

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING



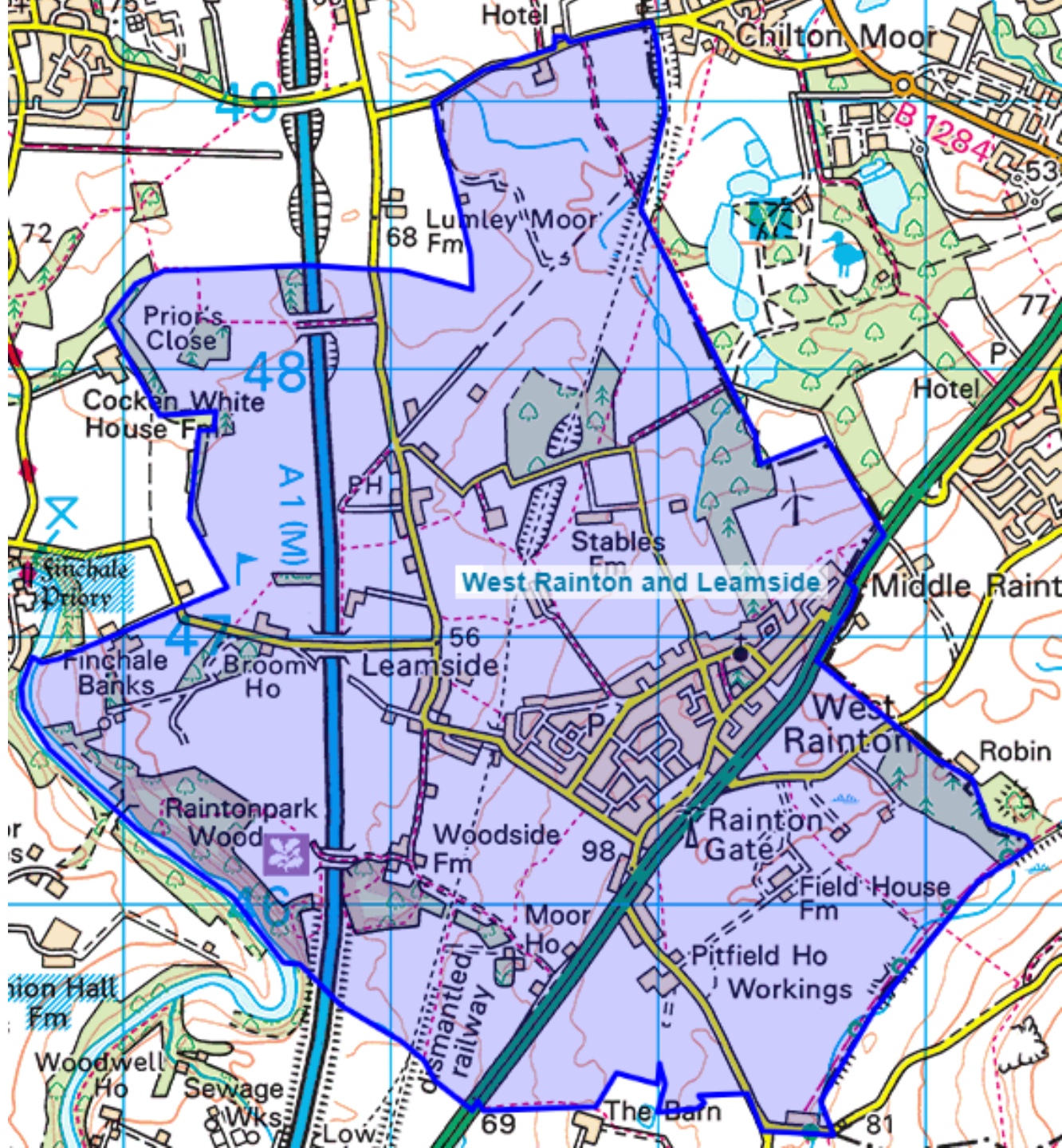
Councillor Ian Diggory
Chair, West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council

AGENDA

1. Introduction by the Chair
2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 9th May, 2024
3. Chair to present Annual Report of the Parish Council
4. Public Participation – invitation to residents to discuss concerns in the community and offer their own ideas for improvements.

PARISH of WEST RANTON & LEAMSIDE

- West Rainton Village
- Leamside
- Rainton Gate
- Good road transport links to nearby towns & cities via A690, A1 and A19
- Some commercial outlets
- Number of active community groups
- Limited employment opportunities – primarily a residential community



