

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 12 January 2026p 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
County Councillor James Stephenson
South Church Community Partnership - Cheryl Hudson

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Public Participation

There were no Members of the Public in attendance.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2025 were approved by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair formally reported that Sam Ashworth had stepped down from the Parish Council as he felt he couldn't commit the time needed. However, he remained a community contact for Close House.

4. Matters Arising/Chairs Update

The Chair provided the meeting with an update on the former Surestart building. While the building had been sold by the County Council there were concerns about the potential purchaser and the sale had been halted for the time being. The Chair thanked Councillor J Quinn at DCC for his assistance to date and the Parish Council could now apply for an asset transfer of the former Surestart centre. However, the Parish Council needed a weighty Business Plan to support the asset transfer

because the previous case out forwards by the Parish Council had fallen because there was insufficient evidence that the asset could be grown. There was a need for the Parish Council to convince DCC it was worthy of the asset and how it could achieve growth of the asset. There was a need for increased funding for the Parish Council and the level of precept would be discussed later in the meeting.

Councillor Stephenson informed the meeting he had been working with Stephen Gray and Joe Quinn on this and the Chair thanked him for his work on the project. Councillor Stephenson added that this was the last chance for the Parish Council to make a strong Business Case for the former Surestart Centre or it would be sold. The Business Case needed to be sustainable and credible and the Parish Council needed to demonstrate it had the means to get the building to a usable state as well as afford to carry on maintaining it in the future.

The Chair considered the Parish Council needed to make a case strong enough that services provided would generate an income and professional help may be needed in preparation of the Business Case. The Parish Council would talk to other community groups regarding income generation.

Councillor Stephenson left the meeting at 6.25

The Clerk referred to the issue of identification cards for Members and had circulated a suggested layout for the cards prior to the meeting. Members all agreed to the format of the card and approved them to be ordered.

Councillor Simm referred to the use of Spacemail and emails with attachments not sending. He suggested that this was because Spacemail would not send attachments and any documentation to be provided needed to be linked to the cloud. Councillor Simm agreed to further investigate the use of a cloud facility. Councillor Mitchell suggested contacting CDALC to seek contacts on how to establish a cloud.

The Chair reported that a walkabout with Peter Garrod from DCC was scheduled to take place on 21 January. Councillor Simm agreed to share the information with all Members. The Chair requested that any Member who had footpath issue email these to Councillor Simm so he could compile a list before the walkabout.

The Chair reported that boulders were in situ opposite the Close House allotments and motorcycles could not get through. During the delivery and siting of the boulders some damage had occurred to fencing posts On Close House allotments and this needed to be repaired. Other target hardening works were needed in Eldon Parish.

Councillor Mitchell reported that two quad bikes had broken through fencing. The Chair responded that 4 fence panels had been taken out on the TSO site and access was being gained through this and exiting at Eldon. The Chair agreed to raise this with Councillor Stephenson. She added that she was keen to have the TSO site closed and the land sold.

Work had been taking place with the ponds in Blackies Wood which had been dredged. It was hoped this would encourage wildlife in the area.

The Chair referred to the previously discussed precept for 2026/26. Although this had been agreed at the last Parish Council meeting there now was a greater need to establish a more sustainable financial base for the Parish Council to allow a strong Business Plan to be submitted for the former Surestart Centre. Following discussion regarding the historically low level of precept of the Parish Council it was agreed to submit a request for a 100% increase for 2026/27.

The Chair added there was a need to develop a Community Association to run the Centre and this would be included in the Business Plan.

The meeting discussed the need for a new logo for the Parish Council and agreed that a more forward looking logo was needed. Any Members who had suggestions for the design of a new logo should forward these to the Chair.

5. Big Spring Clean

Councillor Mitchell informed the meeting that she would be trying to get local people to participate in the Big Spring Clean and agreed to be the lead on this and make appropriate contact for packs. It was agreed that the Big Spring Clean be advertised on the Parish Council Notice Boards.

6. Finance Update

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

7. Police Update

Councillor Bird provided the meeting with an update from the last PACT meeting as follows:

- Since last meeting (13th Nov), 128 calls for beat area.
- 4 calls related to anti-social behaviour.
- 17 road related incidents – none relating to off-road bikes.
- Increased calls for 3x loose horses in the area – council aware
- 4x vehicles have been recovered from the area by colleagues in traffic – 1 stolen, 1 suspected stolen, 2x abandoned suspected used in crime.
- A quad bike was seized yesterday and 2x males arrested. Drone
- Officers have attended Prince Bishops Primary School with further sessions booked.

The target for the next month is an investigation into potential Traffic Calming measures on High Street – Mary Terrace – High Street through to the Eldon Lane border with Eldon

8. Play Areas

Councillor Coleman reported that all swing seats at Auckland Park had been replaced. There was a need for 15 new fence panels at Auckland Park and Councillor Coleman agreed to forward the quote for the work to the Clerk.

Councillor Moore reported that parents had bought motobikes for their children for Christmas and these were being used on Mary Terrace play area, making a mess of the grass. The Chair agreed to report this to the Neighbourhood Wardens.

9. 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).

10. Footpaths and Highways

Councillor Simm had nothing to report. He had circulated feedback on Footpaths 49 and 98 to Members and this would hopefully be sorted nby May 2026.

11. Allotments

The Chair reported that the gates at Close House had been left open and unlocked. Councillor Simm agreed to arrange for a laminated sign

too be produced to be placed on the gates to remind tenants of the need to close and lock the gates.

Referring to the reported problem of vehicles parked on the Grange Avenue allotment site Councillor Simm reported that he had visited the site and only one car was left on the site. This had been reported.

12. 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 take place at 10 a.m. in the Red Alligator.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on Monday 9 February 2026 commencing at 6.00 p.m.

The meeting finished at 8.30 p.m.