2026 starting at 7.00pm, held in
Hurworth Village Hall**



Attendees

Parish Councillors Present:

Chair – Mr Andrew Leigh, Cllr Fiona Lennox, Cllr Peter Willis, Cllr Janine Forster, Cllr Angela Allan, Cllr Dorothy Oughton. Cllr John Howard. Cllr Karen Mann, Cllr Peter Williamson, Cllr David Crisp, Cllr Michael Feeney

Also, Cllr Lorraine Tostevin, Cllr Paul Walters and 7 members of the public, and the Clerk.

1. Apologies for Absence: Cllr Graham Wylie,

2. Declaration of Interest: Cllr Crisp - Allotments

3. Chairman's Address

The Chair welcomed the audience and wished all a Happy New Year.

The Chair thanked the Village Hall committee for accommodating the council for this meeting.

There was one candidate for the council vacancy, and Mr Michael Feeney was invited to address the meeting. Following his address, the council voted for him to join the Parish Council, and he was duly registered and signed the Acceptance of Office Register.

4. Minutes from Meeting Held on 4th December 2025:

The Draft Minutes for the meeting held on 4th December, were accepted, proposed by Cllr Oughton seconded by Cllr Willis, and passed unanimously.

5. Matters Arising:

Cllr Howard addressed the Council: -

a. Salt bins

Cllr Howard informed the meeting that he has ordered three new salt bins. Two are scheduled to be located on the Elder Brook Park and Hurworth Meadows estates.

Cllr Mann confirmed that she has obtained permission for the bins to be installed on the estate from Esh Homes , as they are still the owners of the land.

b. Hurworth Grange Insurance policy

The Chair confirmed that the insurance premium for 2026 has been paid by the Parish Council, and this will be invoiced to Hurworth Grange CIO, who hold the lease for the property.

The policy includes both the buildings, grounds and the community centre activities, staff and trustees.

c. Croft bridge

Cllr Howard informed the meeting that he has finalised the agreement with the Environment Agency, and that the underground pipes will remain under the river.

There is concern about the bank erosion, and the council has now taken full responsibility. The council must consider putting notices up near the river, warning that the banks could potentially be dangerous, and to take care. Also, the council should take out insurance to cover this risk. **Action Clerk** to investigate insurance cover with Zurich Insurance Company.

6. Ward Councillor's Report January 2026

Police and Crime Precept Consultation

The police and crime commissioner for County Durham and Darlington would like to hear resident's views on increasing the police precept for 2026/27.

Policing budgets are funded by two main sources, with an approximate split of 70% coming from central government and 30% from the amount you pay towards policing from our council tax.

There is an online consultation form which has been shared on Hurworth Live. There is also an option to e mail to request a paper copy of the form from the address shown below.

General.EnquiriesPCC@durham-pcc.gov.uk

The consultation closes on 15th January 2026

Cllr Tostevin explained the police consultancy request and urged individuals to submit a response, thereby The council decided they would not submit a 'group' submission.

Darlington Electoral Review

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is asking for your views on the electoral review in Darlington. The review will agree new Ward boundaries across the council.

Currently there are 50 Borough Councillors spread across Darlington. The proposal is to reduce the number of Councillors to 41. Each Councillor must represent approximately the same number of electors and hence the boundaries need to be redrawn to accommodate the changes.

To help determine the boundaries the review wants to hear from electors as to where you believe your ward boundaries should be, this may be based on where you go to access facilities such as shops and leisure and which areas you identify as your local community.

The first part of the consultation closes on February 2nd 2026. Thereafter, a plan will be drawn up representing a draft of the proposed new boundaries. There will then be a second consultation based on this proposal and this second consultation will open on May 2nd.

Details of the consultation are being shared on Hurworth Live and it is also possible to submit views by email or by writing directly to the review officer as shown below.

Reviews@lgbce.org.uk

<https://lgbce.org.uk/allreviews/darlington>

Review Officer (Darlington), LGBCE, 7th Floor. 3 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y8YZ

Cllr Tostevin explained the purpose of the DBC Boundaries consultation, and explained that individuals can submit their opinions and suggestions via the online link or via an email.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

Darlington Borough Council is consulting on their MTFP which is the proposed budget for the next 3 years. Details of the consultation are available on the council's website for comment prior to the MTFP going to a full council meeting for approval.