PARISH of WEST RANTON & LEAMSIDE

Largely rural in nature
Attractive countryside

2021 Census:

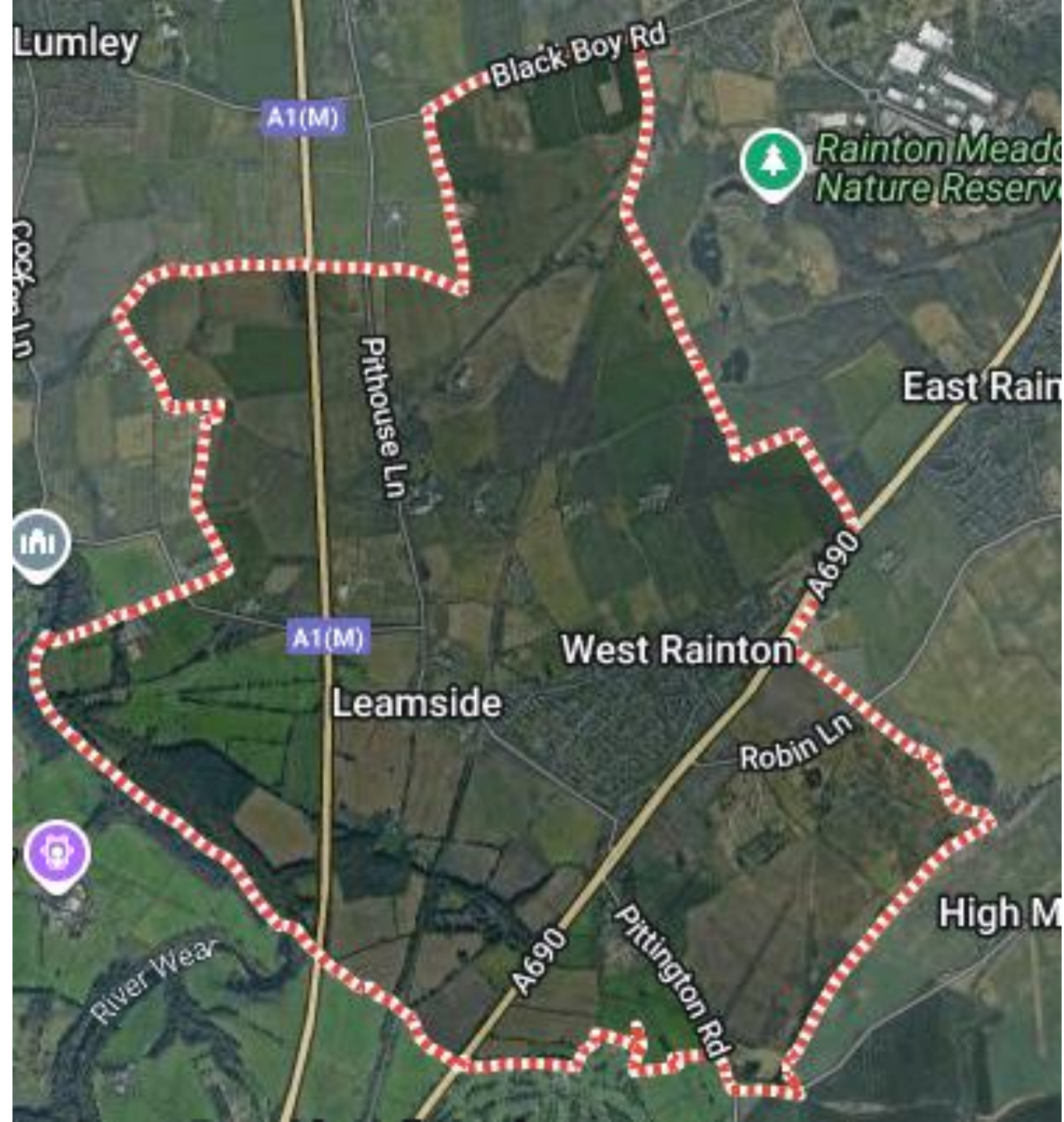
Population = 2334

Homes ~ 1100

Since then:

Allenson View adds 65 houses

Cathedral Meadows adds 150 houses



PARISH of WEST RAINTON & LEAMSIDE

Largely rural in nature

Attractive countryside

2021 Census: Population = 2334

Homes

2021 Census ~ 1100

By 2028 population likely to be close to 2700 occupying ~ 1350 houses.

Will there be more children, more oldies or both?

DEMOGRAPHIC (2021 Census)

AGE BAND

PERCENTAGE

<20

18.3%

20-40

22.2%

40-60

26.2%

60-80

26.8%

>80

6.5%

MINUTES of ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, May 2024

**Available on our website along with a
draft of the minutes from this meeting**

OBSERVATIONS from ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, 9th MAY 2024

- PC were pleased to see an increased attendance at the meeting.
- Representatives from Banks Homes gave an update on the Cathedral Meadows housing development.
- Representative from Woodside Group gave an update on the community hub area development. After exhausting all options to create a commercial hub they are now looking at applying for planning permission for the hub area to become social housing. *(Ongoing issue – report coming up later)*
- Some members of the public discussed their concerns around the cemetery and the policy of the lawned area. They were advised the Parish Council was currently reviewing all policies relating to the Cemetery.
(New policies in place. Update later in presentation)
- A member of the public asked if the cemetery gates could be painted. The Parish Clerk agreed to look into this. *(Cemetery gates have been painted)*

ANNUAL REPORT WEST RANTON & LEAMSIDE PARISH COUNCIL

Follow the link:

[West Ranton & Leamside Parish Council](#)



YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

- The PC is an independent statutory body of councillors elected by local residents.
- Councillors are volunteers and receive no payment for their services.
- Our PC can have a maximum of 9 councillors and for part of the year at least, all 9 places were filled.

