



*The Council of the
Parish of Esh*

The Miners Institute, Church Street, Langley Park, Durham, DH7 9TZ

0191 3736687

Clerk : Karen Harbisher

Chairperson: Cllr Olwyn Moat

**The Council of the Parish of Esh Minutes of the Annual Assembly Meeting of the Council
followed by the Annual Meeting held on
Wednesday the 14th May 2025 at The Miners Hall, Langley Park.
Meeting commenced at 6:00pm
Annual Assembly of the Council followed by the Annual Meeting**

1. Apologies of Absence

Councillor J. Clark

2. Chairperson's Report:

The Chair provided a report at the meeting in which she welcomed the new councillors to Esh Parish Council and explained that the election of the new parish council had been uncontested. Cllr Moat also expressed the view that being a parish councillor was not just a case of turning up to meetings it was the opportunity for councillors to take an active role in the everyday running of Esh Parish Council, which included supporting events that Esh Parish Council host. Cllr Moat highlighted key areas over the last year including successes for the council, such as the play area refurbishment at Quebec and the popularity of events hosted by Esh Parish Council such as the Christmas Santa run around the parish. Cllr Moat acknowledged that there have been challenges during the past year, however there are many positives in which to look forward to such as the start date for refurbishing the Bobby Robson play area. Areas of focus over the coming year are The Rec and Centenary Fields which now has a plan in place which will see continuing work to return the site into a useable and enjoyable space for the community as a whole.

Resolved: That the Chairperson's report be noted

Annual General Meeting

1. Election of Chair and Acceptance of Office.

Proposed members for the office of Chair are Cllr Mike Quinn as proposed by himself and seconded by Cllr Wardman. Following a vote by Cllr Moat, Cllr Thompson, Cllr Wardman, Cllr Short, Cllr Fairey, Cllr Bloomfield, Cllr Walker which returned as unanimous that Cllr Quinn be elected to the office of Chair of Esh Parish Council for the coming year.

Resolved: Cllr Quinn elected to be Chair for the coming year. Cllr Quinn accepted the position and signed the acceptance of office which was witnessed by the clerk.

2. Election of Vice Chair and Acceptance of Office

Cllr Moat as proposed by Cllr Thompson and seconded by Cllr Short. Following a vote, councillors, Short, Wardman, Quinn, Thompson, Walker, Fairey and Bloomfield returned a unanimous vote that Cllr Moat be elected to the office of Vice- Chair for the coming year.

Resolved: Cllr Moat elected to be Vice Chair for the coming year. Cllr Moat accepted the position and signed the acceptance of office as witnessed by the clerk.

3. Record of attendance

Chair Cllr Quinn, Vice Chair, Cllr Moat, Cllr Wardman, Cllr Short, Cllr Walker, Cllr Fairey, Cllr Thompson and Cllr Bloomfield present. County Councillor Alex Neil was also in attendance

There were 5 members of the public present

Clerk : Karen Harbisher

4. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Clark.

5. Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest

6. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

Minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 9th April 2024 had been circulated in draft from via email to all councillors prior to this meeting. Hard copies were also available in the meeting. Cllr Wardman proposed that the minutes be recorded as a correct record of the meeting in April, this was seconded by Cllr Moat.

Resolved: to accept Minutes of the meeting on 9th April 2025 as a correct record.

7. Opportunity for Public to raise matters of interest:

Newly elected County Councillor Alex Neil gave a verbal update as he hadn't provided a written report due to recent acceptance of office. He reported that Reform had taken charge of DCC as they had won the majority of seats, 65 in total around County Durham. He also informed council due to the change in boundaries Esh Parish now has one County Councillor instead of two.

A member of the public highlighted the issue of parking in and around Langley Park, County Councillor Neil was aware of the issues around parking and was going to look into it. The same member of the public also mentioned that he had been part of a river watch programme, which had looked at the River Browney, he also volunteered at the Wetlands in Langley Park. He said that the Browney ran past the industrial estates and he had noticed that there were outlets from the industrial estate, in particular the pet crematorium, that ran into the Browney. He mentioned levels of benzene and creosote polluting the river. Cllr Thompson confirmed that the pet crematorium had been reported in the past. County Councillor Neil said that he would look into it and report back.

There were representatives from Langley Park Banner Group present. They were requesting that Esh Parish Council support their amended Memorandum of Understanding regarding storage of the banner once acquired. This document had been forwarded to the clerk on the evening before this

meeting was to take place, as a matter of courtesy council decided that there would be time at the end of the meeting to examine the document and make a decision.

Resolved: To note that County Councillor Neil will look into issues raised and update accordingly.

8 Clerks Report:

The report of the clerk was circulated to councillors. It included various information regarding issues that were ongoing such as the progress made towards the Bobby Robson Park refurbishment. There had been a site visit by the contract manager, who had highlighted some changes to the original quote for the works. The new quote was slightly more than the previous quote, both quotes were presented to council with the increase being noted. Cllr Wardman proposed that council accept the new quote in order for works to be completed, this was seconded by Cllr Short, a vote was held which returned as unanimous in favour of accepting the new quote.

