



*The Council of the
Parish of Esh*

Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the council

Held on Wednesday 8th January 2025 at the Miners Institute, Langley Park

Meeting commenced at 6 p.m.

Item 1 Record of Attendance:

Cllr Ollie Moat (Chair), Cllr A. Wardman (Vice Chair), Cllr Edwin Simpson, Cllr Kathryn Thompson, Cllr Jackie Clark, Cllr C. Greenham-Denny, Cllr M. Quinn, Cllr J. Crumbie.

There was one member of the public present.

Item 2 Apologies for absence:

Cllr A. Walker, Cllr J. Duddy, Cllr P. Short, County Councillor B. Coult

Item 3 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Crumbie item 12.

Resolved: councillor items of interest noted

Item 4 Minutes of previous Ordinary meeting on 13th November 2024:

The minutes from the ordinary meeting held on December 11th 2024 had been circulated to councillors via email, prior to this meeting, they also had hard copies of the minutes to examine. It was proposed by Cllr Simpson that it be noted that the minutes are a true and accurate representation, this was seconded by Cllr Wardman.

Resolved: It be noted that the draft minutes are a true and accurate representation of the meeting on December 11th 2024.

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

There was a member of the public present, representing Langley Park Churchyard Group. They chose to decline the offer to speak at this point as their item of interest was on the agenda. The clerk had not received any communication from the public prior to the meeting.

Resolved: To accept the member of the public's wish to speak at the allotted point on the agenda.

Item 6 County Councillors report:

In her absence County Councillor Coult's report was circulated, the report had also been sent to councillors via email giving them the opportunity to read it prior to the meeting. The report included information on the closure date for applications from parents for children due to start school in September 25. There was information on grants available from Point North of up to £3000 to be used for organisations and a thank you to DCC staff that kept the road network open during the recent snow and extreme cold weather. There was also a reminder of the danger of placing batteries and vapes in bins, which once crushed by the bin lorry become flammable, setting the lorry on fire, unfortunately this is becoming a common occurrence. There was also information on scam texts being circulated reportedly from DCC about paying Penalty Charge Notices. Local issues included parking, there have been Enforcement visits prior to Christmas where fines were issued, these are set to continue sporadically throughout the coming months.

Cllr Simpson let it be known to thank County Cllr Coult for her comprehensive report in her absence, this was seconded by Cllr Clark.

Resolved: to accept County Councillor Coult's report.

Item 7 Clerks' report:

The clerks report included an update on FOI request, this was responded to with the information requested, within the specified time frame. This was accepted by the requestee and has been noted.

The report included a breakdown of the costs of Christmas events that were hosted by Esh Parish Council. The Christmas Afternoon Tea and Santa Sleigh run were both well received by parishioners with lots of positive feedback. The report also thanked councillors and members of the public that had volunteered their time to make both events happen. Cllr Moat provided information that the member of the public who volunteered his time and owns the Santa Sleigh has discussed his intention to sell the sleigh. Cllr Moat suggested that when the time comes for the sale, Esh Parish Council consider the purchase of the Santa Sleigh for use in future years. There were selection boxes which were surplus to requirements, some were donated to local churches with the rest being donated to The Salvation Army.

Setting up for room bookings and clearing away tables and chairs afterwards can sometimes be problematic because not all groups that use the hall, clear away tables and chairs. This becomes a health and safety issue when the chairs are stacked in the main hall. It is a standing expectation from some groups that the hall is set up for them. There was discussion around this, Cllr Moat proposed that a discreet charge of £5 be added to the hiring fee when booking for this due to the time taken to set up the hall and that this should be explained at the time of booking. Cllr Clark seconded the proposal, which returned a unanimous vote.

The clerk made a call to councillors on behalf of Cllr Greenham-Denny with regards to articles for Esh Leaves and photographs taken from Christmas events. It was also discussed that there be an article on the election process to make it clear to parishioners.

The clerk has received a quote for insurance renewal which includes a price for renewing for one year and a lower price per year for entering into a 3-year contract with the company. Cllr Moat proposed that council accept the quote for 3 years, this was seconded by Cllr Clark and returned a unanimous vote.

The clerks report also contained information regarding use of rooms at The Miner's Institute over the next month to inform councillors of opening and closing when required.

Resolved: To accept clerks report

Item 8 Precept and Budget:

The clerk presented a budget to council, that examined the spend in the current and previous financial years and included projected costs for the financial year 2025/26. The projected costs included running and maintenance costs for the Miner's Institute and area owned by Esh Parish Council around the Parish of Esh. The forecasted spend saw a little increase over that of the current financial year, however not substantial enough to increase the precept. Therefore, the clerk saw no need for the precept to be increased. Cllr Moat proposed that the precept remain the same as in previous years and noted that there had not been an increase since 2021 and that this should be conveyed to the public via Facebook once the necessary documentation was completed and forwarded to County. Cllr Simpson seconded this proposal which returned a unanimous vote.

Resolved: Clerk to complete necessary paperwork regarding the precept and return it to the County Council.