Darlington Jobs Fair

This is an excellent opportunity to meet and hear from a vast number of employers about the opportunities that are available locally. It's a free event which will take place in the Dolphin Centre on Wednesday 11th February between 10 am and 2 pm. everyone is welcome just come along and chat to a wide range of employers and education providers.

Hopetown Events

The Lantern Parade provides an opportunity for children to make lanterns on Saturday 17th Jan and then parade from Hopetown with their lanterns on the 24th Jan at 4 pm

A Dementia Café takes place at Hopetown every other Wednesday from 11.00 am to 12.00 pm and provides an opportunity for those with Dementia along with their Carers to have an informed chat.

7. Public Participation:

- a. A resident asked whether there was any progress on the cutting back of the cherry trees behind Church Row flats. Cllr Williamson explained that this was being addressed, but the complexity is regarding who is responsible for these trees. The manager of DBC Rights of Way has been on sick leave, and this led to the cancellation of the scheduled meeting. Cllr Williamson undertook to take action to progress and report on outcome. **Action** Cllr Williamson.
- b. A resident informed the meeting that a lady had slipped on the right of way immobility entrance to Hurworth Grange. He questioned who should an incident of this nature be reported to? The incident was reported to the Parish Clerk, who

contacted the lady, and discussed the issue. The reason for the fall was not a weakness of the pathway, but that a green slime had spread over part of the slope making the area slippy. The Clerk contacted Hurworth Grange CIO and the slope was scrubbed the following day. The land upon which the slope is located is owned by the parish council, the whole estate is leased to Hurworth Grange CIO, and the Right of Way comes under the jurisdiction of Darlington Borough Council. The accident was recorded in the Grange Accident Register.

8. Hurworth Parish Plan 2025-30

The Chair said that he did not wish to have a long-detailed discussion at the meeting with regard to the Parish Plan, but we needed to make progress.

There has been a fair bit of criticism of Version 4 of the Plan and content. The question is whether to continue with it or not.

The Chair went round the table asking for each councillor's views. Most councillors made comments, and it was decided that because residents will be expecting a Plan therefore, some document should be produced.

Cllr Peter Willis offered to study the documents both version 1, which is over 50 pages, with a lot of detail, and version 4, which is a 20 page summary.

All agreed that some Projects should be identified and undertaken. A decision on the Plan document will be made after Cllr Willis has completed his assessment.

Action Cllr Willis.

9. Planning Report

Cllr Allan reported, 3 planning applications received in December.

25/01291/TF - Rockliffe Hall Hotel, Hurworth Place, Darlington, DL2 2DU
Description
Works to trees protected under Tree Preservation Order 1980 (No.8) W1,W2,W3 - works to various trees within woodland including felling of 24 no. trees

There was a discussion about the planning application, reported above ref 25/01291/TF, which involves 350 trees, of which 24 are due to be felled, as they are either dead or dangerous. Rockliffe Hall has engaged a professional arborist who has submitted a comprehensive report, designating each individual tree, its specie and its state of health. It is likely that a higher number of trees may require felling. The Council has agreed that we have no objection, and Cllr Allan will report accordingly.

25/01112/FUL - 3 Ashville Drive, Hurworth, Darlington, DL2 2JL
Description
Erection of single storey infill extension to rear, alterations to garage roof to facilitate part conversion of garage to habitable space and associated works

25/01376/FUL - 35 Friars Pardon, Hurworth, Darlington, DL2 2EA
Description

Erection of first floor extension over existing side/rear extension and porch extension to front elevation with associated works

10. Tree Report –

Cllr Williamson reported that Hurworth has been fortunate and we have not suffered any serious tree damage, despite the tough weather. We attribute this to the continuous and diligent monitoring of the trees and the maintenance we policy we adhere to.

11. Open Spaces & Environment Report

Cllr Lennox reported:-

Benches

A replacement bench at top of Manor Fields, at footpath, needs to be ordered.

Flower planters

With support from Cllr Janine Forster and resident Judith Redfern, the winter planting was completed. Again, using Facebook, we have asked residents to support us by keeping an eye on the plants: -

- Community Notice Board near the Comet Inn – Croft end of village
- Community Notice Board near La Vita
- Community Notice Board on corner of Westfield Drive
- Hurworth Grange x 4 planters at side of building and with leftover plants we added additional plants to the bedding area at the front of the Grange next to the entrance.