Ian Diggory (Chair)
Kevin Wood (Vice Chair)
Avril Wallage
Malcolm Massey
Alan Langford
Steve Corfield
Bill Kellett
Maureen Boettcher
Peter Morson



The PC employs Mark Ramshaw as its parish clerk. Mark is a paid part-time employee whose role is to administer PC business and act as the responsible financial officer. The Clerk also advises Councillors on procedural matters and is the main point of contact for West Rainton and Leamside parish council.

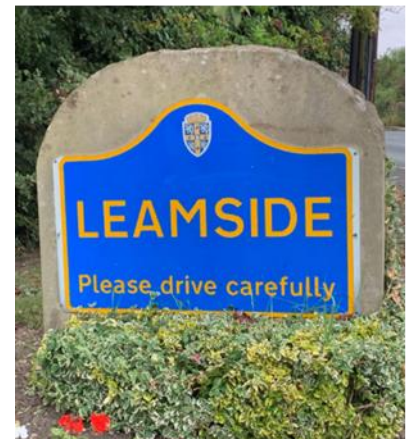
YOUR PARISH COUNCIL - AN UPDATE



- Cllrs. Kellett, Boetcher and Morson are no longer members of the PC.
- 1st May election, Malcolm Stabler joined the PC.
- The PC now has a number of vacancies to be filled by a process of co-option.

WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

- Representing the interests and addressing concerns of all our residents.
- Providing a forum for residents to raise concerns that are important to them, either in writing or in person at monthly PC meetings.
- Initiating and supporting projects and actions that improve local services, community activities and enhance our environment.
- Offering financial support in the form of grants to deserving causes and groups that bring benefits to the community in some way.



HOW ARE WE FUNDED?

We receive no direct funding from central government.

We are primarily funded through an annual precept based on a draft budget agreed by the PC each January.

We determine the precept for next financial year, based on spending plans and forecasts of other income.

The precept is collected by DCC as part of your council tax bill.

For specific projects, such as the outdoor gym, we seek funding from various 'pots of money' made available through a variety of agencies.

PRECEPT REVIEW

A breakdown of income received and payments made in 2024/25 is shown in Appendix A of the report.

In January 2025, the PC reviewed its current financial position and agreed a draft budget for the financial year 2025/26.

Based on these estimates and given the financial pressures due to the cost of living which many of our residents are having to face, the PC decided:

No increase in precept for 2025/26

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

	2023/24	2024/25
Precept	£36,690	£39,618
Other	£15,106	£11,490
TOTAL Income	£51,796	£51,108
TOTAL Spend	£34,408	£35,958
Surplus	£17,388	£15,150
Start of year	£25,407	£42,795
End of year	£42,795	£57,945
Village Improv. plan	£20,000	£20,000
Election reserve	£4,000	£4,000
Reserve Balance	£66,795	£81,945

FORECAST 2025/26

	2025/26
Precept	£41,483
Other	£7,309
TOTAL Income	£48,792
TOTAL Spend	£52,433
Deficit for year	- £3,641
Start of year	£57,945
End of year	£54,304
Village Improv. plan	£20,000
Election reserve	£4,000
Reserve Balance	£78,304

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE WITH RESIDENTS?

- Monthly meetings to which the public are always welcome to attend. Meeting notices and agendas are put on notice boards around the village.
- We maintain a comprehensive and transparent website that contains information on all our activities; including policy documents, finances **and this report**.
- Our website provides an email facility for residents to send questions to the PC via our Parish Clerk.
- For social media fans in the community, we maintain a Facebook page.
- We report 'News from the Parish Council' in each edition of the Village News
- We maintain an awareness of the activities of various community groups through attendance at Village Partnership meetings.

However, effective communication is a dialogue and not a monologue, so if you have concerns or issues you wish to raise, we encourage you to attend one of our monthly meetings, contact us via our website or email the Parish Clerk.

SOME ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Managing and maintaining Parish Cemetery
 - Maintaining Heritage Garden
 - Maintaining War Memorial
 - Maintaining Village Planters and 3 Village Signs
 - Organising Village Christmas Tree and illuminations
 - Organising “Carols around the Christmas Tree” event
 - Financial support for St. Mary’s clock
-
- Reviewing potential impact on the parish of any planning and licensing applications.
 - Using our media outlets to keep residents informed of activities in the parish.
 - Liaising with voluntary groups to ensure we work together effectively for the benefit of our community.
 - Providing financial support to voluntary organisations, charities and community groups that undertake activities or services for the benefit of residents.
 - Monitoring ground maintenance works undertaken by DCC around the parish to improve the appearance of our green spaces and avoid excessive use of herbicides.

