



Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the council

Held on Wednesday 10th September 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, Cllr A. Walker, Cllr P. Short, K. Harbisher (Clerk)

2 representatives from the Neighbourhood Warden team

1 representative from Police and Crime Commissioners Office.

There were 4 members of the public present.

Item 2 Apologies for absence:

Cllr M. Quinn.

Item 3 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr O. Moat items 13 and 15, Cllr J. Clark item 13 and 16, Cllr A. Walker item 10, K. Harbisher item 13

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 8th July 2025 had been circulated to councillors via email, prior to this 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 Fairey.

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 four members of the public present, two members of the banner group and two members of Langley Park Pigeon Club.

The representatives from Langley Park Pigeon Club were allocated an item on the agenda but chose to speak at this point. They requested that the old allotment shop which is unused at the moment, be taken over by Langley Park Pigeon Club to be used for the basketing pigeons prior to being transported for races, storing the baskets and centre for clocking in times after a race. Langley Park Pigeon club are currently carrying this out at New Brancepeth due to their building in Langley Park not being fit for purpose. The gentlemen said that they would maintain the building and would clear it in order for it to be used. Cllr Moat enquired about insurance. It is to be arranged for the representatives to meet with the clerk at the premises to see if it is suitable for their needs. Details were passed to the clerk and the two men left the meeting.

One of the Banner Group representatives was pleased to announce that the group had been successful with their bid from the National Heritage Lottery Fund and had been awarded 14,742. And invited councillors to the public meeting that was being held on Monday 15th September at Langley Park Working Men's Club.

There were two members of the neighbourhood warden team present at the meeting. They enquired about issues that were happening within the parish. There were several issues which council highlighted that needed addressing;

- Cllr Moat mentioned issues around Langley Park such as the amounts of unused vehicles in an area of Langley Park, these vehicles present as being unused as they do not move and have flat tyres and their owner doesn't live near where they are parked.
- Bikes on the Rec, both mountain and electric bikes are being used and churning up the ground making large holes which then are hazardous to people walking on the Rec. There have also been incidents where the ground has been dug, this has been used to create bike jumps which again are hazardous to people walking. Over the summer there were a series of fires started, mainly youths setting fire to the heather which have had to be extinguished by the fire brigade. It was mentioned that the main problem was during the summer with the nights being light and children being out for longer hours and after school time seemed to be the time when the most activity was occurring. The youths when challenged were abusive and threatening and parents condoning the actions of their children with the same behaviour. The wardens said that they would make sure that there would be regular patrols around the Rec and that all shifts would make it a priority.
- Fly tipping around Langley Park which the neighbourhood wardens were aware of as some of it had been taped and was awaiting collection from the clean and green team.
- The camera at Bobby Robson, was it able to be focused on the park because of the issues that had happened in the past. Council was advised that they can make a request to Chilton, the base where the cameras are linked and footage reviewed, to have the camera at Bobby Robson focused on the park. Council was also advised that they can obtain footage of the camera working which may be used as a deterrent in future.
- Dog faeces around the parish is a problem, wardens advised that fixed penalty notices can be issued to perpetrators who do not clear up after their dogs and that if witnessed people can report it via the Do it online section of Durham County Councils website, if people have photographic or video evidence to support, this can be uploaded alongside a witness statement.
- Cllr Bloomfield mentioned an issue with Bridleway 34 and a permissive right of way. The gate leading to the permissive path has been locked and an unknown substance has been

smeared on the gate, presumably to prevent people from climbing over it. The incident had been reported to The Health and Safety Executive.

All of the issues that were raised by council were noted by wardens. They advised that they would be looked into and council would receive updates via the clerk.

Ongoing: Clerk to meet with Langley Park pigeon club to see if the old allotment shop is suitable for their needs. Information from the neighbourhood wardens to be relayed to council once updates are available. Clerk to include these wardens within invitations to parish meetings.

