

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 13 July 2026 at 6.00 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor T Bird in the Chair

Councillors J Clark, M Dodds and A Westwood

Also in attendance:

County Councillor Michael Ramage
Clerk - Ian Croft

G Bavin, D Liddell, T Rigg, R Tindale and H Wallace.

1. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Moore and from Cheryl Hudson.

2. Public Participation

Thomas Rigg and Richard Tindale, both local residents, were in attendance and had expressed an interest in being co-opted onto the Parish Council as a Parish Councillor. Both had a keen interest in the local community and in improvements which could be introduced. Members of the Council discussed Mr Rigg and Mr Tindale's interest in being co-opted onto the Council and upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved:

That Thomas Rigg and Richard Tindale be co-opted onto the Dene Valley Parish Council.

The Chair welcomed Councillors Rigg and Tindale to their new appointments.

Members of the public were in attendance to express their frustration and concern that the villages were becoming a complete mess, with weeding not being carried out and back streets being in a disgusting state. The whole area had a neglected feel to it and windows in empty houses had been broken which created an eyesore for the area..

The residents felt it was time that the police and Durham County Council worked together to address the problems caused by some neglectful landlords in the area.

The road down Spencer Street had been closed for some time due to a culvert which had collapsed while work was being carried out and this had caused great inconvenience to users of public transport.

County Councillor Ramage replied that Durham County Council had decided, due to budget cuts, to not carry out weeding, lopping trees and trimming hedges. However, he was unsure whether any risk assessment had been carried out. He would take a look at the collapsed culvert following the meeting and would raise this matter with Durham County Council with an aim to get reparation as quickly as possible. On the issue of empty homes and general condition of the area Councillor Ramage asked those in attendance to email him specific addresses and locations so that he could investigate further.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 18 June 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

The Chair referred to the provision of defibrillators and bleed kits and informed the meeting he would meet with the York family in the hope of identifying possible fundraising for their provision. The Clerk reported that he had met with the site foreman on the Bishops Park development about location one of the defibrillators on the new development. It would be intended to locate the other defibrillator on the One Stop Shop.

The Chair stressed the need to progress the provision of a seat opposite the One Stop Shop as a matter of urgency. County Councillor Ramage suggested that as the Bishops Park development had interfered with a Public Footpath then the developer could fund the provision of the seat.

County Councillor Ramage informed the meeting that Durham County Council was preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Dene Valley area and suggested that possible sites for housing development within the Parish Council area.

5. Finance Update

The Clerk provided the meeting with details of income and expenditure for the Council to the end of June 2026. The Chair agreed the balances and signed the accounts and bank statements.

6. Police Update

Councillor Westwood reported that the problems on the field near to him seem to have diminished since the grass had been left to grow. However, he reported that there was a breakers yard operating at the top of his street. He had reported this to the County Council and untaxed and unregistered vehicles were being stored there. County Councillor Ramage asked that he be sent the address and he would look in to this.

7. Play areas

The Clerk reported that he had met with officers from the Criminal Justice Team at Auckland Park and that tidying up works would be carried out. There were two fencing panels at Auckland Park Play Area which needed to be replaced and the Clerk would arrange for a fencing contractor to provide a quote.

The Clerk reported that Durham County Council provided play area inspections through an SLA with Parish Councils and he would investigate this further.

The asset transfer of Randolph Street Play Area was progressing and it was suggested that Durham County Council be requested to clear the site prior to the transfer being completed. Councillor Rigg added that he knew a contact who would be able to clear the site if this was needed.

The Chair referred to a boxing hut which used to be located at Randolph Park which had disappeared over time. He believed this had been donated to the community although details were very scarce. It was agreed that the history of the boxing hut would be further investigated.

8. Planning Issues

Councillor Clark circulated a list of planning applications recently received or decided within the Parish area or in neighbouring Parish areas.

9. Footpaths and Highways Issues

There was no update on footpath and highways issues.

10. Allotments

The Parish Council agreed to let the top allotment plot on the Close House allotment site to Councillor Rigg. The plot was currently in a very poor state and it was agreed that Councillor Rigg be given the plot for two years without rent being charged. Rent would be due in 2028/29.

11. Any other business

The Chair reported that a contractor had bent the sign for Deanery Court and Councillor Rigg reported that a post on the new chevrons at the end of Eldon Bank had also been bent. County Councillor Ramage asked that details of these two matters be emailed to him.

The next meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Monday 10 August 2026 commencing 6.00 p.m.

The meeting finished at 7.25 p.m.