



*The Council of the  
Parish of Esh*

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

**Held on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 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 P. Short, Cllr J. Crumbie, Cllr J. Clark, Cllr M. Quinn, County Councillor B. Coult, K. Harbisher (clerk)

There was one member of the public present.

**Item 2 Apologies for absence:**

Cllr A. Walker, Cllr E. Simpson, Cllr C Greenham-Denny.

Councillor J. Duddy failed to respond regarding intentions

**Item 3 Declarations of Interest:**

Cllr Crumbie items 10,15,18, Cllr Moat item 8, County Cllr Coult item 7

Resolved: councillor items of interest noted

**Item 4 Minutes of previous Ordinary meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025:**

The minutes from the ordinary meeting held on 12<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 Short that it be noted that the minutes are a true and accurate representation, this was seconded by Cllr Crumbie.

Resolved: It be noted that the draft minutes are a true and accurate representation of the meeting on February 12<sup>th</sup> 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 public was asked by the chair if they wanted their item which was on the agenda brought forward. This was agreed by the member of the public.

The member of the public held responsibility of being the treasurer of the group that erected the statue of the miner which is situ in the Langley Park. They had brought a matter to the attention of Esh Parish Council regarding custodianship of the statue. During the campaign to purchase the statue and acquire permission for siting, the group had met with Esh Parish Council, who consisted of councillors who have since relinquished their roles as parish councillors. The group representative was certain that Esh Parish Council at that time had agreed to become custodians of the statue and maintain the statue over its lifetime. However, the representative had no written documentation to back the claim. Cllr Moat had expressed that she had looked in previous minutes and couldn't find documented evidence of where this agreement had been made. The representative was uncertain of the date and had assumed that Esh Parish Council were custodians of the statue, which is now in need of some maintenance. The representative mentioned some of the names of county and parish councillors who she thought were present at the meeting, which might help to pinpoint a time frame. It was also thought that the clerk contact organisation such as AAP and DCC to trace when funding had been applied for. County Councillor Coult suggested a contact be made to DCC planning to establish when permission had been granted for the statue. It was mentioned that the statue was not listed on Esh Parish Council's asset register and the implications around insurance and maintenance costs needed to be addressed. It was agreed that the clerk would seek to establish a time frame when permission from DCC had been sought, which would enable archived minutes to be searched. The representative was going to forward the manufacturer of the statue details to the clerk so that worth could be sought for insurance purposes and the costs for maintenance could be sought also.

Ongoing: Clerk to make contact to establish a timeframe for further research in archived minutes.

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

The report from County Councillor Coult was circulated prior to the meeting for councillors to examine, there were also hard copies available during the meeting. County Councillor Coult mentioned that there one thing to add to the report, that there was going be a road closure affecting Woodland Road from the bend at the Board Inn. This is for emergency work to trees to take place. The report included county wide information and update of local issues such as a new dog bin being installed between Birch Grove and the Lanchester Valley Walk, double yellow lines have been extended to cover the rear of Church Street. Issues around GNE bus services in Langley Park have been escalated to relevant officers at DCC, who are seeking improvements to the service. There are numerous telegraph poles being installed around Langley Park by Openreach. At Esh Village, the overgrown area around the VAS sign has been cut back. There are current improvements to the top/ mid-section of Fold Road at Quebec which started W/C 10<sup>th</sup> March. Upcoming works to improve parking at Quebec Street in Langley Park is due to commence. There will be a decision made by the Highways committee over the proposed speed cushions for Low Moor Road on 21<sup>st</sup> March. A local resident has been fined £991 for fly tipping. There are also details of the Big Spring Clean Event taking place on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March which County Councillor Coult has paid thanks to Esh Parish Council for providing a base for the event to take place.

A question was raised over the use of land which had been recently sold, as a rumour had circulated that it was going to be used to build 400 houses. County Councillor Coult said as far as she was aware that this land was only for the purposes of keeping livestock.

Cllr Moat thanked County Councillor Coult for her report which was seconded by Cllr Clark.