Item 6 County Councillors Report:

Councillors were given copies of County Councillor Neils report to examine in County Councillor Neil's absence. The report had also been distributed via email prior to the meeting. The report included information about various updates to additions around Langley Park such as the approval of double yellow lines at the following locations;

- Front Street
- Langley Street
- Beech Court
- Browney Court
- Railway Street

Some of these new lines (Beech Court and Railway Street) formalise current white lines as a no stopping at any time zone with the introduction of these lines. The others are being put in place to improve traffic flow and movement on those streets and prevent any blocked access or obscured view at the entrances to these roads. There was also news that the bus stop opposite Premier will be repaired as there was a pane of glass which was broken.

Resolved: To accept County Councillor Neils' report

Item 7 PCSO Report:

PCSO Hart had intended on attending the meeting, however, because of circumstances beyond her control she sent her apologies. Maria Daniels from the Police and Crime Commissioners Office was in attendance. PCSO Hart had sent a report which was available to councillors as both a hard copy and distributed via email. The report included advice about protecting motorbikes as there has been an increased number of motorbike thefts within the force area. On a local note, the report mentioned how many incidents of anti-social behaviour had been reported, with the majority of these being for the illegal use of off-road bikes. The police are formulating an operation which will target the use of off-road bikes. The public are urged to report any incidents of this to 101 and if they have footage of the off-road bikes this will be appreciated. The report included information of a theft of oil from Esh C of E school in July, all lines of enquiry has been followed, however no suspect was identified.

A representative from the Police and Crime Commissioners Office was present at the meeting she said there was a policing guarantee to increase the amount of police presence on the street. She said that residents are encouraged to report any incidents to 101, this means that the police can use all reports for intelligence gathering when planning on making an arrest. Off road bikes were mentioned as there is an issue with them in Langley Park. Again, the public are urged to report all incidents of off road and electric bikes to 101, especially if they are able to name the rider or know where the bikes are kept. The situation is county wide and as previously mentioned police are mounting an operation to target the use of off-road bikes.

Resolved : to accept PCSO Hart's report and thank the representative from the Police and Crime Commissioners office for attending the meeting.

Item 8 Allotment Shop – Langley Park Pigeon Association.

Discussed during item 5, public raising matters of interest.

Item 18 HR Committee (Brought forward)

The item was brought forward due to health issues with Cllr Wardman. Cllr Wardman and Cllr Bloomfield have formed a HR sub-committee. They have met twice since forming. Cllr Wardman presented Terms of Reference that she had drafted that were relevant to the needs of Esh Parish Council. Cllr Wardman proposed that the HR committee meet four times per year and that they require an extra member, Cllr Fairey volunteered to become the third member. It was agreed that any changes and updates to the appraisal process be brought to council for approval. The clerk is to research CDALC for HR training for committee members. Cllr Wardman proposed that council accept the HR terms of reference, Cllr Moat seconded the proposal, a vote was taken which returned as unanimous.

Resolved; Council accepted Cllr Wardman's proposed HR terms of reference, Cllr Fairey to join HR committee.

Cllr Wardman left the meeting at this point in the proceedings

Item 9 Clerks Report:

The clerks' report included updates to council regarding the banking app being placed on to a generic office mobile, as two people are required to process transactions when performing online transactions. Having a device with the app installed would enable councillors to perform transactions alongside the clerk, who is the designated Responsible Financial Officer for Esh Parish Council. The clerk has enabled this by having an office mobile prepared to download the necessary information. The Clerk made enquiries with the bank, however the bank has said that the app is assigned to an individual rather than a generic phone and that the person must be a signatory on the account. The clerk was requesting permission to have Cllr Thompson as a signatory on the account. There was a discussion as to the type of account was held by Esh Parish Council and it was thought that maybe the account is not suitable for the needs of Esh Parish Council. It was thought that an account similar to those in the charity sector was more appropriate. The clerk is to contact Co op Bank to see about changing the status of the accounts held with them.

There was an update of 106 monies that are available for use in community projects, this is from the construction of the Dere Street Homes estate on the outskirts of Langley Park.

The clerk has completed FILCA training and has completed two modules of ILCA, with a view to register on CILCA in January.

The clerk has supported residents within the parish with accessing the right service for their needs. There was a query regarding contracts, if Esh Parish Council are happy with the service that the contractor provides would the process be to always obtain three quotes. This was discussed and it was thought that in some instances a rolling contract is a cheaper option, therefore current contractors would be encouraged to tender for the work and if prices were similar to those before then rolling contracts could be awarded.

