



*The Council of the
Parish of Esh*

Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the council

Held on Wednesday 9th July 2025 at the Miners Institute, Langley Park

Meeting commenced at 6 p.m.

Item 1 Record of Attendance:

Cllr O. Moat (Vice Chair), Cllr, A. Wardman, Cllr C. Bloomfield, Cllr J. Clark, Cllr K Thompson, Cllr H. Fairey, K. Harbisher (clerk) County Councillor A. Neil

There were 3 members of the public present.

Item 2 Apologies for absence:

Cllr M. Quinn, Cllr A. Walker, Cllr P. Short

Item 3 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr K. Thompson item 11, Cllr O. Moat item 12, Cllr J. Clark item 12, K. Harbisher item 12

Resolved: councillor items of interest noted

Item 4 Minutes of previous Ordinary Meeting held on 11th June 2025:

The minutes from the ordinary meeting held on 11th June 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 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 11th June 2025.

Item 5 Opportunity for members of the public to raise matters of interest:

There were three members of the public present, a local resident and two members of the banner group.

The local resident raised the issue of the fence at the Bobby Robson play area, she had heard that Esh Parish Council had plans to remove the fence and hedge from the play area. The concerns that she raised were around the lack of privacy for the residents of Lambton Street, if the fence and hedge were gone the residents would not be able to sit in their yards due to the park being open and park users being able to see into resident's yards, she was concerned that this had the potential of residents being victimised from youths in the park. She mentioned that there was noise and anti-social behaviour in the park from children as young as 7 or 8 which would go on until late into the night. She believed with the removal of the fence that this would become more commonplace and that the issues around privacy would be evident for both park users and residents.

Council acknowledged the concerns from the resident and explained that with the fence and hedge removed the park would become open and would make the incidents of anti-social behaviour less prevalent due to the openness and being able to see what the young people were doing, if there were incidents of anti-social behaviour then these would be seen more easily and could be reported quickly to the relevant authorities. Removing the fence and hedge would mean that patrols by the police and neighbourhood warden could be carried out easier because of the park interior being visible. The wardens have cited the fence to the park being an issue in the past and that it would be better if it were removed. It was also mentioned that the enclosed nature of the park presently has led to problems with dogs, people are taking them in and letting them roam freely within the park, this is despite dogs being banned from the area.

The representative from the banner group requested the use of the hall at the Miner's Institute during the October to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Langley Park Pit closure. The banner group was proposing to hold an exhibition, which would include photographs from a local photographer that they had been working with. His display would include generic photos of mining from around the North East. However, there would be more focused photographs of Langley Park pit from Beamish Open Air Museums' archives, these would be included in the exhibition. The plan was for the exhibition to run from Monday 25th October – Friday 7th November, this would be the week of October half term and the week afterwards. Councillors raised questions on how the items were to be displayed as the walls in the Miner's Institute weren't great and would not be able to withstand a lot of weight. There were also questions around health and safety aspects of the regular groups that used the hall in respect of the displays and where would the displays be situated when other groups were using the hall? It was suggested that the banner group draw up a plan of the exhibition which would include where the displays were, where they were to be housed during time when other groups were using the hall and also the types of fixing that was to be used for the hanging of the photographs. This plan would be sent to the clerk, who would distribute it with councillors who would feedback to the banner group on its suitability.

The clerk had received emails from residents at Eppleton Close about an InPost locker that had been installed at the One Stop shop at Eppleton Close. The locker had been installed without planning permission and was seeking it retrospectively from Durham County Council. The InPost locker was creating an issue due to it being brightly lit and the excessive traffic that it had generated in the vicinity. Councillor Clark proposed that Esh Parish Council write a letter of objection to the planning department at DCC in support of the local residents. This was seconded by Cllr Moat, a vote was held which was unanimously in favour of the objection. The clerk would inform the residents of Esh Parish Council's support of their objection.

There was a resident for Esh village had called into the office and asked if there was a possibility that he could play pétanque on Esh village green, he had a few friends that had showed interest but were aware that there was a "No Ball Games" sign on the village green. Councillors were understanding that although pétanque was a gentle ball game this would open to the possibilities of other ball games being played on Esh village green. Cllr Moat proposed that the resident was not allowed to play pétanque on Esh village green, this was seconded by Cllr Fairey. Cllr Thompson objected to the

proposal, all other councillors voted in favour of the no ball game still standing. It was suggested that the residents play pétanque at the park in Esh as ball games are allowed to be played there.

Resolved: Clerk to distribute information regarding the banner groups plans for the exhibition at the hall, once received from the banner groups. Clerk to write to planning department at DCC in support of the objection that has been raised by residents in Eppleton Close. Clerk to inform resident from Esh village re. pétanque.

