

West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at
19:00 on Thursday 19th March January 2026
at St Mary's Church Meeting Room, West Rainton

Present: Councillors I Diggory (Chairperson), A Langford, M Potts, M Scott, M Stabler and A Wallage.

In Attendance:

Parish Clerk

NOTE: The meeting was not audio or video recorded.

1. Apologies for Absence

The Parish Clerk advised that Cllr Wood had submitted his apology for being unable to attend (holiday). **Parish Council resolved** to approve this absence.

Cllr Corfield was not in attendance however an apology had not been received.

2. Declarations of interest

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

3. Parish Councillor Vacancies

a) Co-option to Parish Councillor vacancies

The Parish Clerk advised that there had been an interested candidate however they had not completed the application for co-option.

b) Deadline for applications for vacancies

Parish Council resolved to approve the 13th May 2026 as the deadline for co-option applications for the remaining vacancy.

4. Public Participation

County Councillors Bell and Heaviside had apologised that they were unable to attend.

Cllr Bell had emailed a brief report that the Parish Clerk shared.

He had been approached regarding a bus shelter with missing panels and a query on shelter ownership. Cllr Bell advised that he had spoken with DCC and they claim to own the shelter as Parish Council didn't respond years ago when asked if they wished to retain ownership. Cllr Bell advised that consideration was being given to the removal of the bus shelter by DCC and that he would welcome views.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

He went on to advise that the Arden House sale is now complete and Believe Housing have advised it is to be used by young people for education purposes.

Cllr Bell advised that both himself and Cllr Heaviside took part in a community speedwatch recently with the PCSO, this was followed up with a request for them to visit the school to discuss ASB and Ebikes/scooters. This took place today and was well received.

Cllr Bell advised that there have been many reports of late about numerous pot holes with some being quite significant.

Cllr Bell queried a previous discussion regarding a description of Marks Lane as a 'quiet lane'. Cllr Diggory advised that this, along with other road safety concerns are being captured in the Parish Plan which is being reviewed.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting

a) Approval of Minutes

Parish Council resolved that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 19th February 2026 be approved as a correct record.

b) Review of Actions

The Parish Clerk advised that the work to build the steps for the Cemetery was about to start and Heritage Garden maintenance works had been undertaken.

6. Planning Applications

There was no feedback necessary on the 2 planning applications within the Parish.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

7. Finance Report

PART A: FOR INFORMATION					
1. INCOME		Andrew Gray Funeral Directors (GT Double OofArea)	£1,430.00		
		Ian Wood Memorials - Additional insc. £40, New memorial (JJ) £110, Replacement mmemorials x 2 (A & C) £80	£230.00		
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 - March	BACS	513.75	
2	HM Revenue and Customs Only 465PD00171320	HMRC Liability - March	BACS	128.40	
3	Durham Area Youth	2026/27 Grant	BACS (1/4/27)	4000.00	
4	West Rainton and Leamside Village Partnership	2026/27 Grant	BACS (1/4/27)	602.00	
5	1st Rainton Gate Brownies	2026/27 Grant x 2	BACS (1/4/27)	890.00	
6	Makepeace Landscapes	Cemetery Maintenace	BACS	624.00	
7	Unity Trust Bank	Service Charge	DD	6.00	
8	EON	Electricity Supply - Feeder Pillar	DD	16.87	
		TOTAL		6781.02	
B) Expenditure requiring approval					
ITEM	PAYEE	PURPOSE	Payment Method	AMOUNT (£)	BUDGET PROVISION
9	Makepeace Landscapes	Heritage Garden maintenance (agreed Feb 26) plus additional work to include removal of wooden planters and appropriate disposal	BACS	1554.00	Y
10	M Ramshaw	Reimbursement - Fence treatment for Heritage Garden (Toolstation)	BACS	13.78	Y
11	CDALC	Data Protection Training - Training x 5 Councillors	BACS	100.00	Y
12	St Marys Church	Hire of Meeting Room (Jan, Feb & March)	BACS	60.00	Y
13	Narked Ltd	Assertion 10 Compliance work/updates	BACS	90.00	Y
14	G Coates	Village maintenance	BACS	87.00	Y
		TOTAL		1904.78	
Total Expenditure A + B				8685.80	

Parish Council resolved to:

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

8. Cemetery Fees Review

The Parish Clerk referred members to the report that had previously been circulated.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Parish Council resolved to increase fees by 3% (rounded up to the nearest £5) in line with inflation but not to increase the fees for memorial leaves.

