

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 May 2025 at 6.30 p.m.**

**Present:**

**Councillor J Nicholson** in the Chair

Councillors T Bird, I Bourne, R Coleman and J Moore.

**Also in attendance:**

Clerk Ian Croft  
South Church Community Partnership - Cheryl Hudson  
County Councillor Kate Rowland  
County Councillor James Stephenson

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chair welcomed County Councillors Kate Rowland and James Stephenson to the meeting and congratulated them on their recent electoral success.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Clark.

**2. Public Participation**

The Chair welcomed Cheryl Hudson to the meeting.

**3. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Coleman informed the meeting that work had been taking place today on the water leak near to Auckland Park Play Area.

Councillor Moore informed the meeting that he had inspected the picket fencing and hedge at the Coronation A Allotment site and did not consider that it was in a bad condition.

**4. Matters Arising**

The Chair circulate her update report for March 2025 which included the following:

**Blackies Community Woodland Development - Phase One** - The plantations were complete and signed off, Durham County Council were advised that once target hardening was in place, unless the Close House site was safely secured, off road bikes and quads would access the woods through the plantation. This had happened but the site was now secure.

The target hardening project had not been completed - the boulders were inset but trenches had not been dug. Spaces between the boulders at Close House allowed electric bikes through, this was the same with the boulders at the main entrance in Eldon. An update on when work would be complete had been requested from Kate Ward and Aidan from Durham County Council

An initial meeting to engage residents in the Community Woodland Project was arranged for Wednesday at 10 a.m. in The One Stop Shop, The Neighbourhood Warden and PCSO had been invited to attend, Kate Ward had confirmed her attendance. Members of Eldon Parish Council had been invited but had not yet responded.

**Meeting with MP** - Sam Rushworth was very keen to be involved with the Parish Council to help improve the area and facilitate regeneration, The Chair had held a brief meeting with him on Saturday. Durham County Council's Development Plan for Coundon Grange was discussed and how very little had been delivered. The MP was also supporting the Parish Council's complaint regarding the inappropriate allocation of s106 money to Shildon Football Club and also the taking by DCC of £345k s106 money from the Bishop Parks Development. Details of all of this had been forwarded to the MP. A meeting with the Parish Council and walkabout of the Parish was likely to be in June, the date was to be confirmed.

**Water Leak at Woodside Meadows** – this had hopefully been resolved resolved following a plastic bucket and empty oil container being discovered in the pipe. Brian Featherstone at Durham County Council had been emailed requesting that the County Council return the area to how it was including filling the hole, once it was certain the leak was resolved. The Chair thanked Councillor John Moore for his immense work to facilitate this outcome.

### **Coundon and Leeholme Neighbourhood Forum and Area Application**

The Chair had attended a meeting in April, This Forum was at an early stage of development, A Committee had been formed and public consultation was ongoing. They are very keen to work closely with

Neighbours i.e. Dene Valley Parish Council, and the Chair had confirmed the Council would be happy to work with them to help develop the area as a whole especially on joint benefiting projects. The Chair gave a brief outline of the Community Woodland Development Project.

**Planning Enforcement** - A property in Close House was under investigation for the unauthorised construction of an upper floor extension on top of a wooden conservatory

A property in Dene Valley View was under planning enforcement review for the unauthorised conversion of a garage into a living room.

**TSOS** - The site was briefly opened in an attempt to move an unauthorised encampment in Shildon. The travellers resistance to using the TSOS had increased, with the community citing that children and animals become sick when staying there. While there was no evidence of land contamination the Chair intended to contact Environmental Department to discuss if any testing had been carried out.

#### **Neighbourhood Warden**

Liam Donkin has been appointed to our area; he has completed his initial training and is out and about in the area?

### **5. Election of County Councillors for Shildon and Dene Valley Electoral Division**

The Chair informed the meeting that following the recent County Council elections the new County Councillors for the Division were Councillors Michael Ramage, Kate Rowland and James Stephenson. The Parish Council looked forward to working with all three newly elected Councillors for the good of the area as a whole.

### **6. Police Update**

Councillor Bird informed the meeting that there had only been one attendee and himself at the last PACT meeting. He informed the meeting that a cannabis farm had been raided over the road last Thursday. Councillor Bourne added that he did not consider the drugs issue in the area to be as bad as it used to be.

### **7. Play Areas**

The Chair formally reported that she had submitted an official complaint to DCC regarding the allocation of the s106 money for the area.

Councillor Moore asked whether the s106 money would also have been used to improve the Coronation Play Area. The Chair replied that it would have been.

Councillor Coleman reported that she had identified contacts for repairs to Auckland Park Play Area and the Clerk agreed to forward Councillor Coleman the Wicksteeds report for this play area. Councillor Coleman also informed the meeting she had identified some sources of funding for the repairs.

## **8. Planning Issues**

In the absence of Councillor Clerk this item was deferred.

## **9. Footpaths**

Councillor Moore referred to the blocked path at Shepherds Bridge and asked whether this was to be reopened. The Chair replied that it was to be reopened in 2026 and would then be a tarmac footpath.

Councillor Coleman referred to the path from Gurney Valley to Auckland Park which needed overgrowing vegetation cutting back.

## **10. Allotments**

Councillor Bourne reported that there had been a fly tip at Close House allotments.

The Council requested that the Clerk write a letter to a tenant on the Close House regarding there should be no unauthorised persons on the plot, there should be no fires on the plot, there should be no unaccompanied minors on the plot and that Parish Council permission needed to be sought before any buildings were erected.

## **11. Finance Update**

The Clerk provided the meeting with details of income and expenditure for the since the last meeting. The Chair agreed the balances and signed the accounts and bank statements.

## **12. Any other business**

The Chair thanked the County Councillors for attending the meeting. The Councillors suggested, and it was agreed, that there should be an agenda item early in the meeting for the Parish Council to raise issues with County Councillors, following which they would be able to leave the meeting.

**13. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place on Monday 9 June 2025 (*NB subsequently moved back to 16 June 2025*)

The meeting finished at 8.30 p.m.