



**Minutes of the Hurworth Parish Council meeting Held on
5th March 2026 starting at 7.00pm, held at
Hurworth Grange**

Attendees

Parish Councillors Present:

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

Also, Cllr Lorraine Tostevin, Cllr Paul Walters and 12 members of the public, and the Clerk.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Graham Wylie, Cllr David Crisp,
2. **Declaration of Interest:** Cllr Feeney – Allotments, Cllr Williamson – Hurworth Village Hall
3. **Chairman's Address**
The Chair welcomed the Councillors and the visitors.
4. **Minutes from Meeting Held on 5th February 2026:**
The Draft Minutes for the meeting held on 5th February 2026 were accepted, proposed by Cllr Oughton seconded by Cllr Forster.
5. **Matters Arising:**
 - a. **Salt bins**
Cllr Howard reported that he was in possession of the salt bins and will be installing them on the Elderbrook Park and Hurworth Meadows estates presently.
 - b. Hurworth Place river bank area.
Cllr Howard reports that he has had a dialogue with Environment Agency, and they have agreed upon the method of closing down the no longer used river monitoring system.
The agency is going to send him some specimen notices, which will be appropriate for advising the public of a potential danger caused by the river bank erosion. He will then obtain and erect the notices. **Action Cllr Howard.**
 - c. Land at Spar corner

A thorough search of the Councils deeds and records has failed to find a property deed for the area of land outside the Spar shop. Similarly, the Land Registry does not indicate this small section.

A letter dated 1975 from the Middlesbrough Telephone and Telegraph Company requesting the Parish Council's permission to install equipment in this area, does provide some evidence of ownership.

The Council agreed that the area of land required by DBC to extend the pavement will be 'gifted' to DBC, and they will be informed of this and they can proceed with their project. No contract should be required. **Action Clerk**

6. Ward Councillor's Report March 2026

Ward Councillors Report March 2026

Bellway Estate

Works have commenced on the roads and footpaths in the first part of the estate which is the top section of Blackthorn Drive up to and including Yew Tree Close this is to be phase one. All residents have received a letter from Bellway outlining that works have begun and that on completion there will be discussions regarding phase two. Darlington Borough Council have also been notified of these works and have in response asked Bellway to revisit the remainder of the properties where access permission was denied and resurvey the driveways in preparation for phase two.

Darlington Local Plan 2027-2042

The second stage of the consultation on the revised local plan will commence shortly and will last for a further 6 weeks. We can tell you in advance that in terms of future housebuilding in Hurworth there are no further new sites identified in this revised plan. Building will continue to complete the already approved Hurworth sites opposite the stadium. i.e. Elderbrook and Hurworth Meadows.

Local Government Ward Boundaries Consultation

We understand that submissions were made by both organisations and individual residents to the Local Government Boundary Commission as part of the recent consultation for Darlington. Part two of the consultation will open in May when the draft proposals for all the new ward boundaries will be available to view. We will make these maps available to residents for comment.

Please note that the consultation is on the Ward Boundaries only and not the Parish Boundaries. The Local Government Commission has no jurisdiction to alter the Parish Boundaries; this can only be done, if so required, by a separate process which is not part of this consultation.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2026 to 2028

The budget for Darlington was approved at the Council Meeting in February. This budget included a 4.99 % rise in your Council Tax which your Ward Councillors voted against. However, there was a majority vote in favour of the tax rise and so it was carried. (Vote was 19 against and 24 for). The rise included a further 2% increase in precept for Social Care. Parish Council Precepts were also approved at the same time.

Forthcoming Events at Hopetown

Heritage weekend - Will take place on the 7th and 8th March where a number of trains including the very shiny Tornado will be available to view. There will also be a railway themed trail, engineering talks and a whole lot more for railway buffs.

Comic Con – The theme for this is Gotham and on the 28th March, there will be an appearance of Batman (the real stunt double Carl Newman himself), the Joker, Catwoman and the scarecrow. For those not into Batman there will be Kermit the frog, Dalek Dominic and in person the actor Kerry Shale of Thomas the Tank Engine fame.

Vintage Day – To be held on May 25th, this is a day to dress up and participate in a 1940s style event.