Some people had mentioned that as the Miner's Institute is a public building then should it display a flag. There was a discussion around this and it was thought that due to public feeling and political connotations from displaying a flag, it was best not to at the moment.

Crescent homes had held a fundraising event in the Miner's Institute and raised £873 which will be donated to Willowburn Hospice, Crescent homes thanked Esh Parish Council for their support with the fundraising event.

Resolved ; To accept the report of the clerk.

Item 10 Banner Group Exhibition:

Council were informed that the Banner Group Exhibition of the 50th anniversary of Langley Park Pit closing would run from 25th October until 7th November. A proposal from the banner group with regards to the display had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. The concern from council was the damage that would occur from using wall fixings to display the photographs. Council were informed that it is common practice after an exhibition that any damage is repaired and the area painted over. The exhibition was to include photographs from photographer which are generic pit photos from the Durham area and also to include photos from Beamish Museum which are of Langley Park village and pit. The banner group are recommending that the exhibition be in the Miner's Institute due to the purpose of the building to be used for miners and their families.

Council have been informed that when the exhibition is taking part, members from the banner group will invigilate. It was mentioned that display boards could be used to prevent damage to walls these would not be as static as a wall display and would need to be moved around to accommodate other users of the hall, because of this Cllr Clark proposed that during the two weeks of the exhibition, the banner group have sole use of the hall and regular bookings for the hall be cancelled. Cllr Fairey seconded the proposal, a vote was held, Cllr Walker had declared an interest, therefore did not vote. All other councillors present voted in support of the proposal.

Resolved: The clerk to contact regular bookings to inform them of the closure of the hall over the time period of 25th Oct – 7th Nov.

Item 11 Bobby Robson update + trees + fence + signage

Three contractors had been contacted with regards to removing two birch trees and one ash tree from the Bobby Robson play area due to the ash tree having ash die back and the birch trees obscuring the view from the CCTV camera present at the park. All three contractors had supplied quotes which were given to councillors. The quotes were anonymised as was discussed in a previous meeting. The quotes were discussed and it was proposed by Cllr Moat that the second of the quotes be accepted Cllr Short seconded the proposal a vote was held, Cllr Walker abstained all other councillors present voted in favour of the second contractor being awarded the contract. Cllr Walker had abstained as he said it was impossible to vote for something that he had no idea of who the contractors were, he could be voting for a contractor who had given poor workmanship in the past. Therefore, a discussion arose around the anonymisation of quotes. It was decided that moving forward that quotes would not be anonymised and councillors would know who the contractors were.

In terms of the fence, it was decided that there should be community engagement around the removal of the fence and hedge.

Ongoing: Clerk to inform contractor of awarding of the contract to take down the trees and schedule a date for that to happen. All quotes in future will not be anonymised and a letter wrote to streets around Bobby Robson to inform residents of the proposed changes to the fence surrounding Bobby Robson.

Item 12 Playdale

Councillors were querying the invoice from Playdale, there are several changes from the initial quote in February to the final quote in May. Council is aware that changes need to be made with some items being removed to compensate for the extra costs incurred from extra waste removal from the substrate under the old surface in the park. However, it seems that other items on the quote have been increased. Questions were raised about it being a clerical error on Playdales part. Cllr Moat proposed that the clerk alongside Cllrs Clark and Thompson compose an email raising the query with Playdale and bring it back to the next meeting of Esh Parish Council.

Ongoing: Clerk to arrange a time convenient for all concerned to compose the email to Playdale.

Item 13 Grant Application for Langley Park WI and Langley Park Allotments Association:

Grant applications were received from both Langley Park WI and Langley Park Allotments Association. Copies of both applications were available for councillors to examine. For the WI application, the clerk, Cllrs Moat and Clark had declared interests. Cllr Moat had left the room at this point. Cllr Bloomfield proposed that the grant be awarded to Langley Park Wiand was seconded by Cllr Thompson, a vote was held which returned as all remaining councillors voting in favour of the grant being awarded.

Cllr Moat re-entered the room for the second grant proposal. Cllr Clark proposed that the grant be awarded to Langley Park Allotments Association, this was seconded by Cllr Moat an returned a unanimous vote.

