

West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council
Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held
at 19:00 On Thursday 15th May 2025
at St Mary's Church Meeting Room, West Rainton

Present: Councillors S Corfield, I Diggory (Chairperson), A Langford,
M Stabler, A Wallage & K Wood

In Attendance:

Parish Clerk

County Councillor Alan Bell

NOTE:

The meeting was not audio or video recorded.

1) Election of Chairman for 2025/26

Cllr Wood proposed Cllr Diggory for Chairman and this was seconded by Cllr Langford. There were no further proposals. **Parish Council resolved** to elect Cllr Diggory as Chairperson for the coming Year.

2) Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr Diggory signed the acceptance of office form which was witnessed by the Parish Clerk.

3) Election of Vice Chairman for 2025/26

Cllr Wallage proposed Cllr Wood for Vice Chairman and this was seconded by Cllr Corfield. There were no further proposals. **Parish Council resolved** to elect Cllr Wood as Vice Chairperson for the coming year.

4) Apologies for Absence

There were no absences.

5) Declarations of Interest

It was agreed that declarations of interest would be dealt with as and when the need arose.

6) Appointments to Outside Bodies

West Rainton & Leamside Village Partnership

Cllr Diggory advised that he was happy to continue as the Parish Council's representative at the WR&LVP meetings. Parish Council resolved to approve this.

Smaller Councils Forum

Cllr Wallage advised that she would be happy to represent the Parish Council at the meeting if nominated. Cllr Wood proposed Cllr Wallage as the representative and this was seconded by Cllr Corfield. **Parish Council**

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resolved to approve Cllr Wallage as the representative for the Parish Council at the Smaller Councils Forum.

7) Parish Councillor Vacancies

The Parish Clerk advised members that there are 3 vacancies to be filled via the co-option process following the uncontested election.

Parish Council resolved to approve a deadline of July 9th 2025 for applications. These applications will be considered at the July meeting of the Parish Council.

8) Public Participation

County Councillor Bell gave an update on the Banks building site and some of the issues that had been raised with both Banks and Durham County Council. He advised that an appeal was to be submitted by the developer regarding the planning committee's refusal of the additional housing planning application. This will go through a validation process.

Cllr Bell advised that Cllr Heaviside and himself look forward to working with the Parish Council and other stakeholders within the Village.

9) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Cllr Stabler advised that he would abstain from this item as he was not a member of the parish council when the matters were considered or approved.

Parish Council resolved that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 17th April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

10) Finance Report

Cllr Stabler advised that he would abstain from this item as he was not a member of the parish council when the matters were considered or approved.

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PART A: FOR INFORMATION			£			
1. INCOME		Memorial Leaf (AE) (Cheque)	180			
		Memorial Leaf (JT) (BACS)	180			
		Single Burial (JJ) Dignity Funerals (cheque)	389			
		Re-Open (LC) Stuart Wright Funerals (BACS)	215			
2. EXPENDITURE						
A) Expenditure previously agreed by Parish Council due this month						
ITEM	PAYEE	PURPOSE	Payment Method	AMOUNT (£)		
1	M Ramshaw	Parish Clerk Net Salary - May 25	BACS	497.82		
2	HM Revenue and Customs Only 465PD00171320	HMRC Liability - May 25	BACS	124.40		
3	Unity Bank	Account Service Charge	BACS	6.00		
4	Lloyds Bank	Debit Card Charge	BACS	3.00		
5	EON	Electricity Supply - Direct Debit	BACS	30.00		
6	Makepeace Landscapes	Cemetery Maintenance x 2 visits & 2 hrs village maintenance (strimming - £35ph +VAT)	BACS	708.00		
TOTAL				1369.22		
B) Expenditure requiring approval						
ITEM	PAYEE	PURPOSE	Payment Method	AMOUNT (£)	BUDGET PROVISION	
7	Annette Simpson	Internal Audit Fee - 2024/25	BACS	220.00	Y	
8	ICCM	Annual Subscription	BACS	105.00	Y	
9	Anglian Water Business (National) Ltd	Cemetery Water Supply 2/2-1/5/25	BACS	23.89	Y	
10	G Coates	Village Maintenance - Village Signs, grass cutting, weeding flower beds etc.	BACS	125.00	Y	
11	Columbaria	Memorial Leaves x 2	BACS	216.00	Y	
TOTAL				689.89		
Total Expenditure A + B				2059.11		

Parish Council resolved to:

1. Note income and expenditure reported for information.
2. Approve expenditure listed in Part B

11) Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Cllr Stabler advised that he would abstain from this item as he was not a member of the parish council when the matters were considered or approved. The Parish Clerk referred members to the Internal Auditors Report. **Parish Council resolved** to approve the Report.

12) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

Cllr Stabler advised that he would abstain from this item as he was not a member of the parish council when the matters were considered or approved. The Parish Clerk introduced the item and proceeded to work through the Annual Governance Statements to explain how the Parish Council meet their requirements. **Parish Council resolved** to approve the Annual Governance Statements. The Parish Clerk then presented the Accounting Statements 2024/25. **Parish Council resolved** to approve the Accounting Statements. The Chairman and the Parish Clerk signed the required documentation.

13) Planning Applications

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There were no planning applications for consideration.

14) Code of Conduct

The Parish Clerk referred members to the revised code of conduct which had been previously circulated. **Parish Council resolved** to adopt the code of conduct.

15) Jubilee Hall

a) Update from Working Group

Cllr Langford updated members on the positive progress that had been made by the Working Group. Around 60 people had attended the public meeting regarding the future of Jubilee Hall. Cllr Langford circulated the minutes from the West Rainton and Leamside Community Association meeting held 7th May 2025. The next meeting is planned for 4th June 2025. Cllr Langford advised that he is to chair the new Management Group.

b) Request from Community Association

Cllr Langford, representing the Jubilee Hall Management Group, asked what information the Parish Council required to be able to consider a request for financial support towards creating an employed role to support the running of Jubilee Hall.

Cllr Diggory advised that a business case was required. Cllr Wallage circulated information aimed at supporting the development of a business case which would assist the Community Association in applying for financial support.

16) Station Road Commercial Development Update

Cllr Corfield advised that he had contacted Aldi, Lidl, Sainsburys, Tesco, Morrisons and the Co-Op. The majority did respond. The Co-op agreed to look into the development of an express shop. Tesco and Morrisons also agreed to pass the information on to the appropriate people within their organisation.

County Councillor Bell advised that there may be a local company who could be interested and advised that County Councillor Heaviside has the information. **Cllr Corfield agreed to contact County Councillor Heaviside.**

Cllr Corfield agreed to email the details of his findings to the Parish Clerk who would submit it to the planning Case Officer on behalf of the Parish Council .

17) Request for a memorial bench/plaque installation

The Parish Clerk referred members to the request from a parishioner for the installation of a new memorial bench or a memorial plaque on an existing bench or within the Village.

Option 1 - Installation of New Memorial Bench

Following discussion of this option , **Parish Council resolved:**

As a matter of council policy, it would not be appropriate for the Parish Council to fund the provision of the proposed new bench but would be

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supportive of a policy to allow the installation of a robust maintenance free Marmax traditional bench, (this would then be in keeping with other recently installed new benches installed by Durham County Council in the village), subject to confirmation of the agreement of the land owner to any proposed site and the agreement of the applicant to pay all costs, including installation. (The corner of Hall Lane opposite Lea Rigg was suggested as the nearest suitable site to Burns Close. This is Durham County Council land).

Parish Council resolved to offer support to the parishioner if they wished to pursue this option by obtaining a quote from Marmax for the supply of a bench with a pre-installed inscribed plaque and to liaise with DCC to seek their agreement to the proposed location, public liability insurance cover and the cost of installation.

Option 2 -Installation of a memorial plaque to an existing bench in the village

Following discussion, **Parish Council resolved** not to support this option, as a matter of policy, as the Parish Council already provides a service option for memorials by way of the memorial tree in the cemetery; existing benches were provided for general public use and the installation of a memorial plaque onto an existing bench would effectively create a memorial bench for an individual family and may detract from its wider public use.

Parish Council asked the Parish Clerk to contact the parishioner to explain the reasons for the Parish Council decision and offer support on the option to install a Marmax bench.

18) Annual Parish Meeting

Cllr Diggory advised members that the Annual Parish Meeting had taken place on 8th May. There was positive feedback around the format of the meeting and the work of the Parish Council.

19) Meetings Calendar 2025/26

Parish Council resolved to approve the list of meetings for 2025/26.

20) West Rainton & Leamside Village Partnership

Cllr Diggory updated members on the latest news from the Village Partnership. The current Chairperson and the Village News editor are stepping down. The Partnership is in a healthy financial position.

21) General Correspondence

The Parish Clerk advised there was no general correspondence for consideration.

22) Date and time of next meeting

Parish Council noted that the next meeting is Thursday 19th June 2025 at 7:00p.m.

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Dated:.....

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

Parish Council resolved to exclude the press and public from the following item in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (Section 2)

23) Correspondence (x2) from member of the public

Cllr Stabler advised Parish Council that the item to be considered relates to two Freedom of Information requests and consideration as confidential business is an attempt to manipulate the situation. Cllr Stabler refused to participate in the matter and left the meeting (20:55).

Cllr Diggory advised members of the nature of the two requests for information and the history of previous related requests.

Cllr Wallage declared an interest and left the room.

Parish Council considered the information requests alongside the previous historical information requests and agreed that the latest requests are a repetition of previous requests that had already been dealt with.

On 15th October 2021 the individual had been informed that the Parish Council considered the matters raised as closed and that there would be no further communication on the matters.

Parish Council resolved to respond to the individual and advise that as a result of the earlier decision from October 2021, and the repetitive nature of the requests, the Parish Council maintains its decision to have no further communication on these matters.

Members reiterated that there is a duty of care on themselves to ensure that the Parish Clerk is able to carry out his role without undue harassment.

Furthermore, members voiced their concerns over unsubstantiated allegations made about the conduct of the Parish Clerk and the former Chair of the Parish Council.

Signed:.....

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