

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 February 2025 at 6.30 p.m.**

**Present:**

**Councillor J Nicholson** in the Chair

Councillors T Bird, I Bourne and R Coleman.

**Also in attendance:**

Clerk Ian Croft  
Kate Ward

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Clark and J Moore and County Councillors S Quinn and S Townsend.

**2. Public Participation**

The meeting welcomed Cheryl Hudson to the meeting who provided details of the South Church Community Partnership.

Councillor Nicholson thanked Cheryl for her information and considered that the Parish Council could learn from what had been developed at South Church and share best practice.

Cheryl informed the meeting that the Partnership met on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month and the next meeting was to be held on 19 February in The Red Alligator. Councillors Nicholson and Bourne both replied that they would attend the meeting, Kate Ward also said she could attend.

**3. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Nicholson referred to there being no Parish Council meeting in January each year and suggested that this be discussed later in the year.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

The Clerk reported that the precept request form had been sent to Durham County Council following the setting of the precept by the Parish Council at its meeting on 9 December 2024. This had been acknowledged by Durham County Council on 19 December.

A request for financial assistance had been received from the Great North Air Ambulance Service and a copy of the request letter was circulated.

##### **Resolved:**

That a donation of £350 be made.

A quote had been received from Durham County Council for repair works to be carried out at Auckland Park Play Area and this was circulated. It was agreed that other quotes should be sought. Councillor Nicholson suggested that the Council could engage with the Probation Service to carry out maintenance work.

Progress was being made on the transfer of the Randolph Street Play Area. Heads of Terms had been duly signed and returned to Smith Roddam. There was a need to publish an Open Spaces Notice at a cost of £649, this cost to be met by the Parish Council. Confirmation had been received that a Deed of Covenant would not need to be completed and therefore this would be a cost saving.

The Parish Council's website had been migrated to a .gov.uk domain and was [denevalleyparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://denevalleyparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Copies of NALC Good Councillor Guide and Good Councillor's Guide to Finance had been ordered for each Councillor.

#### **5. DCC Housing Strategy Plan for Coundon Grange**

Councillor Nicholson referred to the County Durham Housing Strategy: Targeted Delivery Plan for Coundon Grange.

Councillor Nicholson informed the meeting that Councillors Quinn and Townsend had held discussions with Kim McGuinness regarding the needs of Eldon and Dene Valley regarding infrastructure. The Parish Council needed to discuss this with Councillors Quinn and Townsend. Unfortunately the Delivery Plan had not been circulated with papers for this meeting. Councillor Nicholson agreed to send out the Delivery Plan and requested Members read the document for the next meeting. It was hoped that Councillors Quinn and Townsend would be able to attend the

next Parish Council meeting on 17 March where this could be discussed.

## **6. Parish Council 5-year Plan**

This item was linked to the previous agenda item and was therefore deferred for this meeting.

## **7. Police Update**

A police update which had been forwarded by Kate Ward was circulated to the meeting (for copy see file of Minutes).

Kate Ward explained problems which had been encountered with the CCTV camera, but these had now been resolved and the camera was operating normally.

Kate Ward referred to the lighting at Randolph Park. One pillar and four columns had poor connections and the MUGA lighting had been dismantled because it was unsafe. Work to restore/repair the broken columns and restore power could be undertaken at a cost of £8,000 plus £500 a year running costs.

Kate informed the meeting that there was approximately £10,200 left in funding for Dene Valley in the Towns and Villages Project and that the cost of installing barriers at Blackie Boy Woods was £1,500. Councillor Nicholson reported that quads and bikes had chewed up Blackie Boy Woods on 31 January 2025. The traffic was gaining access on Gurney Valley.

Councillor Coleman expressed her support for target hardening of Blackie Boy Woods. Kate Ward informed the meeting that money was available for anti social behaviour in the PCC's budget which could cover items such as MUGA lights, lighting columns and target hardening.

Councillor Nicholson referred to the crime figures which had been provided but these did not identify what the crimes were. Councillor Nicholson referred to several horse incidents, including cruelty and fly grazing and would email details to Kate.

## **8. Play Areas**

Councillor Nicholson provided an update on the asset transfer of Randolph Street Play Area. It had been noted that the previous s106 money which had been identified for the area was not being shown any longer on the list of s106 monies available. It was agreed that

Councillor Quinn be emailed to ascertain whether she had any idea of where this money had gone while at the same time emailing Planning at DCC asking the same.

## **9. Planning Issues**

A list prepared by Councillor Clark was circulated 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**

Councillor Nicholson reported that Councillor Moore had not raised any issues with footpaths.

Councillor Nicholson reported that the footpath on phase 2 of Bishops Park was scheduled to re-open in May/June of this year, although there was no notification on site.

There was an issue regarding Grange Hill Farm of a farmer putting cows and calves in a field which had a footpath through it. The footpath should either be diverted or an electric fence erected.

## **11. Allotments**

There were no allotment issues to report. The Clerk informed the meeting that the letters for 2025/26 rents would be sent out soon.

## **12. 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.

## **13. Any Other Business**

Councillor Nicholson reported that she was hoping to start to have regular meetings with the wardens.

Eldon Parish Council had a walkabout with Sam Rushworth, MP and a letter would be sent from herself and the Clerk to Sam Rushworth

seeking a meeting with the Parish Council to discuss issues being experienced in the area.

The condition of the road at Auckland Park was concerning with mud on both the footpath and road from the new development.

Kate Ward reported that the Knife Angel was to visit Newton Aycliffe from 31 May 2025.

#### **14. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place on Monday 17 March 2025.

The meeting finished at 8.40 p.m.