Item 6 County Councillors Report:

Councillors were given copies of County Councillor Neils report to examine. The report included information about various issues including parking improvements for Langley Park. This includes the proposed implementation of parking restrictions on front street parking to encourage a higher turnover of vehicles and users to the shops in that area. This will also include a proposal of new areas of double yellow lines, particularly around street entrances to improve visibility. The locations of these lines are yet to be finalised, Cllr Neil has been informed they will go ahead. The project started under Cllr Coult, the implementation of new speed cushions on Quebec Street is set to commence the week commencing 4th August despite some delays. County Councillor Neil also reported that he is engaging with volunteer organisers from Park Run who to provide a new local Park Run service which is planned to be at Ushaw Historic House and is aiming to launch at some point in October according to current timeframes. Councillor Neil mentioned that he had been in contact with residents from Esh Village in respect of parking and school traffic concerns. He has mentioned that he will be in contact with the schools re. possible solutions and would welcome the input of Esh Parish Council and EVRA.

Councillor Neil highlighted further developments have come from the review of the County Durham Plan which is being made over the coming months and will be a vital part in deciding the future projects undertaken by the council as well as which land and areas may be earmarked for housing and other developments. He recommends that Esh Parish Council participate closely in this process where possible to ensure residents are satisfied with the results of the plan.

Resolved: To accept County Councillor Neils' report

Item 7 Funding Opportunities:

County Councillor Neil alluded that there were the possibilities of funding from 106 monies that had accumulated. This money could be earmarked to fund a new play area within Langley Park, the new park would have to be on parish land with the insurance and maintenance falling to Esh Parish Council. Councillor Neil was asked if there was a possibility that the money could be used to fund ongoing improvements to the existing Bobby Robson play area, such as replace the existing fence to make it better suited for visibility purposes, and to add to the play equipment in Bobby Robson which was in the process of being refurbished, he said that he would look into it and report back to council. It was also mentioned claiming 106 monies for the Dere Street development as soon as that becomes available.

Ongoing: County Councillor Neil to report back to Esh Parish Council when further information becomes available.

Item 8 Clerk's Report

The clerk's report included items of interest for council such as an update on the money claim that Esh Parish Council has with a contractor that was paid for work that they didn't do. The clerk had received instruction from the court bailiffs that the contractor could not be found at their business address. There was evidence that the private address of the contractor could be within the Sunderland area, therefore, the clerk contacted the Electoral Department of Sunderland Council to see if the contractor held a private residence within the area as this could be another avenue in which to pursue him. The clerk received confirmation from the Electoral Department that this person does reside within the area of Sunderland and that representatives from Esh Parish Council were welcome to look through the Electoral register to find the address, however this would be quite an onerous task due to the electoral register being a paper copy and was by street name rather than individual's name. The electoral department couldn't give information other than they resided in Sunderland. Cllr Clark said that she was willing to look through the electoral register to find the contractor's address so that it could be passed on to the bailiffs.

The report to council also contained an update of the claim for 106 monies from Durham County Council. Before and after photos have been sent alongside the invoice for payment. We are waiting for payment to be made.

The reports from ROSPA have been emailed, these were forwarded to councillors, they have raised some issues, on the whole low risk, these issues are being actioned on a sliding scale.

Three companies have been approached to supply and fit blackout blinds for the hall, two have supplied quotes, these were given to council for their approval. Cllr Clark recommended that another company be sought, the clerk is to seek another company as recommended by Cllr Clark.

Ongoing; Cllr Clark to arrange suitable time to view electoral register at Sunderland Library. Clerk to contact another company about the blinds in the hall.

Item 9 PCSO report.

PCSO Hart was invited to the meeting but had sent apologies and a report to be read in her absence. The report included a review of local crime trends, since the last report in June, there have been 13 incidents of anti-social behaviour of anti-social behaviour, the majority of these reported have been off road/electric bikes. The report mentioned that the police are in the process of putting together an operation to target the off-road bikes and where they are being stored. There was a plea from the police for anyone having evidence of the off-road bikes, especially if faces weren't covered where the faces aren't covered, could this be forwarded to PCSO Hart It was highlighted in the report that PCSO Hart had received video evidence of youths causing issues at Diggerland, this is being looked in to. Durham Police are working closely with the Co-op in Langley Park in a hope to cut incidents of shop lifting through the Stopwatch scheme.

Resolved: To accept the report from PCSO Hart.

Item 10 Bobby Robson Update:

A report was given to council about the progress with Bobby Robson play area. ROSPA have carried out their annual inspection which has highlighted a few areas that need to be addressed, none of them pose as high risk and will be addressed before the park opens to the public. Playdale are due to inspect the park on 12th July. The work to the skate park and the youth shelter are outstanding.

The contractor removed old rotten tree stumps as a favour. These areas require attention as they have old roots, rocks and other debris which were exposed when the tree stumps were uprooted. It was mentioned that the responsibility for the clearance should fall to the contractors. Cllr Clark mentioned that it would be an easy fix and would require a few hours to complete. An artist who had been approached to quote had emailed the clerk and thought that their quote could be adjusted to suit what Esh Parish Council wanted. It was agreed that the clerk chase up the contractor in relation to the skate park and the youth shelter. It is required that the clerk seek quotes for the trees to be crowned, which will increase the visibility for the CCTV camera at the park.