Thank you to local business, Paddock Farm Nursery and Water Gardens, for organising and sourcing the plants, also for donating 8 big bags of compost.

Fountain and Trough at Spar Shop – enquiring about cost to have it professionally cleaned.

12. Allotments – Cllr Dave Crisp

Cllr Crisp reported that the annual rent has been increased from £20 per year to £25. Several rents have already been paid.

One new tenancy agreement has been signed. There are four names still on the Waiting List at Strait Lane and we are expecting at least another three vacant plots. The final situation will be resolved before the next council meeting.

13. The Highways & Traffic Report – Cllr Dorothy Oughton

Cllr Oughton reported

Metal Bridge	No of vehicles	23,351
	Fastest	55mph
	Average speed	24.7mph
The Green	No of vehicles	36,429
	Fastest	51mph
	Average speed	24.3mph
Hurworth Rd.	No of vehicles	53,631
	Fastest	51mph
	Average speed	23.5mph
Linden Court	No of vehicles	112.543
	Fastest	63mph
	Average speed	27.5mph
Roundhill Rd.	No of vehicles	54,7883
	Fastest	54mph
	Average speed	25.6mph

One Speedwatch session was performed and not a single vehicle was exceeding the limit.

It is hoped to arrange more sessions shortly.

During the meeting, Cllr Howard commented that there are too many vehicles parking both partly and completely on the pavements. This creates a problem for wheelchairs and prams. There is a major problem area at Croft hill. Wheelchairs are having to move onto the road in some cases.

It was agreed that Cllr Oughton raises this problem with our PCSO. The Chair asked Cllr Oughton to arrange for our PCSO to attend council meetings quarterly, starting in April 2026. The PCSO had already agreed to attend meetings when asked. **Action Cllr Oughton.**

Cllr Paul Walters was asked to post a polite notice/reminder on Hurworth Live about this issue of parking on the pavements – Action Cllr Walters

14. Crime & Security Report – Cllr Dorothy Oughton

The following crime incidents were reported.

44 incidents have been reported.

Those followed up were:-

AOB 4

Animal & wildlife 5 (Loose horses on Elder Brook Park estate)

15. Rights of Way & Parish Walks – Cllr Janine Forster

Due to the bad weather and the early darkness, Cllr Forster has not been able to carry out any meaningful walks.

No complaints have been recorded, apart from the incident discussed under Public Participation.

Cllr Forster enquired further about which groups of trees Rockliffe Hall Hotel will be felling. This could impact on the right of way pathway in that area.

It appears that the pathway behind the old Station Inn is about to be re-opened. Further details next month.

16. Roads & Pathways Report and Hurworth Contingency Plan – Cllr John Howard

Cllr Howard stated, nothing to report.

17. HPC report from Elderbrook Park and Hurworth Meadows Estates

Cllr Mann gave the following report:-

Animal welfare

- Several incidents of escaped horses from the fields that lie at the end of the estate. These incidents occurred at varying times of the day and night. They were in Neasham Road, in residents' gardens etc. These horses were looking for food and water. Police and RSPCA were called. The police ushered them back to the same field they escaped from. RSPCA were unhelpful.
- Two horses were also found in the new play area by the new local authority housing. They have no food or water. Residents called the police and nothing happened; RSPCA the same. At the time of writing the horses still remain in the play area.
- This has happened every year during the winter for the last 3 years. Why? These poor creatures live in squalor and are neglected and starved and no one does anything about it. Why? Someone must know who they belong to and who owns the fields the horses graze in?

Esh homes have been contacted re permission for positioning salt bins on the estate. They have been on Christmas leave for 2 weeks so we expect a reply on their return.

With regard to the loose horse, the council discussed this problem, and decided that the situation must be reported by the Parish Council to the RSPCA, and also to DCB Animal Welfare. **Action Clerk**

18. Correspondence & Matters of Interest

HPC web site appraisal

Cllr Allan requested that HPC consider moving to a [.gov.uk](#) domain with a view to setting up individual [.gov.uk](#) email addresses for all councillors.

Councillors voted in favour of a move to a [.gov.uk](#) domain.