Resolved: to accept County Councillor Coult's report.

**Item 7 Clerks' report:**

The current accountant that provides payroll for Esh Parish Council is set to retire in April. The clerk to the accountant who conducts payroll on behalf of the accountant has offered to take it over, providing the same level of service for a similar cost to Esh Parish Council. The clerk has looked into providing this in house, however set up costs for software and registering with relevant bodies make it expensive and onerous. Cllr Moat proposed that Esh Parish Council continue with the services already provided, this was seconded by Cllr Clark. A vote was taken which was returned as unanimous.

The report covered information for the upcoming Council and Parish Elections with information of conduct during the election and purdah period. There was also information of which councillors had attended election training from CDALC.

There was also an update from the Allotments Association regarding issues which were highlighted in last month's meeting. An update from the clerks and cleaners review was given to council. It was mentioned that the cleaner is pleased with the location of the new cupboard which houses her equipment and has a sluice sink for her to use, this is better for her as it is lower and eliminates using the sinks in the kitchen. It was mentioned by council about keeping a sweeping brush, blue roll and a dust pan and brush in the old cleaner's cupboard for people to use when hiring the hall to tidy after themselves.

The clerk updated council to contractors that had been approached for installing a projector in the main hall. Three contractors had been approached, however to date, one has visited the hall and is compiling a quote. The location of the screen was discussed because if the Langley Park Banner was to be stored in The Miner's Institute, would this not be located on the wall where potentially the projector screen would be. There were questions as to the need for a projector, Cllr Moat suggested that it could be used for movie nights and for conferences as the hall is booked for training purposes on occasion, this was agreed at a previous meeting.

The report included a thank you from the clerk to all parish councillors that had helped in the delivery of Esh Leaves, and an update of the contractor commissioned to deal with mole extermination on problem areas around the parish.

There is a hostess trolley used by groups in hall which is the property of Cllr Moat, the trolley is well used and there was a suggestion that one be purchased by Esh Parish Council for use of people hiring the hall and for parish events such as afternoon tea. The cost of the hostess trolley is £60, it was proposed by Cllr Moat that Esh Parish Council purchase a hostess trolley, this was seconded by Cllr Clark, a vote was held which was returned as unanimously in favour of the motion. Clerk to order a hostess for use in the hall.

There was a programme for the monthly bookings of both the main hall and parish room at The Miner's Institute for councillors to make note of. Cllr Moat thanked the clerk for the report.

Resolved: To accept clerks report

### **Item 8 Memorandum (Banner Group):**

A Memorandum of Understanding was distributed amongst council, which, explained a proposed adoption of custodianship of the banner to Esh Parish Council. This memorandum commits Esh Parish Council to having responsibility of the maintenance, insurance and storage of the banner post hand over by the banner group. Councillors read the memorandum and were unhappy with some of the proposals that it made due to it not being a joint decision by both parties. Cllr Clark raised the issue of costs to Esh Parish Council and that these additional costs should be factored into funding bids for a lengthy period after hand over takes place. Cllr Moat suggested that the banner be displayed in a protective case which would protect against damage from people examining it and light damage. Cllr Thompson raised the issue of the strength of the walls within the Miner's Institute to take such a weight of case and banner. It was suggested that the language used in the memorandum of understanding was tying Esh Parish Council into caring for and maintaining the banner and that council were not happy as this was not drafted through mutual consent. Cllr Wardman proposed that the Memorandum of Understanding in its current form be sent back to the banner group as it suggests that Esh Parish Council adopt all responsibility, Cllr Short seconded this proposal, a vote was held which Cllr Moat abstained from, the decision amongst remaining councillors was unanimous that in its present format, the Memorandum of Understanding be rejected by Esh Parish Council and that the clerk contact The Banner Group to arrange a meeting of The Banner Group and Esh Parish Council to discuss the matter further.

Resolved: Clerk to contact The Banner Group to convey the thoughts of Esh Parish Council and arrange a meeting at a time that is mutually beneficial to all concerned.

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

This agenda item was discussed during item 5. It is thought that the same principles apply to this as in the previous item, where Esh Parish Council signs a formal document that has been drawn by mutual consent.

Ongoing: clerk to contact DCC to establish when planning permission was sought in order to research through archived minutes.

### **Item 10 Allotments and Smallholding Inspections**

The inspections of the allotments managed by Langley Park Allotments Association and the smallholdings held by Esh Parish Council is due in April. County Councillor Coult mentioned that in her capacity as secretary to Langley Park Allotments Association, their internal inspections were almost at an end. Cllr Moat requested councillors to assist with inspections, Cllrs Thompson, Clark and Short expressed an interest in assisting. The clerk to liaise with LP AA to arrange a time for the inspections to take place, possibly around Easter.

Resolved: Clerk to contact LPAA to arrange possible dates.

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

### **Item 11 Grant Applications:**

The clerk has received grant applications from Quebec Village Hall in support of their Wednesday Afternoon Club and from Langley Park Allotments Association. The merits of each application were discussed. The WAC happens on a fortnightly basis and provides people with a free meal and entertainment. There were testimonials of enjoyment from attendees in support of the WAC. Cllr Thompson proposed that an award of £500 be given to Quebec Village Hall that enabled WAC to continue, Cllr Clark seconded this proposal and returned a unanimous vote.

LPAA have applied for a grant to help with the hire of skips to enable allotment holders to tidy their allotment in preparation for the growing period. It was noted that Langley Park Community Garden had received a grant during this financial year, as they are a separate entity to Langley Park Allotments Association it was proposed by Cllr Thompson that LPAA receive a grant of £500 this was seconded by Cllr Clark, Cllr Crumbie abstained from the vote, all other councillors voted in favour.

Resolved: The clerk to contact both Quebec Village Hall and Langley Park Allotments Association to inform them of council decisions.

### **Item 12 Bobby Robson Park Refurbishment:**

Esh Parish Council has sought quotes for the refurbishment of Bobby Robson play area. It was decided that a full overhaul of the park was not needed therefore some existing equipment will be kept and new play equipment will be added alongside resurfacing to the enclosed area. The plans and quote were available for councillors to examine. There were questions raised about replacing the benches in the park, it was decided that new benches and picnic tables be ordered as they would have to be installed prior to the surfacing work taking place. One of the items of play equipment need to have panels replaced and the clerk was to contact Wicksteed for prices. Cllr Clark proposed that the work go ahead to refurbish Bobby Robson play area, this proposal was seconded by Cllr Short, a unanimous vote was returned supporting the refurbishment of Bobby Robson play area.

Resolved: Clerk to contact contractor to inform them and to establish a date for installation. Clerk to order new benches and picnic tables prior in order for installation prior to refurbishment date.

### **Item 13: Flowering for the Parish.**

Cllr Moat requested the item to be included on the agenda. The clerk had been tasked with establishing the requirements of planting from Esh Village Residents Association, they require planting for three tiered planters, 7 tubs at various locations in Esh Village and two sinks on the green, in addition to this the requirements from the rest of the parish are as follows:

Quebec – 3 large planters around the Village. 4 hanging baskets at the village hall. 3 hanging baskets at The Quebec Tea Rooms.

Langley Park – 34 hanging baskets, two large tubs outside of The Miners Institute, around the Christmas tree and cenotaph.

The clerk was tasked with asking businesses which had recently changed ownership if they wanted to be part of the planting scheme around the village.

It was mentioned that the large planters out side of the Miner's Institute were worn and worse for wear. Cllr Moat proposed that new planters be sought, preferably made from recycled plastic with

notification stating that they were recycled. Councillors looked through a catalogue and it was decided that a bench with planters at either side be ordered. Cllr Clark seconded the proposal; a vote was held which returned as being unanimously in favour.

Resolved: The Clerk to contact company and order bench with planters

#### **Item 14: Planters for Parish**

This was discussed in the previous itemed agenda point. The clerk is to contact contractors for quotes to supply, plant and water planters and baskets around the parish

Resolved: Clerk to contact contractors to obtain quotes.