Resolved: The clerk to contact companies to crown the trees and to contact the contractor about the skate park and the youth shelter.

Item 11 SLA Renewals.

The Service Level agreement for park inspections and litter picking that Esh Parish Council hold with a contractor is due to be renewed. The contractor is holding the price from last year through to this year. Cllr Moat proposed that the SLA be in place for a further twelve months, this was seconded by Cllr Clark and returned a unanimous decision. It was also decided that the inspection reports be forwarded to councillors each month.

Ongoing: Clerk to inform contractor of the renewing of contract for a further 12 months and forward inspection reports from the contractor

Item 12 Grant Application for Langley Park WI:

An application has been submitted from Langley Park Women's Institute, there were some councillors that had pecuniary interests as they are members of Langley Park WI, one councillor had submitted the application on behalf of Langley Park WI, this councillor left the room while the discussion took place. After a discussion, Cllr Wardman proposed that the application be re-submitted from the treasurer of Langley Park Women's Institute rather than a member of Esh Parish Council. The application would be brought back to the meeting in September for approval. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Bloomfield and returned a unanimous decision.

Resolved: Clerk to contact treasurer of Langley Park WI and notify them of council's decision and request that the application be resubmitted.

Item 13 Allotment Inspections:

The allotments at Cross Fell and Earl of Durham had been inspected on 19th June 2025. Cllr Moat reported that the allotments are graded on a scale of 1-10, with a score of 5 or less being a cause for concern. On the Earl of Durham Allotments, 15 out of 71 were scoring 5 or less. From the inspection last year this is an improvement, however, some of the issues raised were similar to those when the site was inspected last year with the same people. Some of the allotments are not numbered correctly.

At Crossfell allotments, one third, 5 out of 15 had scored 5 or less. On one of the allotments, the tenant had died, this was taken into consideration. There were issues with the allotments as a whole, including the track which had scrap metal dumped there and had the potential to become a dumping ground. The land next to the garages owned by the council was very overgrown and

needed to be cut back. The clerk is to email The Clean and Green team from DCC to notify them as the land belongs to DCC and is therefore their responsibility. Councillor Moat is to email her report on the allotment to the clerk to forward to Langley Park Allotments Association.

It was also highlighted that a small holding tenant was keeping livestock on the small holding that required permission from Esh Parish Council, to which permission had not been sought. The clerk is to correspond with the tenant about the removal of the livestock and the need to seek permission from Esh Parish Council.

Resolved: Clerk to forward email from Cllr Moat to Langley Park Allotments Association. Clerk to email Clean and Green at DCC regarding overgrown grass at garages at the rear of Lillian Terrace and clerk to send letter and email to smallholding about the removal of livestock that are there without permission.

Item 14 : Allotment Shop

The shop belonging to Esh Parish Council, which is on land suffering from historical contamination was once ran by Langley Park Allotments Association is now back within the remit of Esh Parish Council. Cllr Clark has emptied the shop and disposed of the plastic containers that were present within the building. The discussion led to the need to fence the perimeter of the land and for the rest of the shop to be cleared, once this happens then its use will be discussed, the community garden are keen to use it for storage. This is the only use for the shop as the land cannot be worked nor livestock kept on it due to the contamination of the soil. Cllr Moat proposed that quotes be sought for clearing the overgrown area and rubble from the shop/ land. This was seconded by Cllr Clark and returned a unanimous vote.

Ongoing: Clerk to seek quotes for the clearance of the land/ shop then bring it back to council where it's use will be discussed

15 Bank account for Rec

The Old Rec Centenary Fields has charitable status, however, there is no bank account for it. If there was a bank account then funding could be accessed. It was discussed that an existing dormant account from Esh Parish Council be converted for the Rec. The clerk mentioned that it might take less time if a new account was opened. The clerk was to enquire with the Post Office and Lloyds about opening a new account.

Ongoing: Clerk to make enquiries about the opening of a new account for the Rec.

16 Phones at the Tute:

There are a number of mobile phones in the office drawers of the Miner's Institute. It was discussed that one of these phones have the security app for internet banking downloaded as this would give an extra device that could be used if other devices weren't available to be used. There are always two people to perform banking for security purposes and having this would mean that the device could be available if the main people that performed banking weren't available. Cllr Moat proposed that the security app be downloaded onto a mobile phone in the Tute, this was seconded by Cllr Wardman, which returned a unanimous vote.

Resolved: The clerk to charge the phones and contact bank in order to have the relevant information to download the app onto the device to hold in the Tute.

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. A prepayment for the Christmas lights was discussed, the clerk is to email the representative from the company that supplies the Christmas lights to clarify some of the points raised in a meeting that was had with them before payments are made.

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

Item 15: Date of next ordinary meeting:

The date of the next ordinary meeting for Esh Parish Council is Wednesday 10th September 2025.