There was an update to council in respect of the application made to Durham County Council for 106 monies. The application had been successful with Esh Parish Council being awarded £15,700 towards the cost of the Bobby Robson play area refurbishment.

The clerk had received a phone call in relation to a quote from a contractor, the contractor has provided planting around the parish for a number of years and wanted an update on a quote that he had provided. Council discussed the quote, with Cllr Wardman proposing to inform the contractor that planting would be going ahead but here were amendments which need to be accounted for. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Moat and returned a unanimous vote. The clerk to inform the contractor of councils' decision.

The issue of the clerk's salary was raised from payroll, who had informed the clerk that the salary had remained stagnant since the appointment of the clerk in August 2023. The salary had recently increased due to the increase in the minimum wage, however the payroll accountant had highlighted that the wage of the cleaner had also increased in line with minimum wage and that the clerk was now on the same salary scale. Cllr Moat that this was a task for the HR committee and that until training had been completed the salary remain the same.

The report included an update from the 80th commemoration of VE day events, the coffee morning drop in had been successful and had been well attended in the morning but had waned in the afternoon. Left over cake and sweets had been donated to the care home in Langley Park. The window decoration was discussed as to how long to leave it up. The clerk mentioned due to the 80th VE commemoration it could be feasible to leave it until after armistice day in November and that there was also the 80th commemoration of VJ day in August. Cllr Short proposed that the window display to remain until after armistice day in November, this was seconded by Cllr Wardman, a vote was held, Cllrs Short, Wardman, Fairey, Walker, Quinn and Thompson voted in favour of keeping the window display, Cllrs Moat and Bloomfield abstained. Resolved the Window display will remain until after Remembrance Sunday in November.

From the park inspections the contractor had reported that the gate post had rotted and had snapped. He reported that the fence to the gate would also need to be replaced. The clerk had asked for quotes to replace the fence post and rehang the gate and another to replace the post and fence. As this is a safety issue it is a matter of urgency that the work is completed promptly and the quote for the post and fence was under £1000, therefore three quotes were not sought. However, the price quoted was beyond the remit for the clerk to sanction, which means that council will have to agree. Both quotes were circulated, Cllr Fairey proposed that because it was a safety issue that the gate post and fence be replaced, Cllr Short seconded this, a vote was held, Cllr Thompson abstained

from the vote, all remaining councillors voted in favour. Resolved – Clerk to contact contractor for work to be completed as soon as possible.

Resolved: Actions from the clerk's report noted

9. Schedule of meeting dates for the coming 12 months:

A schedule for meeting dates was distributed to council by the clerk for suitability. After consideration the council unanimously voted to accept the proposed meeting dates for the coming year.

Resolved: It be noted that the meeting schedule for the coming 12 months be accepted.

10. Policies:

There are updated versions of Financial Regulations and Standing Orders from NALC, these were circulated to council alongside the currently adopted Financial Regulations and Standing orders. Council was requested to look through all documents and decide which elements to keep from the currently adopted Financial Regulations and Standing Orders and which to adopt from the updated NALC versions. As all of the documentation is lengthy and needs time to be dedicated to the task, councillors were asked to take the documents away with them, read through them and another meeting was scheduled in which the documents would be discussed. The meeting is to be held on Wednesday 28th May, commencing at 6pm.

Ongoing: Councillors to examine documentation and bring recommendations to the meeting for discussion and the prospect of updating existing policies.

At this stage Cllr Moat mentioned that the HR committee would need to be re-elected and that ideal candidates would be people that had knowledge of employment law. Councillors that put themselves forward for roles within HR were Cllr Quinn, Cllr Wardman and Cllr Bloomfield. Cllr Walker proposed that these councillors be elected onto the HR committee, this was seconded by Cllr Moat and returned a unanimous vote in favour of these councillors being on the HR committee.

Resolved: Cllrs Quinn, Bloomfield and Wardman are elected to the HR committee.

11. Payments and bank reconciliation

The clerk distributed the accounts for month of April, council were given the opportunity to examine them. There had been a payment made for mole extermination, Cllr Moat raised a question if the mole problem had been eradicated, to which the answer was yea as the sites had been inspected. Cllr Walker raised an issue around the ethics of mole extermination, Cllr Moat said that this had been a discussion in an earlier meeting and that extermination was decided as the policy that council had adopted.

Resolved: Accounts are correct and accepted by Council.

Banner Group

Langley Park Banner Group had presented amended documentation to the clerk which was too late in which to be included on the agenda. Out of courtesy the matter was discussed at the end of the meeting when all other business had been conducted. The amended Memorandum of

Understanding was read by all councillors present at the meeting. Cllr Quinn proposed that the amended document be signed by Esh Parish Council, this was seconded by Cllr Fairey, a vote was held which was returned as unanimous.

Resolved: The Memorandum of Agreement documentation was agreed and signed by representatives of Esh Parish Council and Langley Park Banner Group.

12 Date of Ordinary Meeting

Date of the next Ordinary Meeting is for Esh Parish Council Wednesday 11th June 2025, 6pm, The Miners Institute.