7. Public Participation:

- a. A resident remarked on how dirty the town is at present. A discussion took place which resulted in the meeting agreeing that Hurworth Parish is fairly well kept, and most agreed that Darlington town has far too much litter. No action required.

8. Hurworth Parish Plan 2025-30

Cllr Willis was not present at the meeting, but had submitted a report, viz:-

I have added an Action Plan "chapter" to your Version 4 which was very comprehensive, and best left as you'd written it - need some volunteers for a few actions.

I have sent this version to Andrew (Chairman). I also sent it to Graham Wylie who was happy with it.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Willis, and stated that we will compile Version 4 including Cllr Willis' chapter and move forward with this as the final document. The Chair instructed the Clerk to prepare the 'final' version, and to send a copy to each councillor for their review. The formal decision will be made at the Council's April Meeting. **Action Clerk**

9. Planning Applications February 2026

Cllr Allan reported,

Three applications were received in February.

Application - 25/01404/FUL

Location - Land to the East Of Neasham Road, Hurworth Moor, Darlington

Description - Application submitted under Section 73 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 for the variation of condition 2 (approved plans) attached to planning permission 23/00950/FUL dated 28 May 2025 (Change of use of land to Gypsy/Traveller site including erection of 2 no. utility

buildings, siting of 2 no. mobile homes, 2 no. touring pitches with car parking, access road and associated works) to permit an increase in size of the utility buildings

Application -26/00174/FUL

Location - 29 Manor Road, Hurworth Place, Darlington, DL2 2HH

Description - Erection of two storey extension to front (north) elevation incorporating first floor extension above existing single storey extension, together with re-roofing of entire property and associated works

Application - 25/01268/FUL

Location - 6 Blind Lane, Hurworth, Darlington, DL2 2JB

Description - Construction of a boundary wall with piers to replace existing timber fence to the east and south boundary.

The Council, through the Chair voted 'No objections', this will be conveyed to DBC by Cllr Angela Allan

10. Tree Report

Cllr Williamson reported as follows:-

- a. A cherry tree which is causing problems at the side of the Strait Lane allotments, and is becoming interwound in the telephone lanes is being felled. It is a sapling which has grown too high.
- b. A tree behind the Church Row flats is growing over the fence and requires cutting back – this will be addressed.
- c. There is a huge willow tree on the river bank opposite the La Viva restaurant, which is potentially dangerous. The evidence is the large branches which have been broken during the last bad weather period and re altering the balance of the tree. The tree is located within two yards of the pathway to the fjord. This land used to be a DBC 'Highway', but DBC claim that it is not their land. A meeting has been arranged with the DBC Rights of Way manager, but the Land Registry does not indicate any ownership. The tree need to be reduced before any more severe weather, if to falls it could fall onto the main road, the Lord Wrightson bridge or an adjacent property.
- d. The two oak trees at Fox Close. At the last meeting the council considered felling both of these trees, and requested three quotations. We have obtained the quotations, and the cost will be £4,800.
At this point Cllr Howard made a strong objection and took over the meeting, expressing his personal feelings about the protection of both trees. He was supported by Cllr Forster, and Mrs Judith Aston in the public gallery. They wished to see the DBC arborist report which states that the tree is dangerous, and the documentation relating to the claim for root intrusion caused by the other oak

The chairman intervened and asked the councillors to go to the trees in question to view them and form their own opinion of their condition. He then asked that we discuss the trees at the April meeting where a decision will be taken to either fell the trees at this stage (taking into account the councillors views) or if any other remedial action should be taken to try and preserve the trees, even if that was more expensive than felling them. **Action** for this meeting 'Councillors to view trees and report in April'.

11. Open Spaces & Environment Report

Cllr Lennox reported:-

- a. Arrangements have been made for the war memorial opposite the Spar shop to have a major cleaning, and we have engaged a professional company to carry out the work
- b. Cllr Lennox displayed a Dog poo bag box which holds the bags, in a secure container, which will encourage dog walkers to 'pick up' after their dogs. The council agreed to purchase 20 boxes, which will be deployed in due cause. The boxes will have locks. **Action Clerk and Cllr Lennox.**

12. Allotments – Cllr Dave Crisp

In his absence, the Clerk reported that all the rents for 2026 have been collected. Several plots have been re-assigned, and there are two names on the Strait Lane Waiting List.