Item 9 Churchyard Project;

The newly appointed chair of The Churchyard Project in Langley Park introduced themselves and included history and the aims of the group. Esh Parish Council were informed of the name change to Langley Park Churchyard Group and that they had been running for a year, however, they now have a constitution and an elected chair. When the group was formed the churchyard was in a state of disrepair with graves flattened for health and safety purposes, there are no paths and much of the churchyard is inaccessible. The potential for the churchyard as a wildlife haven was recognised and there have been wild bird and wild flower counts that have taken place over the past year. The local primary school have conducted a bug count and looked at the bio-diversity of species on display in the churchyard. The history of the church and churchyard was that they were built to support the mining community within Langley Park and the last people to be buried there was in the 1980's which was a little after the closure of the local mine.

The aims of Langley Park Churchyard group are to improve the space so that it is a safe green space for people to enjoy and observe the bio-diversity of the habitat. To preserve the habitat to encourage more wildlife. The final aim for the group is to recognise remembrance and heritage, providing a record of all of the graves, cross-referenced with burial records to ensure ease of finding resting places of ancestral family members. They have a staged approach of work to be carried out, the main one to get the paths cleared and install seating for people to enjoy the space.

In light of the costs involved it was suggested that once the group has the necessary evidence to support, i.e. bank account, evidence of AGM then Langley Park Churchyard group could apply to Esh Parish Council for a grant of up to £500.

Ongoing: to keep clerk informed of progress made and supply documentation when sought for a grant from Esh Parish Council

Item 10 Christmas Events:

Esh parish Council hosted events over the Christmas period, which were very successful. The events were an afternoon tea on 13th December and the annual Santa Sleigh over the weekend of the 21st and 22nd December, with the first night being around Langley Park and the second around the rest of

the Parish of Esh. Over the weekend Santa and his Elves delivered over 500 selection boxes to the children of the parish and around 400 additional small gifts to younger children. Collections were taken over both nights of the Santa sleigh which raised £242.16p for DH7 Community Events. Esh Parish Council would like to thank all of the volunteers, both from the public and parish council who gave their time and equipment to ensure that these events took place.

The Christmas lights around the parish had posed several issues, Esh Parish Council had received complaints about the tree at Esh Village only having 50 lights on it. The lights of the tree in Langley Park were also quite sparse compared to previous years. There was discussion around the fact of the tree looking spindly and the possibility of it needed to be groomed and maybe have the crown raised to make it bushier.

The clerk had received an enquiry from the new proprietor of the One Stop Shop as to why his shop didn't have the parcels like the rest of the village shops. This was conveyed to council and it was also discussed that several other businesses have new proprietors and that they could be approached to see if they want to take part in the lighting scheme for next Christmas. Esh Parish Council wishes to take this opportunity to thank the shops and businesses within Langley Park that take part and supply electricity to the lights, enabling the centre of the village to look festive.

Resolved: Clerk to contact light contractors for a date for the removal of the lights and a debrief meeting date to discuss issues that arose from Christmas period.

Item 11 Baby Room Tenancy Review:

The tenancy review for Building Bearpark Community Partnership is due for renewal. The group run a baby bank in the Miner's Institute. The tenancy was initially agreed on the group changing its name as having Bearpark in the title was thought to be limiting and might restrict usage of the baby bank. The group have now changed their name to Building Better Community Partnerships, which has removed the use of Bearpark. Council agreed that the tenancy run for another six months with no rent increase. This was proposed by Cllr Moat and seconded by Cllr Clark and returned a unanimous vote.

Resolved: Building Better Community Partnership has had their lease extended for six months.

Item 12 Small Holding – annual tenancy review:

Esh Parish Council owns four small holdings within Langley Park. Each of the smallholdings is tenanted with the tenants paying varying amounts dependant on the size of their plot. Three of the rates will remain the same whilst it was discussed that one small holding which the rent had remained the same throughout the current tenant's tenure of many years needed to be brought in line with the rents that other tenants were paying for their smallholdings. This was conveyed to the tenant last year when the rent was paid in 2024. It was decided that the rent be increased to £150 per annum and that for the current year it could be paid in instalments. This was proposed by Cllr Moat and seconded by Cllr Simpson. Cllr Crumbie abstained from the vote. The remaining councillors voted unanimously in favour of the rent increase.

Resolved: Clerk to prepare documentation and covering letter and send to tenants of the small holdings.

Item 13: Councillor Training – CDALC election training

In light of forthcoming elections in May, CDALC, the governing body for parish councils in Durham have highlighted training for clerks and councillors. The training will take part over two sessions, one face to face and the other via zoom. This was conveyed to councillors with the clerk taking preferences for format of training. Councillors preferring face to face were Cllrs, Clark, Greenham Denny, Quinn also the clerk preferred this method of delivery. Cllrs Moat, Wardman and Crumbie preferred zoom.

Resolved: The Clerk to book councillors through the relevant channels.

Item 14: Grass cutting

The clerk has approached several companies in regards to providing quotes for grass cutting around the parish over 2025. As yet the clerk is awaiting replies from these companies. Therefore, this item will be deferred until next month.

Resolved: Item deferred until next month

Item 15: 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.

Item 14. Date of next ordinary meeting:

The date of the next ordinary meeting for Esh Parish Council is Wednesday 12th February 2025.