Cllr Allan will work with the Clerk to obtain quotations and make the necessary applications. Action Cllr Allan and the Clerk.

Cllr Allan offered to review the HPC website and identify areas that need work. Policies and procedures will also be reviewed. Cllr Allan will project manage both reviews and request assistance from HPC councillors as and when required. Action Cllr Allan

19. Accounts for Payment

The schedule of payments made in the month of December 2025, having been distributed to all Councillors, were formally accepted by the meeting.

Accounts for Payment December 2025

<u>Name</u>	<u>Cheque No.</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Cancelled cheque	104258		
M Harrison	104259	Odd jobs, monitors	75.00
Cancelled cheque	104260		
G Wylie	104261	Poster	18.04
P Robinson	104262	Boots	55.30
WAVE	104263	Water rates allotments	165.47
CDALC	104264	Good Councillor booklets	48.00
P Robinson	104265	Salary	665.05
P D Allan	104266	Salary	1390.20
Inland revenue	104267	PAYE	539.00
G Wylie	104268	Web site software	269.60
BT Comms	DD	Communications	64.32
P D Allan exs	104269	Administrations	237.54
Club Insure	104270	Annual Insurance	9291.30
Total			
Expenditure			£12,818.82

20. Financial Report

The Financial Report as at 31st December 2025, having been distributed to all Councillors, were formally accepted by the meeting.

Handyman									75	200	200	100	575	1200
Hurworth Grange support		2000	10112										12112	5000
Capital & Legal exs	5356		259						3	259			5877	8517
VAT	59	3	258	503	18	32	190	123						
Total Expenses	10769	4688	7663	17607	2756	6448	15760	5410	12818	14389	9100	9270	116678	91867
													3160	2951
Funds in Hand less ringed														
Revenue less expenses	53915	123146	120176	112786	102952	100196	98525	82765	77355	64723	68365	65925	11689	
<i>Funds in Hand</i>	<i>123,146</i>	<i>120,176</i>	<i>112,786</i>	<i>102,952</i>	<i>100,196</i>	<i>98,525</i>	<i>82,765</i>	<i>77,355</i>	<i>64,723</i>	<i>68,365</i>	<i>65,925</i>	<i>57,075</i>	<i>Ringed</i>	

21. Association Reports

1. Village Hall

Cllr Crisp submitted the following Village Hall report:-

Hurworth Village Hall - December's report.....

The Village Hall hosted three private family parties in December.

The Hall provided an ideal venue for three larger groups of family and friends to enjoy time together and it is hoped this will continue in 2026.

The Sunday soup and cinema was, as ever, very popular with 'Conclave' the feature presentation.

And, the only quiz of 2025, the Christmas Quiz with guest quizmaster Peter Barron doing the honours proved to be another sell out.

2. Hurworth Grange CIO

No report submitted.

22. Any Other Business

The Chair explained the new internal communication system which he has created, which covers chat lines, document display, discussion group facilities and much more. He urged all councillors to register onto all of the option facilities, which he intends to become the council's standard way of conversing.

23. DBC Boundary Consultation

The Ward Councillors left the meeting at this point, as they both have personal interests in the outcome of this project.

The Chair read out the major points of this consultancy, which is for DBC to reduce the number of Ward Councillors from 50 to 41 (as previously mentioned in Section 6 above "Ward Councillors Report"). Hence making a cost saving.

Each ward is appreciated by the number of names on the electoral roll. In order to achieve their goal, they will need to expand some wards to absorb others, and hence require less ward Councillors.

The Chair read out some options: -

Hurworth could expand, if we undertook to add another 300 or more houses attached to the ESH Homes estate opposite the Northern Echo Arena, or take back Skerne Park estate, which used to be part of HPC, or possibly Blackwell, which now has two large new estates.

An alternative would be to reduce Hurworth Parish by making the A66 the parish boundary, thus liberating the 700 new residents who are part of the Elder Brook and Hurworth Meadows estate.

The Clerk emphasised how very important this decision will be for Hurworth Parish Council, as it is a choice of remaining a rural village, or becoming part of Urban Darlington town.

It was agreed that the Council must promote this '**Have Your Say**' invitation by DBC, and ensure that as many residents state their views formally. **Action Council to promote the responses,**

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.35pm.