The cider making equipment has been delivered and is will be stored at Strait Lane.

The shed at Strait Lane has been renovated and is now secure.

A new notice board will be installed at the Grange allotments.

13. The Highways & Traffic Report – Cllr Dorothy Oughton

Cllr Oughton gave a detailed report of the traffic volumes and speeds at the five locations being monitored for the month of February 2026.

Metal Bridge	Total vehicles	20,061
	Max. Speed	55mph
	Av. Speed	25mph
The Green	Total vehicles	30,226
	Max. speed	51mph
	Av. speed	24.5mph
Hurworth Road	Total vehicles	33,660
	Max. speed	51mph
	Av. speed	24.3mph
Linden Court	Total vehicles	121,169

	Max. speed	60mph
	Av. speed	27.5mph
Roundhill Road	Total vehicles	52,410
	Max. speed	54mph
	Av. speed	26.2mph

Full details are available of the HPC web site.

Cllr Howard complained about the congestion on Croft bank, with vehicles parking and causing hold ups and potential accidents. Most councillors totally supported this observation, and what asked what action could be taken.

Action: Dorothy Oughton to speak to the community support officer and raise the concern.,

14. Crime & Security Report – Cllr Dorothy Oughton

Suspicious activity	4
Antisocial behaviour	2

The Hurworth PCSO will not be available to attend the Parish Council April meeting, but could come in May, or some future date. **Action Cllr Oughton to arrange.**

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

Hurworth Parish council public footpath walk report 2026

For path 11 and 12 Walked during February 2026.

Path 11, runs across Rockliffe grounds past the cricket pitch and Path 12 walks up the Glebe past the grange community centre and the back of the grange housing estate. These are our most walked public footpaths.

Parts of these become impossible to use when wet in the winter.

As you can see from the pictures below.

1 and 2 - path 12 at the top of Hawkswood

3 and 4 – path 11 over Rockliffe where the path has been moved.

5 and 6 – Also path 11, show the improvement that the new slightly raised path has made, keeping the flood water held back.

Summary Attention needs to be made to improve the parts of paths 11 and 12 that are un passable

Commented [AL1]: Insert

Commented [PA2R1]:

Commented [PA3R1]:

Commented [PA4R1]:

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

No further updates other than what had already been discussed under matters arising

17. HPC report from Elder Brook Park and Hurworth Meadows Estates

Cllr Mann gave the following report:-

Hurworth Parish Council March 5 2026

Report from Elderbrook Park and Hurworth Meadows

- Horse Welfare

The owner of the horses in the Darlington Borough Council fields at the bottom of the estate have been given notice to vacate the land. This was actioned because the horses were escaping from an unsecure field onto roads and private gardens. There were also issues with their welfare ; the owner on holiday for 2 weeks over Christmas and the horses left without food and water.

The ‘solution’ is not a desirable one. It passes the problem on. It is not an isolated case. Better education and husbandry are required.

- Perimeter pathway around the estate

A resident has informed me that the pathway around the estate was to have bollards at the entrances to the path as per the original plans. He is concerned that these have been withdrawn and will not be installed. His objection is that during last summer pony and traps were being ridden up and down on the part of the pathway that was open. It is a well-used path and is/will be used more for dog walkers etc as it is opened up fully. It isn't the place for a pony and trap to be ridden and he would like to see the bollards reinstated there and on other paths on the estate. I will contact the Planning Department at DBC to query.

- Grit Bins

Pictures of where the bins will sit has been sent through to Cllr Howard.

18. Correspondence & Matters of Interest

- a. Update on the change of Domain and email addresses to [.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) - Cllr Allan
Cllr Allan reported that this has now been installed. Most councillors had now signed on and the system is operational.
- b. **Web site update** – Cllr Wylie and Cllr Allan
Cllr Allan has sent an amount of documentation relating to Governance, and other essential policy requirements, to Cllr Wylie, who is updating the existing web site.
The current website needs work specifically in relation to its policies and procedures.