#### **Item 15: Allotment Shop:**

The keys to the allotment shop which was once ran by Langley Park Garden Association were handed back to Esh Parish Council. The plot where the shop stands is unsuitable for cultivation or to hold livestock on due to soil contamination. It was though that the shop area could be used for storage but need to be cleared first. There was a discussion around the potential use of the area and that an agreement should be drafted to reflect what the area could become, that is storage for personal or business use. The discussion led to whether it could be for business storage due to its location, vehicular access is limited and has the potential to block access for other users. Cllr Clark mentioned that there was the potential that the area could be used for storage by the Community Garden, however, the fence is need of repair and the containers presently on site would need to be removed, which might prove to be costly as one of them is constructed of fibreglass, which would need careful and correct disposal, the clerk is to seek quotes for this.

Cllr Moat proposed that once the inspections for the smallholdings and allotments are out of the way, the allotment shop area is to be photographed to establish what needs to be done. Cllr Clark seconded this; a unanimous vote was returned.

Ongoing: Clerk to make seek quotes for removal work once established the level of clearance to be achieved.

As the time was now 8pm, Cllr Wardman requested that the meeting be extended by 30 minutes.

#### **16 Contractors list:**

Cllr Crumbie suggested that a contractors list be set up and advertised on Esh Parish Council's website and Facebook page, this would give contractors the opportunity to add their details to the list, therefore when needed there are contractors available to use for parish council business. Cllr Crumbie advised that the list could be updated on a quarterly basis. This was proposed by Cllr Crumbie and seconded by Cllr Wardman, a vote was held which returned as unanimous.

Resolved: Clerk to compose an advertisement for the website and Facebook which encourages contractors to send or bring their details to the clerk. This list will be kept on file and would not be subject to publication.

#### **17 VE Day Celebrations**

VE Day is 8<sup>th</sup> May. It was discussed that Esh Parish Council could an afternoon tea to commemorate VE Day, this would be a ticketed event similar to the afternoon tea held at Christmas, this limits

numbers of people who can attend. Therefore, it was also discussed that it could be a drop in event which would be cake and tea drop in session, this will encourage more people to celebrate the event rather than having a set number at a ticketed event. There was also a discussion around having poppy displays around the parish and the lighting of a beacon to celebrate the event. It was decided to form a sub committee to organise possible events and bring them to the next meeting in April.

Ongoing: Sub committee to be formed to bring a list of possible events to the next council meeting in April.

#### **18. Addition to Small Holding Tenancy:**

The clerk has been approached by one of the tenants of a small holding to have their daughter added to the tenancy. The matter was discussed and was concluded that if the daughter lives within the parish boundary, then Esh Parish Council are unable to raise an objection. Cllr Moat proposed that adding the daughter to the tenancy go ahead as long as she lives within the parish boundary, this was seconded by Cllr Short, councillors Crumbie and Thompson abstained from the vote, councillors Moat, Short, Quinn, Wardman and Clark voted in favour of the proposal going ahead.

Resolved Clerk to establish if the tenant's daughter resides within the parish boundary. If the daughter is a resident within the parish, then, the tenant to be notified of the addition to the tenancy and paper work updated to reflect the addition.

#### **19. 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.

Cllr Thompson mentioned that she knew of a piano which was free and wondered if it could be used in the Miner's Institute when get togethers and events were to be held. The discussion which followed reflected upon the room the piano would take up and the cost of upkeep, therefore council decided not to have the piano.

At this point in the meeting, Cllr Moat, the Chair read a statement that she had composed, in the interests of transparency. She'd had a request for an off the record meeting with another councillor, to which she had complied, however due to meetings being in the interests of the public, the chair has decided going forward that there will be no more meetings of this nature and all business must be conducted within the public forum of council meetings. Should the need arise then a full disclosure of the meeting content will be exposed.

#### **Item 20. Date of next ordinary meeting:**

The date of the next ordinary meeting for Esh Parish Council is Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