9. Appointment of Internal Auditor

Parish Council resolved to appoint AS Accountancy Services as the internal auditor for the 2025/26 audit.

10. Annual Plan

Cllr Diggory thanked members for their feedback on his proposals. He reiterated the importance of the Annual Plan as it should set out the Parish Councils priorities for the coming year.

Cllr Diggory advised that he would circulate a list of initiatives that have been approved/agreed upon and then look for members to take them forward.

Cllr Diggory went on to say that he would include what is outside of the Councils control and what the Parish Council can directly influence.

11. Asset Register

The Parish Clerk presented the Asset Register to Members. Parish Council discussed the recorded values of the Cemetery, War Memorial and the Heritage Garden. The ownership and value of the bus stop was also raised as it was not included on the Asset Register. Cllr Diggory advised that the bus stop was deemed to be owned by DCC as a result of the Parish Council not claiming ownership when asked by DCC in the past.

After discussion **Parish Council resolved to approve** the Asset Register as presented.

12. IT Policy

Parish Council resolved to approve the adoption of the IT Policy presented.

13. Motion – To implement a template for motions

Parish Council resolved to approve the adoption of the template for motions as presented.

14. Motion – To plant a permanent Christmas Tree on the Village Green

This motion was presented by Cllr Stabler and seconded by Cllr Scott. Cllr Stabler gave some background to the proposal and shared information on Lumley Parish Council who have moved to having a living tree.

Cllr Diggory advised that he felt there were three options; keep the arrangements the same, approach a nursery to supply a cut tree or plant and maintain a live tree.

Cllr Stabler advised that his motion was to plant a permanent tree and requested a named vote take place regarding the motion.

A vote took place with Cllrs Stabler and Scott voting for the motion, Cllrs Diggory, Langford and Wallage voting against the motion and Cllr Potts abstained from voting. The motion was not passed.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Parish Council asked the Parish Clerk to approach other Parish Councils who have live Christmas Trees in situ for further details.

15. Motion – To install a heritage blue plaque

This motion was presented by Cllr Stabler and seconded by Cllr Diggory. Cllr Stabler advised that Durham City Parish Council had purchased a plaque in the past and the plaque could celebrate the mining history of the village. The Parish Clerk was asked to obtain information from Durham City Parish Council about the cost of a plaque.

16. Motion – To increase insect friendly planting

Cllr Scott presented the motion, seconded by Cllr Diggory. Cllr Wallage advised that ordering of plants and delivery arrangements for this year is already underway. This process has evolved over a number of years. Whilst members were generally in agreement with the resolution it was considered to be appropriate for consideration in next years planting arrangements.

17. Installation of a defibrillator

Cllr Diggory advised members that he had made some initial enquiries at Homer Hill Farm Shop regarding the possible siting of the defibrillator. The original idea was to site the defibrillator near to the Church however this was not possible. The general consensus was to approach the Farm Shop and see if a firm proposal could be agreed.

18. Bus Shelters

Cllr Diggory advised that it was clear from information received that DCC owned the bus stops in the village and therefore the Parish Council is absolved from any responsibility for their upkeep.

19. West Rainton and Leamside Village Partnership Meeting

Cllr Diggory advised members it had been the Partnerships Annual General Meeting the previous evening. Discussions had taken place regarding the Village Partnership merging with the Community Association. There was no urgency to this merger so discussions will continue between interested parties.

20. Smaller Councils Forum

No meeting had taken place since the last Parish Council Meeting.

21. General Correspondence

The Parish Clerk advised that an email had been received from a local community project (equine assisted therapy). Parish Council asked the Parish Clerk to invite the sender along to the next Parish Council meeting to discuss their requirements.

22. Date and time of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting is Thursday 16th April 2026 at 19:00.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Signed:.....

Dated:.....