Resolved: Clerk to contact both organisations and inform them of grants being awarded to them

Item 14 Hanging Baskets:

It was brought to the attention of the clerk that not all of the shops were displaying hanging baskets. The clerk contacted the contractor and was informed that some of the brackets in situ were no longer suitable for the weight of the baskets and that some of the building owners had refused to have the hanging baskets up on their premises. It was decided that the baskets around Langley Park be counted and cross referenced with an inventory from the contractor where the baskets had been placed, also an inventory of the original locations of the baskets. It was also thought that the clerk was to contact the landlord of the buildings to ascertain why they no longer wanted hanging baskets and to emphasise that all contact of this this nature should be made through the clerk rather than the contractor.

Ongoing: Clerk to contact the contractor in reference to how many hanging baskets and original locations. Clerk to count hanging baskets around Langley Park. Clerk to make contact with the landlord of the buildings that didn't want the hanging baskets placed on their building.

Item 15: Allotments

Esh Parish Council have received a request from a tenant of a large allotment to keep pygmy goats on the large allotment. The tenant has assured that they have all of the documentation from DEFRA needed to register and keep pygmy goats. He also assured council that there was sufficient space for the goats and that all husbandry needs were met. Cllr Moat left the room as she had declared an interest and did not want to be part of the discussion. The discussion that ensued was about the goats being a farm animal and large allotments were for poultry and rabbits as per the tenancy agreement which had been signed by the large allotment holder and by the tenant being granted permission this would set a precedence for all large allotments holders to have large animals. Cllr Clark proposed that no permission be granted on the grounds of setting a precedence for other large allotment holders. This was seconded by Cllr Short and returned a vote in favour of supporting permission not being granted with Cllrs Walker, Short, Bloomfield, Fairey and Clark making that vote. Cllr Thompson was out of the room when the vote was taken.

Resolved: Clerk to contact tenant and convey the wishes of council.

Item 16 Cllr Clark training

Cllr Clark has expressed an interest in carrying out training which will allow her to take the lead with allotment inspections and matters arising from those. The two courses which Cllr Clark has shown interest in attending are Allotment Management: Tenancy Agreements and Policies and Allotment Management: Site facilities and Health and Safety. Both courses are online. Cllr Moat proposed that Cllr Clark attend both courses, this was seconded by Cllr Thompson and returned a unanimous vote in favour.

Resolved: The clerk to book Cllr Clark onto both online course and inform Cllr Clark of the details.

Item 17: New Councillor Training.

CDALC are offering training to new councillors and those who want to refresh their knowledge. The information for this training had been circulated to councillors when it was made available to the clerk. Cllrs Wardman and Bloomfield had requested that the clerk book places on their behalf prior to this meeting. Cllrs Fairey and Walker have prior arrangements and can't make the training. Cllr Short has expressed interest in attending at this meeting.

Resolved; Clerk to make booking for Cllr Short and enquire if this training runs at other times of the year in order for all new councillors to participate in training.

Item 18: HR Committee

As discussed earlier in the minutes.

Item 19 Policies for adoption

There were two policies that the clerk requested be adopted by council. Both had been circulated via email prior to the meeting. There were hard copies available in councillor packs on the night. Cllr Moat requested that the policies be taken and read thoroughly and brought back to the next meeting due to time constraints at the current meeting.

Ongoing: Policies to be read by councillors and brought to the meeting in October.

Item 20: Upcoming Events – Halloween, Armistice Day, Christmas.

This item was deferred until next month. There will be no Halloween events this year due to the 50th commemoration event of the closure of Langley Park Pit which is held by the Banner Group. Therefore, the other events mentioned can be deferred for the meeting month.

Ongoing: deferred until next month

Item 21: Payments to be made and bank reconciliation

The clerk distributed information on payments made, payments outstanding and bank balances for councillors to take note. The prepayment for Christmas lights is still outstanding. Clerk to chase up final bill for this as changes had been made to the order and there was no receipt of costs incurred from changes made.

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

Item 22: Date of next ordinary meeting:

The date of the next ordinary meeting for Esh Parish Council is Wednesday 8th October 2025.