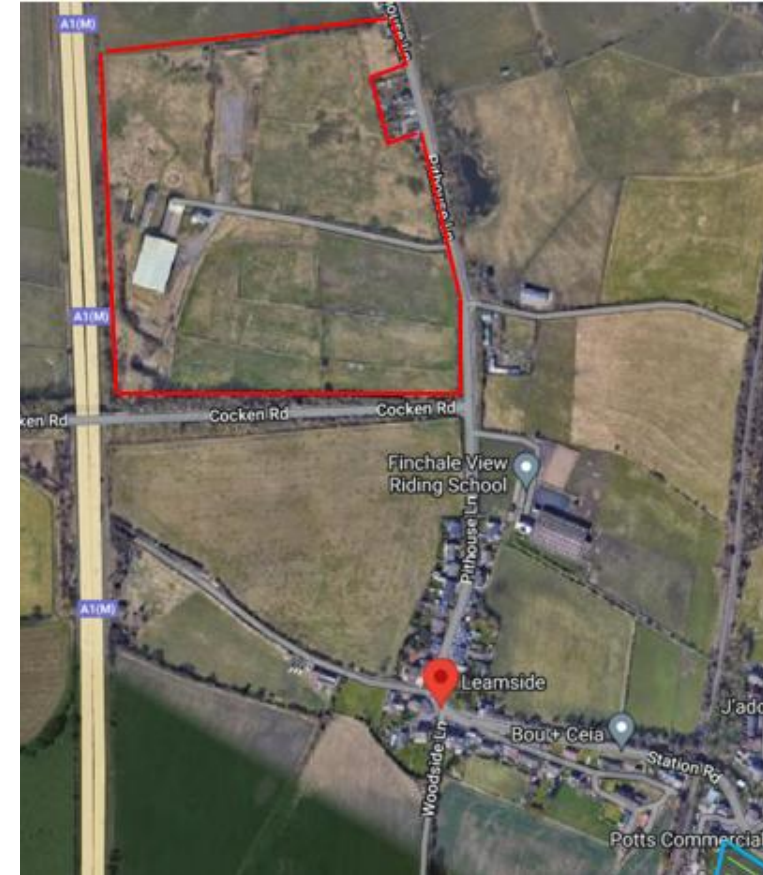


RUSSELL FOSTER FOOTBALL CENTRE

Applicant submitted an appeal to the Independent Planning Inspectorate having been refused planning permission by DCC in July 2023.

The Parish Council, as well as a number of individual residents and our MP, Mary Foy, submitted letters of objection to the appeal.

In May 2024 the Planning Inspectorate upheld the decision of DCC to refuse planning permission and **rejected the applicant's appeal.**



Good example of the community coming together to successfully resist an unwanted development. Majority of objectors probably in favour of encouraging youth football, but we were all convinced this was the wrong location - and the Planning Inspectorate agreed.

COMMUNITY HUB DEVELOPMENT

An area of land adjacent to the Cathedral Meadows development was designated a community hub in the original planning application for the whole site in 2015. Developer had approval to develop commercial premises on the land.

Failure to secure any interest from the commercial sector led the developer to seek planning consent for the development of 20 affordable homes on the site.

October 2024: PC submitted a letter stating it had no objection to the proposed development.

March 2025: Group of residents submitted a petition to the planning officer objecting to this housing development and calling for it to be replaced with a convenience store.

April 2025: Planning committee voted to reject the housing application, despite a positive recommendation from the planners. Developer plans to appeal the decision.

April PC meeting: PC will make its own enquiries to gauge any interest in developing a retail outlet on the site and report back at May PC meeting.



<https://westraintonandleamsidepc.gov.uk/>

31st March 2024: Durham County Council withdrew support for hosting our PC website.

A replacement host and developer was found and a new website developed.

Easier access Clearer presentation Comprehensive information
(Some information may still require updating.)

Our thanks to Iain Clifford for facilitating the transfer and continuing to update our new website.

[Agendas & Minutes](#)[News & Events](#)[Meeting Dates](#)[Contact us](#)[Police](#)

Welcome to the West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council website.

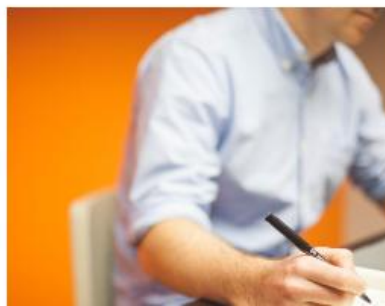
We are a small parish on the outskirts of County Durham.

If you require any further information or you would like to see any additional information included in this website please [contact us](#). The website is updated periodically and changes can be incorporated quickly.



