



*The Council of the  
Parish of Esh*

**Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the council**

**Held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at the Miners Institute, Langley Park**

**Meeting commenced at 6 p.m.**

**Item 1 Record of Attendance:**

Cllr O. Moat (Chair), Cllr, A. Wardman (Vice Chair), Cllr K. thompson, Cllr J. Crumbie, Cllr J. Clark, Cllr M. Quinn, County Councillor B. Coult, K. Harbisher (clerk)

Cllr E. Simpson was late and arrived at

There were 3 members of the public present.

**Item 2 Apologies for absence:**

Cllr A. Walker, Cllr P. Short, Cllr C Greenham-Denny.

Councillor J. Duddy failed to respond regarding intentions

**Item 3 Declarations of Interest:**

Cllr Crumbie items 10 Cllr Moat item 10, Cllr Clark item 7.

Resolved: councillor items of interest noted

**Item 4 Minutes of previous Ordinary meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March and Extra Ordinary meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025:**

The minutes from the both the ordinary and extra ordinary meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> March and 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025 had been circulated to councillors via email, prior to this meeting, there were also hard copies of the minutes to examine at the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Wardman that it be noted that the minutes of both meetings are a true and accurate representation, this was seconded by Cllr Clark.

Resolved: It be noted that the draft minutes are a true and accurate representation of the meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2025, and those of the extra ordinary meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

## **Item 5 Opportunity for members of the public to raise matters of interest: and Item 9 Miners' memorial statue (brought forward by Chair)**

The member of the banner group was present at the meeting to discuss that Memorandum of Understanding that he had presented to Esh Parish Council. He was hoping that a meeting could be arranged to discuss the memorandum and agree terms that were mutual to both parties. It was agreed to meet on April 23<sup>rd</sup> and that in the meantime, the clerk is to contact insurance providers to ascertain if the current policy can be adjusted to accommodate the banner and the potential cost of this.

One of the other members of the public present at the meeting was from the group that raised money for the Miner's Statue, and as the points to be raised were similar to those of the banner group, the chair brought item 9 on the agenda forward. The meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March raised the issue of custodianship for the Miner's Statue. It was thought from a representative from the group that they had entered into an agreement with Esh Parish Council to maintain the statue and become custodians of it. The group had no documentation supporting this decision. Councillors have researched into archived minutes and have not found written evidence to support this. There was a lease for the land found which is for a period of 21 years and signed for by Esh Parish Council. The lease is for land adjacent to Browney Court where the statue is situated.

Custodianship for the statue would ensure that Esh Parish Council were responsible for all maintenance and insurance costs. Esh Parish Council are aware of an offer to paint and repair the statue for free, this was emailed to the clerk, who then circulated it to councillors. This email was highlighted by Cllr Clark. County Councillor Coult also mentioned at this point that Esh Parish Council should contact legal at DCC to establish the position of Esh Parish Council. I was mentioned that some of the original group that campaigned for the statue still reside in the village and may be able to reform to help to deal with custodianship.

Ongoing: Clerk to contact legal at DCC regarding ownership and stance of Esh Parish Council. The member of the public to be kept informed.

## **Item 6 County Councillors report:**

This is the last report from County Councillor Coult as she is not standing for the position as County Councillor in the forthcoming elections. The report for County Councillor Coult was circulated to councillors prior to the meeting, there were also hard copies of the report available during the meeting for councillors to read. The report focused on county wide issues such as the visit from the King and Queen who will attend a Maundy Service at Durham Cathedral on April 17<sup>th</sup>. There was information in regards to a confirmed case of avian flu, therefore a mandatory housing order is in place for the whole of County Durham. Failure to comply is an offence under The Animal Health Act 1981. The report included changes to the opening times of the household waste recycling centres, they are operating under their summer opening hours, there will also be planned maintenance to sites over the coming weeks, information for this can be found at <https://www.durham.gov.uk/hwrc>. There was also a reminder to bring photo ID for the forthcoming elections in May.

Local issues included an update on the speed cushions at Low Moor Road, they have now been approved at committee and works are awaiting a start date. Parking areas on Quebec Street have both had surface improvements carried out. The wildflower area on Low Moor Road is being prepped and resown after works failed last year. Councillor Coult thanked everyone that supported to the Big Spring Clean Event around the villages, with thanks going to Cllr Moat for providing refreshments on behalf of Esh Parish Council. A walkabout with the Neighbourhood Warden had been conducted and there is a reminder that any incidents of anti-social behaviour witnessed be reported. Anti-social behaviour included, dog foul, drugs, litter, harassment etc.

All key reporting information is below:

- <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>
- 0800 555 111
- <https://www.gov.uk/report-untaxed-vehicle>
- <https://www.durham.police.uk/Report-It/101-Live-Chat/101-Live-Chat.aspx>  
101
- <https://www.durham.gov.uk/asb>
- 03000 260 000
- <https://doitonline.durham.gov.uk/>  
Operation Snap
- <https://p.sentrysis.com/police/rtc/?fbclid=IwAR36XZbgjF-oObS-1qWJqUc9ltdQ09cfKsF85SJ4jM5fhpXjb3gVkDemCkQ>

A PACT report had also been submitted by PCSO Hart, which was circulated to councillors.