Commented [AL5]:

The Accessibility statement in particular needs to be reviewed and changed to ensure compliance.

c. Procedures Review Plan – Cllr Allan

The policies and procedures had been removed from the HPC website therefore there was a delay in Cllr Allan obtaining access to the policies and procedures.

All HPC policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated. Cllr Allan will ask for assistance from councillors during the review period. When the policies have been updated and adopted at the next council meeting(s) they can be uploaded to the current website. This work is required irrespective of a new website being established in the future. The review and updating of policies should assist in the transfer of policies to a new website

.Cllr Allan has also received a copy of the Risk Assessment document, which the Clerk has updated to March 2026, and once she has received this document it will be circulated to all the Parish Councillors for their approval at the April meeting.

d. Letter regarding Beer Festival – Chair

The Chair invited Mr Bill Drumm to address the meeting regarding the plans of the Rockcliffe Cricket Club and Hurworth Village Hall combining to organise a Beer festival which will be held from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon in June. Three speakers outlined the plans for the event, which includes entertainment. Sponsors will be approached to assist with the funding. The group requested that the Parish Council participated with a sponsorship ward of £1,000. The Chairman took a vote, proposed by Cllr Howard and seconded by Cllr Leigh, and the vote was unanimous. **Action Clerk**

e. Parish Chronicle – Chair

In the past, and in accordance with HPC policy the parish council as produced and delivered a Parish Chronicle, initially four each year, reduced to two each year. Facebook and the web sites have largely taken the place of printed matter, and the council provides current matters of interest in the All Saints monthly newsletter. The Chair recommended that the council should remove the commitment of produce any more Parish Chronicles, the council was unanimous in their agreement. as the council now uses social media as a faster more effective way to communicate.

Commented [AL6]: Insert - as the council now uses social media as a faster more effective way to communicate.

f. Letter from Campanologists – Chair

The Chair referred to a letter received from the Hurworth Campanologists thank the council for their donation, detailing their expenditure, and offering to refund the £24 which was underspent. This was an excellent gesture.

g. Hurworth Scouts letter – Cllr Howard

The council has received a letter from the Hurworth Scout asking, again, for a long-term lease for their scout hut area. It is very unlikely that the council can agree to this, as the property and land is leased to Hurworth Grange CIO on a 5 year lease. The Chairman agreed to look into this matter. **Action Chair.**

19. Accounts for Payment

The schedule of payments made in the month of February 2026, having been distributed to all Councillors, were formally accepted by the meeting.

Accounts for Payment February 2026

<u>Name</u>	<u>Cheque No.</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Jewson	104279	Planter plants	126.00
Treeboy	104280	Tree work	252.00
Mazars	104281	Audit fee	378.00
WJPS software	104282	New email address	499.20
D Kerr	104283	Cider maker	154.98
Grave Care	104284	Memorial cleaning	675.00
PDA -Commercial picnic bench	104285	Picnic bench	493.80
WJPS software	104286	Software services	42.00
BT Comms	DD	Communications	64.32
P Robinson	104287	Salary	360.19
P D Allan	104288	Salary	1390.20
Inland Revenue	104289	PAYE	678.99
		Allotment shed	
D Crisp	104290	repair	210.00
P Williamson	104291	Land Registry fees	90.00
P D Allan	104292	Flag and admin exs	81.25
Total Expenditure			£5,495.93
Allotment rents received			£1,400.00

20. Financial Report

The Financial Report as at 28th February 2026, having been distributed to all Councillors, were formally accepted by the meeting

	Financial Report 28th February 2026					Ringfenced funds £11,689				
	<u>Apr-25</u>	<u>May-25</u>	<u>Jun-25</u>	<u>Jul-25</u>	<u>#####</u>	<u>Sep-25</u>	<u>Oct-25</u>	<u>Nov-25</u>	<u>Dec-25</u>	
Revenue										
Precept	80000									
Litter Picker ref & VAT		1718				4505				
Rent & Interest			273	1410		272			186	
Grants - Other				6363						
Allotment rent										
Total Revenue	80000	1718	273	7773	0	4777	0	0	186	
Expenditure										
Salaries & NHI	2110	2193	2591	3614	2429	2594	2429	2494	2594	
Gen. Admin										
Expenses	1056	706	175	129	209	134	1042	288	602	
Trees	247	0	347	1545		2779	167	675		
Open Spaces		225	1040	216				580		
Section 137	1000	684	1037	1200			11062	900		
Projects & Plan										
Repairs & Insur		313							9291	
Newsletters & Posters	799	323	74	29		15	62		33	
Youth Activities										
Paths/ RoW										
Allotments	142	241	141		100	443		350	165	
Highways/ Defib						451	808		55	
Handyman									75	
Hurworth Grange support			2000	10112						
Capital & Legal exs	5356			259					3	
VAT	59	3	258	503	18	32	190	123		
Total Expenses	10769	4688	7663	17607	2756	6448	15760	5410	12818	
Funds in Hand less ringed										
Revenue less expenses	53915	123146	120176	112786	#####	100196	98525	82765	77355	
Funds in Hand	123,146	120,176	112,786	102,952	#####	98,525	82,765	77,355	64,723	

- a. Cheque books are going out of fashion, and the Council need to have the facility to pay bills by bank transfer. Rather than change the council policy to a single signature, it was proposed that a facility for the Clerk to raise bank online payments, with an 'authoriser, fill be safer and comply with the current policy. It was agreed that the council will adopt this method. It was further agreed that Cllr Willimson should become a signatory, and will become the Authoriser. **Action Clerk**
- b. The council confirmed that Gordon Fletcher should remain our Internal Auditor.
- c. It was agreed that the Clerk should pay the following amounts before the end of financial year, 31st March 2026.
 - Hurworth country Fair £2,000, Hurworth Outdoor Concert £2,000, Tees River Trust £1,000. **Action clerk**

It was also agreed to give the village hall their armed services donation early. Action Clerk.

Commented [AL7]: It was also agreed to give the village hall their armed services donation early. Action Clerk.

21. Association Reports

1. Village Hall report

- a. Cinema on Sunday 1st March was 'The Salt Path.' We have a regular crowd of folks that enjoy the afternoon soup and cinema. The 1st March saw 2 'newbies' attend. When asked they said they'd lived in the village for 22 years but this was the first time they'd ever been in the Village Hall. That said, it's always great to welcome new people into the hall.

Sunday 8th March, we have a talk from Carol and Dave Dean entitled, 'Secret Women.' The hidden role women have played in society. For example, during WW2. Entry is £5 and includes refreshments.

Sunday 29th March sees the welcome return of, 'The Pudding Club.' Bakers make 12 taster portions of their favourite pudding. Attendees get to taste 6 different puddings and judge which one they think is the best. A great calorie filled afternoon of fun. Non-bakers pay £5 entry.

April 5th is Sunday cinema with the showing of, 'Downton Abbey - The Finale.' Homemade soup from 2pm with the film starting at 3pm prompt.

- a. Karen Wesson, Authorised Children's Minister had sent the following letter to the council

The All Saints Church Holiday Club is run for two days each school half-term from 10.00 to 16.00 each day. The club is for primary school age children from Reception to Year 6. We ask for a minimum donation of £5 per child per day. We have been running the club since May 2024 with, on average, 16 children attending each day. We select a religious theme each time we run the club. Examples of our themes are: Noah's Ark, St Peter and Pentecost.

The club is held in the church centre and we use the churchyard for treasure hunts. Given the layout and uneven ground of the churchyard, we are unable to play games there safely.

We are very grateful to have been able to use Hurworth Village Hall during the holiday club last week on Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th February. We had access to the hall from 13.00 to 14.30 each day. We played games and the children had a great time, burning off lots of energy.

Thank you to Bill Drumm, David Crisp and all the Village Hall committee for making this possible.

Our dates for the rest of this year are May 27th and 28th and October 28th and 29th. Bill Drumm has already reserved these dates for us. Thanks Bill.

2. Hurworth Grange CIO

Cllr Wylie had submitted the following report:- No significant changes from the program given at the last meeting.

22. Any Other Business

No formal business came forward.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.20pm.