Annual Parish Meeting – 8 May 2025

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place at St Mary's Church on 8 May 2025 at 1830 hours. Full details are contained in the following notice which can be



Search News Categories

Cemetery	(3)
Community	(4)
Community News	(4)
Election	(1)
Environment	(4)
Housing & Development	(6)
Parish Financial	(2)
Roads and Traffic	(2)
Sport and Leisure	(2)
Uncategorised	(7)

Latest News

- [Annual Parish Meeting – 8 May 2025](#)
23 April 2025
- [ELECTION OF PARISH COUNCILLORS](#)
9 April 2025
- [CHANGES TO CEMETERY PROCEDURES](#)
21 March 2025

PARISH CEMETERY

2023: Concerns and allegations were raised by some residents about a lack of consultation on PC policies, and questions about the long-term plan for the cemetery.

2024: Residents attended 2 PC monthly meetings to further raise their concerns. The PC published a written response on its website detailing the reasons how and why the existing policies came about.

2024/25: Acknowledging the strength of feeling over this issue, the PC undertook a comprehensive review of all its cemetery policies, associated rules and procedures. This work has been completed, and the new cemetery documents are now available on the PC website.

PARISH CEMETERY

1st April 2025: New cemetery rules and regulations came into force.

People with an interest in the graves in the new burial area have been contacted to offer them the options available under the new policy.

May 2025: Following a tendering process a new grounds maintenance contractor has been appointed and will begin work this month.

Cemetery maintenance costs are significantly greater than the income generated from burials, but this will always be the case. Cemetery is a valuable community asset and the PC continues to make investments that will maintain its appearance and safety for the benefit of all.

SCHOOL AVENUE PARK PROJECT

Bench

Tables

Gym area

Tree seat

Bins

Grass
cutter
access

Gym area
gate

Public gate
access



SCHOOL AVENUE PARK PROJECT

Project has taken a long time to come to fruition but is now close to completion.

- ✓ An Outdoor Gym with equipment designed for use by residents of all abilities and fitness is in place.
- ✓ Installation of a family seating area, consisting of benches, picnic tables and a tree seat is ongoing
- Awaiting erection of metal fence around the whole area in same style as encloses the children's play area.
- Large boulders currently on the border of this site will be transferred to another part of the village.



- Grant funding for the outdoor gym element of the project was secured by DCC.
- Grant funding was secured by the PC to fund the street furniture elements.
- DCC installed the equipment to an agreed design on behalf of the PC.

THREAT TO JUBILEE HALL

Jubilee Hall in imminent danger of closure following resignation notice of its long-serving principal volunteer

PC was approached in January for assistance in preventing the closure of this key community asset.

Following discussions with various interested parties the PC set up a working group with the remit of establishing a **management team** to ensure the long-term future of Jubilee Hall.

A public meeting has been held, and a number of potential volunteers have come forward.

