

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 14 July 2025 at 6.30 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor J Clark in the Chair

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

Also in attendance:

Clerk Ian Croft
South Church Community Partnership - Cheryl Hudson

Two Members of the Public were also in attendance

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Coleman and J Nicholson.

2. Public Participation

Two Members of the Public in attendance raised the issue of the level of Anti-Social Behaviour being experienced from tenants in two properties in at Coronation. This had resulted in high levels of dog faeces, the accumulation of rubbish and raised voices at all hours of the day and night. The police had been informed and the Neighbourhood Wardens were also aware. Nobody in the area was aware of who the landlord(s) of the properties were, but there was a high turnover of tenants in the properties because the landlord(s) refused to carry out property repairs. Councillor Mitchell suggested there was a need to find out who the landlord(s) were and Councillor Clark suggested the County Council may have this information as they would be paying housing benefit.

Councillor Simm expressed sympathy with the residents because getting any action to address the problems was really challenging. At local PACT meetings only around 50% of the incidents which occurred in an area were included in the police report. This was another example of the few in an area spoiling the area for the many.

The members of the public also raised the issue of improved facilities at Coronation Play Area and that Shildon Football Club had been allocated the s106 money rather than Dene Valley. Councillor Simm replied that

the s106 money was allocated to public open spaces and that Shildon Football Club was not a public open space. The Parish Council were currently fighting this with Durham County Council.

The members of the public asked about summer events in the Dene Valley area. Councillor Clerk replied that she believed events were taking place on 21 and 28 July at |St Marks.

Councillor Simm informed the meeting that both he and the Clerk had been contacted by the Probation Service regarding work they could carry out in the Dene Valley area. The Service already maintained the grass area of Auckland Park Play Area and were seeking other jobs they may be able to carry out on behalf of the Parish Council. As a first thought the meeting suggested the Service could carry out clearance works around the Chapel and Members were asked to consider what other work they could carry out. Councillor Simm informed the meeting he would set up a Teams call with the Service to discuss possible further works in the area.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record subject to Councillor I Burne being removed from the membership.

Councillor Bird informed the meeting that there continued to be a problem with quad bikes and motor bikes in the area. Councillor Moore suggested that the police could use drones to follow the quads and motor bikes and Councillor Mitchell added tha she could understand the community frustration when it seemed that nobody was able to do anything about these problems. Councillor Simm replied that a lot of the time the issue was down too resources, adding that if anybody raised issues with him then he always asked if they had reported the incidents to the police in the first instance.

Councillor Bird reported that two ball bearings had been thrown through windows at the One Stop Shop.

In reply to a question from Councillor Mitchell, Councillor Simm said there were 111 properties within Dene Valley Parish Council area which were currently boarded up.

4. Any Issues to be Raised with local County Councillors.

There were no County Councillors in attendance.

5. Matters arising/Chairs Update

Councillor Bird referred to the seat at Gibson Street which he had costed to be around £150 to repair. Councillor Simm replied that he would raise this job with Community Reparation/Probation Service'

In the absence of the Chair there was no Chair's update.

6. Start of Work on the new County Durham Plan – Call for Sites Now Open.

Councillor Simm informed the meeting that Durham County Council was consulting on possible sites for development to be included in the new County Durham Plan and this was the opportunity for the Parish Council to identify such sites within the Parish Council area. The deadline for the submission of sites was 15 August 2025 (subsequently extended to 29 August) and sites needed to be identified using an online form.

As preliminary thoughts the meeting identified The Hollow near the Chapel, land between Bishops Gate and the school and Millbank. To identify possible areas on land a map of the area was needed and Councillor Mitchell requested a map of the Parish Council boundaries so she could better understand the area of the Parish Council. The Clerk agreed to send a pdf showing the Parish Council area to Councillor Simm who could arrange for it to be printed on a larger scale.

7. Parish Council Policies and Procedures

The Clerk reminded the meeting that the Internal Audit for 2024/25 had identified that the Parish Council's Policies and Procedures were in need of a refresh and presented the following for approval:

- Code of Conduct for Members
- Financial Regulations

Following discussion, the meeting **approved** adoption of the documents and the Clerk agreed to upload them onto the Parish Council's website.

8. Councillors Roles and Responsibilities

Although this item had been placed on the agenda at the request of the Chair, who was not in attendance, Councillor Simm talked the meeting through it.

Councillor Simm informed the meeting that since assuming the position of Chair of the Council, Councillor Nicholson had carried out a lot of work and this item was trying to break up areas of responsibilities in an attempt to relieve some of the pressures on the Chair. Councillor Simm informed the meeting he was happy to take on the area of responsibility for Footpaths in the area and suggested that the Parish Council could join The Open Spaces Society at a cost of £45 a year.

Councillor Simm also referred to Allotments and informed the meeting that Councillor Nicholson was locking Close House on an evening. The possibility of establishing a possible Close House Allotment Association needed to be investigated.

It was agreed that as this item had been placed on the agenda at the request of the Chair it should be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

9. Finance Update

The Clerk provided the meeting with details of income and expenditure for the Council since the last meeting. The Chair agreed the balances and signed the accounts but was unable to sign the bank statement as the Clerk had forgotten to bring it. This would be initialled at the next meeting.

The meeting agreed that three Notice Boards for the Parish should be ordered. Councillor Clark requested a seat be provided opposite the One Stop Shop. The meeting agreed that .gov.uk email addresses should be obtained for those Members who wished to have one, these being Bob Simm, Tonya Mitchell, Janice Clark, John Moore, Renate Coleman, Jayne Nicholson and Ian Croft.

10. Play Areas

Although not in attendance, Councillor Coleman had received a quote for repairs to be carried out at Auckland Park Play Area and details of this were circulated to Members. The Council **agreed** that the repairs should be approved and the Clerk would report this back to Councillor Coleman so she could inform the Company to proceed.

Councillor Clark reported a problem of dog faeces at Rosemount which should be reported to the Neighbourhood Warden.

10 Police Update

Councillor Bird informed the meeting that the Police Update provided on contained certain types of crime, for example it did not include domestic

abuse incidents. He added that until last week the area had been relatively quiet.

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12. 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)

13 Footpaths

Councillor Moore informed the meeting there were no updates on Footpaths in the area.

14. Allotments

Allotments had been previously discussed earlier in the meeting.

15 Any other business

Cheryl Hudson informed the meeting that the next meeting of the South Church Community Partnership would be held on Wednesday at 1.00 p.m. in St Andrew's Church. Councillor Nicholson had spoken about Blackies Wood at the last meeting and one woman had expressed an interest to volunteer.

Councillor Moore informed the meeting that he had eight oak trees to donate.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Members considered that the next diaried meeting of the Parish Council, which was 8 September, was too far away given the levels of activity currently taking place. It was agreed that a Special meeting should be held and this should be the second Monday in August which was 11 August 2025. The Clerk agreed to email all Members with this date.

The meeting finished at 8.40 p.m.