

Item No. 3

At a meeting of the Dene Valley Parish Council held at the Dene Valley Community Partnership One Stop Shop, High Street, Eldon Lane on **Monday 10 November 2025 at 6.00 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor J Nicholson in the Chair

Councillors T Bird, J Clark, R Coleman, T Mitchell, J Moore and R Simm.

Also in attendance:

Clerk Ian Croft
South Church Community Partnership - Cheryl Hudson
County Councillor – Michael Ramage

Members of the Public

J Sanderson, A Yorke and C Yorke

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence had been submitted.

2. Public Participation

J Sanderson, A Yorke and C Yorke were in attendance. J Sanderson expressed the desire to erect a memorial seat over the road from the One Stop Shop on the spot where a seat used to be. If the Parish Council provided the seat then C Yorke informed the meeting that the family would provide the plaque.

Upon a vote being taken it was **agreed** that the Parish Council provide a seat at this location.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October were approved by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Coleman informed the meeting she had contacted Councillor Stephenson about the fencing at Auckland Park but as yet had not heard anything.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that Members Neighbourhood Budgets were £20,000 aa year, of which £14,000 needed to be spent on capital.

Two more Notice Boards had been delivered for the One Stop Shop and Close House. Councillor Bird would place Parish Council agendas in the One Stop Shop Notice Board.

4. Matters Arising/Chairs Update

County Councillor Michael Ramage was in attendance to discuss local issues with the Parish Council.

The Chair thanked Councillor Ramage for attending the meeting.

Councillor Ramage informed the meeting that the correct spending of s106 money was an issue which was dear to his heart. He was trying to find out what was happening and had happened with s106 money at the County Council, particularly the allocation of s106 money to projects in the Shildon area. However, he was experiencing reluctance from officers within the County Council. S106 deeds stated what could and could not be done with the money and the money should be ring-fenced according to this deed. There was £150,000 of s106 money dormant in the Coundon area and there was no reason why this couldn't be spent. There was an argument from an officer whether this could be spent in another Ward. There was a similar type of point going across to Bracks Farm.

Councillor Nicholson informed Councillor Ramage that the Parish Council appreciated the work he was doing to bring Durham County Council officers to account. Councillor Ramage replied that he was fed up with certain areas being 'forgotten' areas.

The Chair informed the meeting that the Parish Council's bid for the former Surestart building had been unsuccessful, however she had spoken to other County Councillors, including the Portfolio Holder for Finance and had learned that buildings such as the former Surestart building should be offered to Parish Councils or Community Associations in the first instance. This was being looked at as well as the s106 money for Bishops Park.

Referring to target hardening at Blackies Wood Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that the Parish Council may need to purchase 14 2-ton boulders at a cost of £150 plus VAT to supply and position. Upon a vote being taken it was **agreed** that the boulders be purchased. The works would be advertised in the Council Notice Boards.

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Councillor Bird asked whether any Plan could be called the Dene Valley Parish Plan rather than Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Nicholson replied that such plans must be called Neighbourhood Plans. Councillor Simm suggested it could be called the Neighbourhood Plan for Dene Valley Parish Council.

Councillor Nicholson circulated a document which contained details of what a Neighbourhood Plan must include. Durham County Council's website showed who had a Neighbourhood Plan and shows that Dene Valley Parish Council had Stage 1 of a Neighbourhood Plan based on work previously carried out.

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The Clerk reminded the meeting that the next meeting of the Council in December would be considering the precept for 2026/27 and allotment rents for 2026/27.

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Councillor Coleman informed the meeting that if Parish Council Members were to be knocking on doors, then they should have some form of identification. The meeting agreed that this should be considered further.

The meeting also considered whether all Members should have a DBS check and whether this was necessary.

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Councillor Clark circulated details of planning applications which had been received or determined in the Dene Valley Parish and surrounding areas since the last meeting (for copy see file of Minutes)

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12. Allotments

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that one person was considering a tenancy at Close House Allotments.

13. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

Cheryl Hudson reported that the next meeting of the South Church Community Partnership would be held on Wednesday at 10 a.m. at St Andrews School.

Councillor Simm referred to the new development at William Street and that the developer said he had adopted the road.

14. Date of Next Meeting

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Cheryl Hudson reported that the next meeting of the South Church Community Partnership would be held on Wednesday at 10 a.m. at St Andrews School.

Councillor Simm referred to the new development at William Street and that the developer said he had adopted the road.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on Monday 8 December 2025 commencing at 6.00 p.m.

The meeting finished at 8 p.m.

Item No. 3

At a meeting of the Dene Valley Parish Council held at the Dene Valley Community Partnership One Stop Shop, High Street, Eldon Lane on **Monday 10 November 2025 at 6.00 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor J Nicholson in the Chair

Councillors T Bird, J Clark, R Coleman, T Mitchell, J Moore and R Simm.