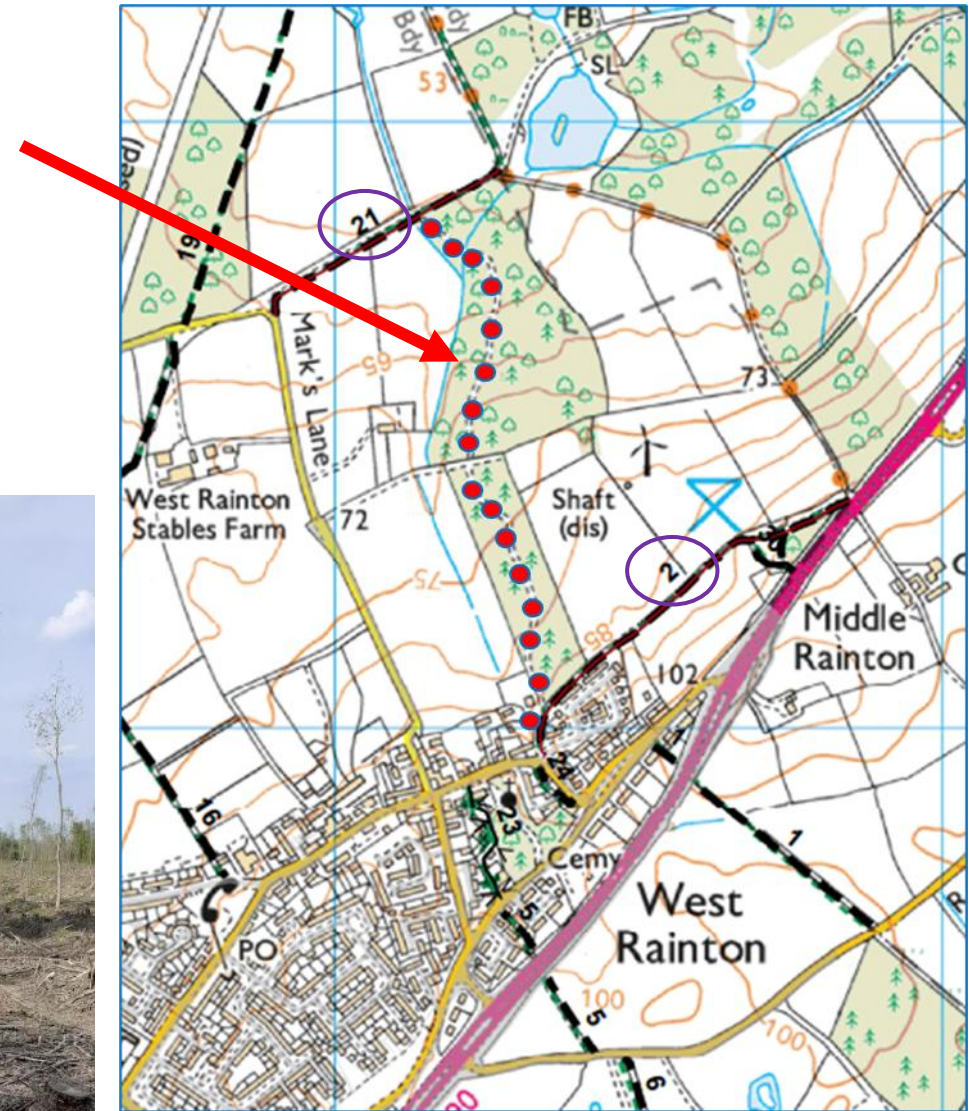
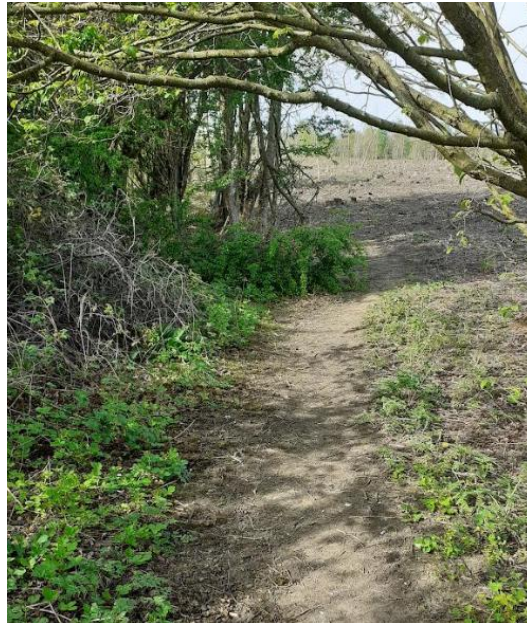


This is an ongoing process, but progress is being made, and the initial response has been encouraging.

UNREGISTERED FOOTPATH

Residents raised concerns regarding the status of a well used but unregistered footpath, between public footpath No 2 (from the Dene) and Footpath 21 (the red track that runs from Mark's Lane to Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve)

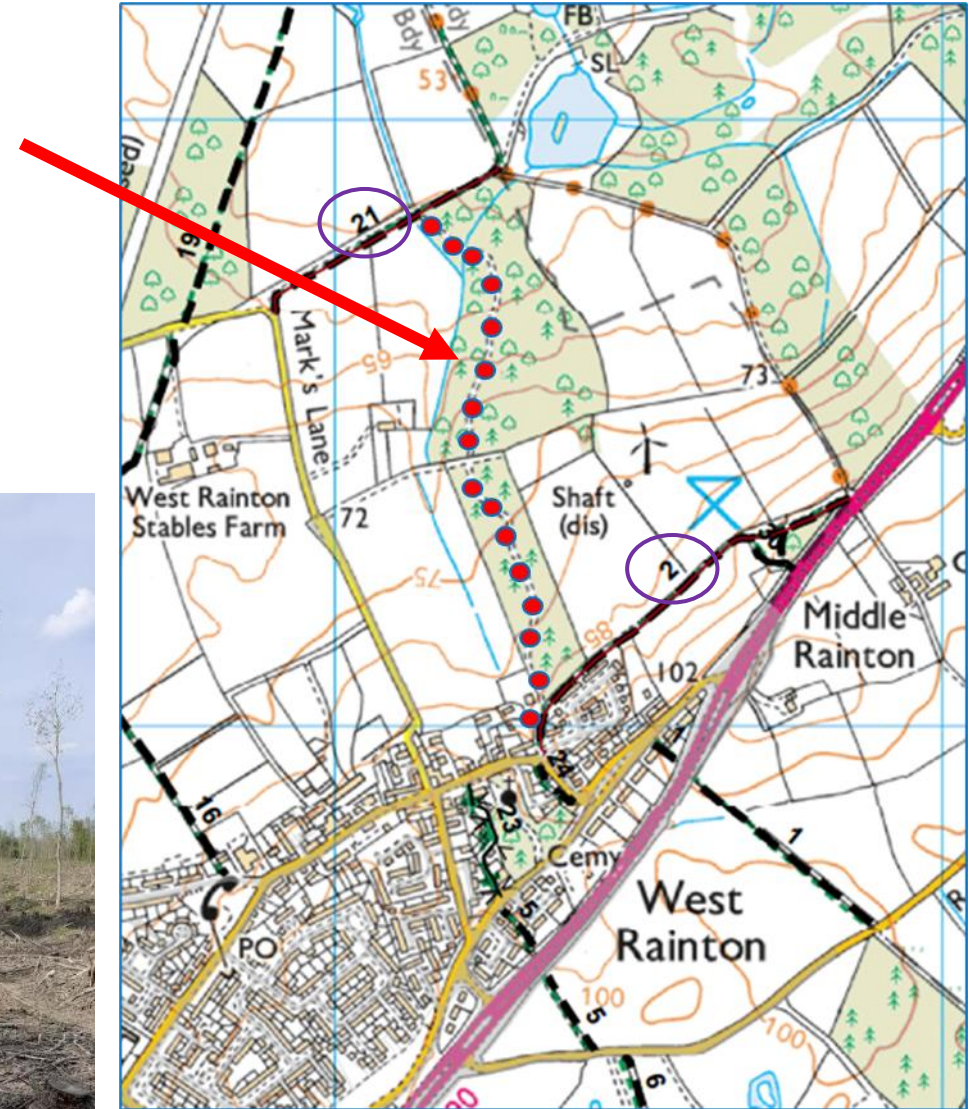
PC submitted a formal application to DCC to have this path registered as a Public Right of Way on its "Definitive Map".