Cllr Moat thanked PCSO Hart for her report and Cllr Simpson thanked County Councillor Coult for all of the reports that she had submitted during her time as County Councillor.

Resolved: to accept County Councillor Coult's and PCSO Hart's reports.

#### **Item 7 Clerks' report:**

There were a number of items to bring to council's attention, including an email received from Esh Living enquiring about The Rec and possible enhancement opportunities, it was agreed that they should be invited to the parish council meeting in June.

The clerk has received confirmation from Playdale of a possible start date for the Bobby Robson Refurbishment date, clerk to order new tables and obtain quotes for siting, so that they are in situ ready for refurbishment and to get quotes for reinstating the gates to make the area secure. The clerk will order the new picnic tables so that they are in situ prior to the refurbishment.

The clerk has received an email from a resident requesting permission to metal detect on the Rec, the consensus was that if council allowed this individual to metal detect then this sets a precedence which many people could take advantage of and destroy the area. Due to the area being a nature reserve council have rejected this request. Cllr Moat proposed that no metal detecting be allowed to take place on the Rec, this was seconded by Cllr Clark, a vote was held which was returned as unanimous.

There was also an email regarding a DMMO Application Footpaths 41,42,47 Upgrade to Bridleway around Hagg House in Esh Village, the process is in consultation at the moment and is unlikely to be presented to Highways committee until June. It was agreed that the email be circulated to all councillors and then brought back to council for consideration in Mays meeting.

The clerk has received a concern from a resident about the vape bin, they have a child that attends the youth club on a Monday evening. The resident reported that the child had taken a spent vape from the vape bin and had bought a refill for it. This was conveyed to council who were informed that from now on the vape bin would be kept in the main office out of the way of the children. There were also reports that children were taking the batteries from the battery bin and heating them up, therefore it was also decided that the battery bin would also be kept in the main office out of the way whilst the youth group and other children's groups were in the main hall.

Cllr Clark has submitted a request to council via the clerk for the picnic table that is in storage at the parish lock up. Cllr Clark is requesting that the table be donated to the community garden as it

would be used. Cllr Wardman proposed that as the table wasn't being used by the parish, Esh Parish Council donate it to the community garden. Cllr Crumbie seconded the proposal, all councillors apart from Cllr Clark voted and returned in favour of the table being used for the community garden.

It was also discussed the possibility of a contact number to be placed on the notice board in case people booking the hall needed to make contact with someone.

Resolved: To accept clerks report

#### **Item 8 Council end of term Report:**

This is a report from the chair regarding the tenure of the current parish council and what has been achieved over the time in office. The report from the chair included a thanks to all councillors who had served over this term and the contribution that they have given to make Esh Parish a better place.

The report acknowledged that improvements are ongoing, however, some of the positives mentioned in the report were, the rec – there is an adventure trail in place which can be added to, bat and owl boxes have been fitted and there is a management plan in place for improvements to be carried out to manage the invasive species, which will allow others to thrive. Pathways have been cleared this helps to make the Rec somewhere for all to enjoy. It is hoped that the Rec will become self sufficient through funding being accessed.

Esh Parish Council has worked closely with Langley Park Allotments Association in agreeing a new management plan. Councillors now conduct bi-annual inspections on the allotments.

Esh Parish Council has agreed with local contractors and has several SLA's in place to ensure that work carried out is to the highest standard around Esh Parish. There are also service agreements for the Miner's Institute to ensure that all regulations are complied with.

Esh Parish Council has supported many local groups by supplying funding through their grant system, groups to benefit are Langley Park Allotments Association, Quebec Village Hall, Community Garden, The Banner Group and many more.

Cllr Wardman suggested that the report be published once the local elections had been carried out and that additions be made to the report such as the resurrection of Esh Leaves and the Santa Run around the parish. Also to thank local contractors for the support that they give to Esh Parish Council.

Resolved: Clerk to publish the report as a newsletter which will encompass all that the current council has achieved.

#### **Item 9 Miner's Memorial Statue;**

This item was discussed alongside item 5

#### **Item 10 Smallholding Inspections**

The small holdings were inspected by councillors on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025. Overall, since the last inspection, there have been great improvements and the tenants are to be congratulated for the effort that they have made in maintaining their small holdings to this standard. Cllr Crumbie suggested that the small holdings be numbered which would give clarity when discussing them.

Small holding 1- small holding was clean and open, the livestock were well cared for and happy. There was some rubbish that had accumulated at the track side of the small holding that would need to be disposed of, there was also an old piece of fence which had been left when the new fence had been erected, this would also need disposing of. On the whole councillors were very happy with the plot.

Small holding 2 – the plot was clean and tidy, the water in the stream was flowing with no blockages, hedges were at an acceptable level, the only concern was a lack of grass.

Small holding 3 – this plot raised a few issues, there were sheds which were dismantled and laying flat on the ground, one was new but it was thought that the other one had blown over in the wind. There was no livestock on the plot and it was starting to become overgrown in parts. The clerk has made several attempts to correspond with the tenant, by email, letter and telephone, however as yet unsuccessful. Cllr Moat suggested a final attempt to contact the tenant be made and that they be given until the end of April in which to make improvements to the small holding. The small holding is still in an improved state to what it has been in the past.

Small holding 4 – there is a marked improvement to this small holding, it is now open and tidy with the muck heap being non-existent.

Resolved: Clerk to contact tenant of small holding 3 to express concerns from inspection and issue a deadline. Clerk to write to other tenants praising them for the effort that they have made in keeping their smallholdings to this standard.

#### **Item 11 Allotments Association:**

Langley Park allotments Association has brought a matter to the attention of Esh Parish Council which they would like some assistance with. A tenant of the Allotments Association has moved out of the area. Allotments Association rules state that tenant must reside within the area to hold an allotment. The tenant paid the rent for the allotment in January and has since moved outside of the parish boundary, however the sale of the house is yet to be completed. The tenant was under the impression that as they had paid rent for the year, they would be able to continue with the allotment. Langley Park Allotments Association are stating that the tenant is in breach of the tenancy agreement due to residing outside of the parish boundary. The tenant has also made representation to Esh Parish Council, both representations were put before council.

Council were sympathetic to both parties, the upholding of rules on behalf of Langley Park Allotments Association and to the distress of the tenant. After a discussion, Cllr Moat concluded and proposed that because of the restrictions brought about from Avian Flu, the tenant who has a stock of poultry, will remain on the plot. The eviction notice stands and that the tenant be afforded one month after restrictions have lifted to vacate the plot. Cllr Clark seconded the proposal. Council took a vote, Cllr Crumbie abstained from the vote and all other councillors present voted in favour.

Resolved: The clerk to contact the tenant and Langley Park Allotments Association to inform them of the decision.

**County Councillor Coult left the meeting at this point in the proceedings.**

### **Item 12 The Rec Update :**

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, Cllrs Clark and Thompson along with the clerk met with the contractor who was hired to manage the Rec and bring it back to a state befitting of its original purpose, to be enjoyed by all. There is a management plan in place is an ongoing improvement programme, scheduled over a number of years for the Rec. Cllr Clark provided council with a report that she had compiled. The report stated that the Rec was sectioned into five distinct areas for ease of clarification during discussion. The areas are as follows:

Area 1 Bottom Field

Area 2 Old Tennis Court

Area 3 Field to the right of the path (behind Park Drive)

Area 4 Field to left of the path (farmers field side)

Area 5 Football Field

Although there is work to do on all areas of the Rec, area 2 raises a cause for concern due to a health and safety issue. At the moment the steps leading up to the old pavilion area require attention, the top two steps need to be repaired which will bring them to a safe standard. They also need handrails in various positions due to the width of the steps, this has a cost implication of goods and additional labour. Another proposal to make the step area safe is to bank the walls and steps, infilling them with soil and rubble dug from other areas of the Rec as they are cleared. This will create a grassy banked area of low maintenance, seeded with wild flowers and dead hedge areas to encourage wildlife. As the contractor is repurposing spoil from elsewhere on the Rec the only cost implication would be the wooden posts for dead hedging.

There was a discussion on the severity of the cutback needed, as invasive species such as brambles have been left for many years they have taken over in areas and are choking other species from blooming such as bluebells. Once the brambles are cut back and kept in check, then other flowers will return as they have done in other areas of the Rec that have been cleared. The view from the top of the Rec to the bottom will be improved once the invasive bushes have been cut back. Cllr Moat proposed that the steps be covered with spoil and turned into a grassed bank with wild flowers and dead hedges to make them safe, this was seconded by Cllr Simpson. A vote was held which was returned as unanimous.

Resolved: Clerk to contact contractor to inform them of decision made regarding the steps.

### **Item 13 Window decoration for VE Day Anniversary:**

During the meeting in March. It was mentioned that Esh Parish Council were to hold events to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE day and to create a display around the parish of poppies. Since then, the clerk has received an email from a company that specialises in window art and murals. This email was circulated to councillors to gauge opinion. Councillors were keen to have the windows at the Miner's Institute filled with art depicting the occasion, this would make a focal point for the celebrations. It was also thought that when the skate park is repaired then ask to quote for a mural. Cllr Wardman proposed that the window at The Miner's Institute is decorated for the VE 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Cllr Thompson seconded this proposal. A vote was held which returned as unanimous.

It was decided that the coffee morning drop in be held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May as this coincides with the regular coffee morning already held.

Resolved: The Clerk to contact artist and arrange for a date to decorate the window.

**Item 14: Payments to be made and bank reconciliation**

The clerk distributed information on payments made, petty cash income / balance and bank balances for councillors to take note.

Resolved: Accounts are correct and that payments are authorised by the Council.

At this point members of the public were requested to leave.

**Item 16 Private and Confidential:**

**Item 17 Date of next ordinary meeting:**

The date of the next ordinary meeting for Esh Parish Council is Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025.