Also in attendance:

Clerk Ian Croft
South Church Community Partnership - Cheryl Hudson
County Councillor – Michael Ramage

Members of the Public

J Sanderson, A Yorke and C Yorke

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence had been submitted.

2. Public Participation

J Sanderson, A Yorke and C Yorke were in attendance. J Sanderson expressed the desire to erect a memorial seat over the road from the One Stop Shop on the spot where a seat used to be. If the Parish Council provided the seat then C Yorke informed the meeting that the family would provide the plaque.

Upon a vote being taken it was **agreed** that the Parish Council provide a seat at this location.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October were approved by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Coleman informed the meeting she had contacted Councillor Stephenson about the fencing at Auckland Park but as yet had not heard anything.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that Members Neighbourhood Budgets were £20,000 aa year, of which £14,000 needed to be spent on capital.

Two more Notice Boards had been delivered for the One Stop Shop and Close House. Councillor Bird would place Parish Council agendas in the One Stop Shop Notice Board.

4. Matters Arising/Chairs Update

County Councillor Michael Ramage was in attendance to discuss local issues with the Parish Council.

The Chair thanked Councillor Ramage for attending the meeting.

Councillor Ramage informed the meeting that the correct spending of s106 money was an issue which was dear to his heart. He was trying to find out what was happening and had happened with s106 money at the County Council, particularly the allocation of s106 money to projects in the Shildon area. However, he was experiencing reluctance from officers within the County Council. S106 deeds stated what could and could not be done with the money and the money should be ring-fenced according to this deed. There was £150,000 of s106 money dormant in the Coundon area and there was no reason why this couldn't be spent. There was an argument from an officer whether this could be spent in another Ward. There was a similar type of point going across to Bracks Farm.

Councillor Nicholson informed Councillor Ramage that the Parish Council appreciated the work he was doing to bring Durham County Council officers to account. Councillor Ramage replied that he was fed up with certain areas being 'forgotten' areas.

The Chair informed the meeting that the Parish Council's bid for the former Surestart building had been unsuccessful, however she had spoken to other County Councillors, including the Portfolio Holder for Finance and had learned that buildings such as the former Surestart building should be offered to Parish Councils or Community Associations in the first instance. This was being looked at as well as the s106 money for Bishops Park.

Referring to target hardening at Blackies Wood Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that the Parish Council may need to purchase 14 2-ton boulders at a cost of £150 plus VAT to supply and position. Upon a vote being taken it was **agreed** that the boulders be purchased. The works would be advertised in the Council Notice Boards.

5. Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Bird asked whether any Plan could be called the Dene Valley Parish Plan rather than Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Nicholson replied that such plans must be called Neighbourhood Plans. Councillor Simm suggested it could be called the Neighbourhood Plan for Dene Valley Parish Council.

Councillor Nicholson circulated a document which contained details of what a Neighbourhood Plan must include. Durham County Council's website showed who had a Neighbourhood Plan and shows that Dene Valley Parish Council had Stage 1 of a Neighbourhood Plan based on work previously carried out.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that if the Parish Council did not have a Neighbourhood Plan then it could be ridden roughshod again like it was for Bishops Park. There was a need to keep identities of local areas.

Councillor Simm suggested that AI could be used in assisting the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

6. Finance Update

The Clerk provided the meeting with details of income and expenditure for the Council to the end of October 2025. The Chair meeting agreed the balances and the Chair signed the accounts and the bank statements.

The Clerk reminded the meeting that the next meeting of the Council in December would be considering the precept for 2026/27 and allotment rents for 2026/27.

7. Communication and Safeguarding

Councillor Coleman informed the meeting that if Parish Council Members were to be knocking on doors, then they should have some form of identification. The meeting agreed that this should be considered further.

The meeting also considered whether all Members should have a DBS check and whether this was necessary.

Councillor Coleman informed the meeting she had set up a WhatsApp group for Parish Councillors and any Member wishing to be part of the Group needed to provide her with their contact number.

8. Police Update

Councillor Bird informed the meeting that the next PACT meeting would be held on 13 November and as such he had no update to provide. He would circulate the update when he received it.

9. Play Areas

The Chair informed the meeting that she considered Councillor Ramage had provided a lot of information regarding s106 monies.

Councillor Coleman informed the meeting that she had obtained a quote to repair the 2 infant swings at Auckland Park and these had been agreed by the Chair and the Clerk. She would contact Councillor Stephenson again about the fencing at Auckland Park.

10. Planning Issues

Councillor Clark circulated details of planning applications which had been received or determined in the Dene Valley Parish and surrounding areas since the last meeting (for copy see file of Minutes)

11. Footpaths and Highways

Councillor Simm informed the meeting that he had no update to provide adding that he had received no feedback about Shepherds Bridge.

12. Allotments

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that one person was considering a tenancy at Close House Allotments.

13. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

Cheryl Hudson reported that the next meeting of the South Church Community Partnership would be held on Wednesday at 10 a.m. at St Andrews School.

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