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A decision on the application is pending

PARISH ENVIRONMENT: TREE PLANTING

PC invited the Green Group to submit a long-term planting strategy for types and locations of trees in the parish.

In a separate project there is a potential for additional trees on Believe Housing land.

DCC would need to be consulted if any planting on their land was proposed.

PC is considering the cost, supply and maintenance of any trees to be planted and will develop a plan to progress this project.



CATHEDRAL MEADOWS DEVELOPMENT

Construction of 150 dwellings by Banks Homes on its Cathedral Meadows development is well underway.

Our community does receive a financial benefit from these types of development called Section 106 monies.

Some of the Banks Homes S106 monies are allocated to the school, some to the doctors surgery and other amounts can be applied for by local charities.

Avant homes development of Allenson View was another case in point where Section 106 monies came to the parish.

In general any such S106 benefit must be spent on capital projects – hence the need for ideas (wish list!).



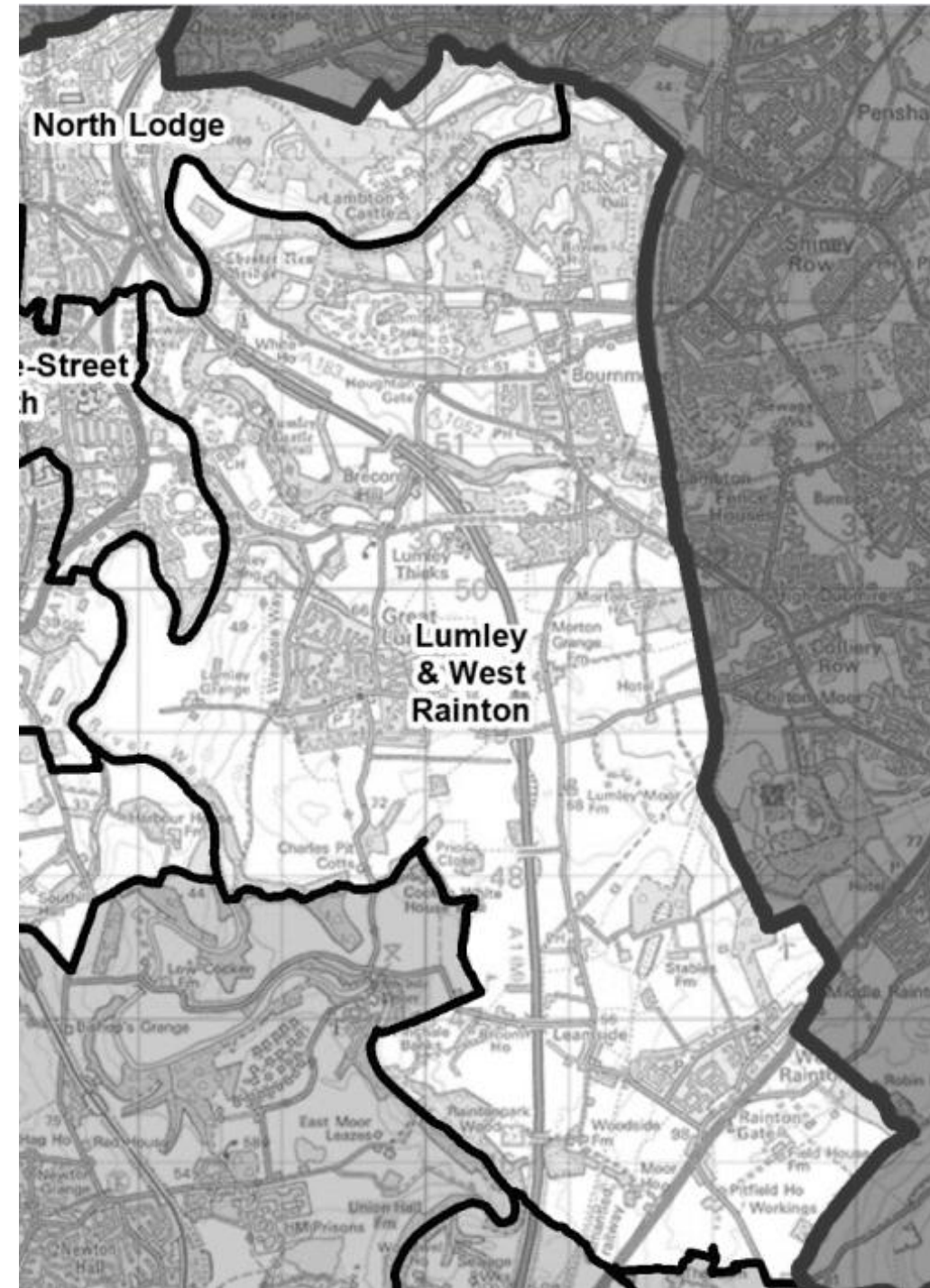
LOCAL ELECTIONS

The parish boundary remains the same.

We are now part of the newly created **Lumley and West Rainton division** that includes Great Lumley, Woodstone village and Bournmoor

This division will elect two county councillors to represent our interests.

Update: Alan Bell and Phil Heaviside were returned as Independent county councillors at the recent May election



ANNUAL PLAN

Regularly reviewed
and updated by PC.

Used to define
some of PC
objectives.

Helps to guide a
programme of
future activities.

Copy of the Annual Plan,
indicating the status of
agreed actions, published on
our website.

Theme 1	Maintain the parish's rural character and existing amenities, whilst encouraging sustainable development
Theme 2	Improve road safety
Theme 3	Continue to improve the appearance and management of the parish cemetery
Theme 4	Maintain and improve our public parks and open green spaces
Theme 5	Improve community engagement and cohesion
Theme 6	Maintaining good governance
Theme 7	Effective management of the parish council's resources and assets

Example from Annual Plan

THEME 3: PARISH CEMETERY

	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Status
3.1	Review contractual arrangements for grounds maintenance and waste management contracts 2025/26.	January 2025	Parish Clerk	
3.2	Monthly walkabouts to monitor progress and identify new issues.	Ongoing		
3.3	Ad hoc grave top-ups as and when necessary.	Ongoing	Parish Clerk/Gardner	Consideration to be given to more member involvement.
3.4	Reduce size of corner flower bed to allow easier access for grass cutting and add additional flower bed in between bench and memorial tree.	October 2024	Parish Clerk/Gardener	Carry over from 23/24. May not be necessary as access does not seem to be an issue. Propose to delete 3 beds now in cemetery.
3.5	Undertake Stress Testing of Headstones.	October 2024	Parish Clerk/Appropriate contractor.	Carry over from 2023/24
3.6	Review all cemetery policies.	September 2024	Parish Clerk /Cllr Wallage	In progress.
3.7	Consider how we can improve on communicating council policy and cemetery rules to cemetery users.	September 2024	Parish Clerk/Cllr Wallage	

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025/26

- Work with DCC on completing the School Avenue Park Project.
- Support the Community Association to secure the future of Jubilee Hall.
- Look to fill any councillor vacancies to maximise community representation on the PC.
- Seek to improve how we engage and communicate with residents.
- Engage with new residents moving into the parish.
- Identify and develop further projects and initiatives for the benefit of all residents.
- Identify and explore potential external funding opportunities.
- Review all new planning applications to assess their potential impact on our community.
- Monitor the implementation of any approved planning developments.
- Review and update our Annual Plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

MOVING ON FROM THE PAST



DEALING WITH TODAY'S ISSUES



Policy Areas to consider	Features
Amenities	Schools, doctors, pharmacy, etc.
Community facilities	Shops, cafés, entertainment, public buildings, etc.
Local economy	Business development, service providers, etc.
Natural environment	Landscape, biodiversity, green spaces, etc.
Social environment	Care for the elderly, support for young people, etc.
Voluntary sector	Support for Jubilee Hall, Community Association, etc.
Community engagement	Greater involvement of residents, etc.
Transport	Traffic control measures, cycle tracks and walk-ways
Telecommunications	Ultra-fast broadband, etc.
Energy	Conservation, off grid generation, renewables, etc.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

What sort of parish do we want to see in 3, 7 or 10 years?

- *One that is growing in a sustainable fashion?
(can retain existing residents and attract new ones)*
- *A vibrant place to live for all residents - young and old?*
- *More activities, facilities and amenities?*
- *Greater community engagement?*

How do we get from a vision to reality?

You need detailed plans and strategies – which all take time and effort.

This is a joint challenge for us (the PC) and the community at large.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING



THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING