

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

15th May 2026



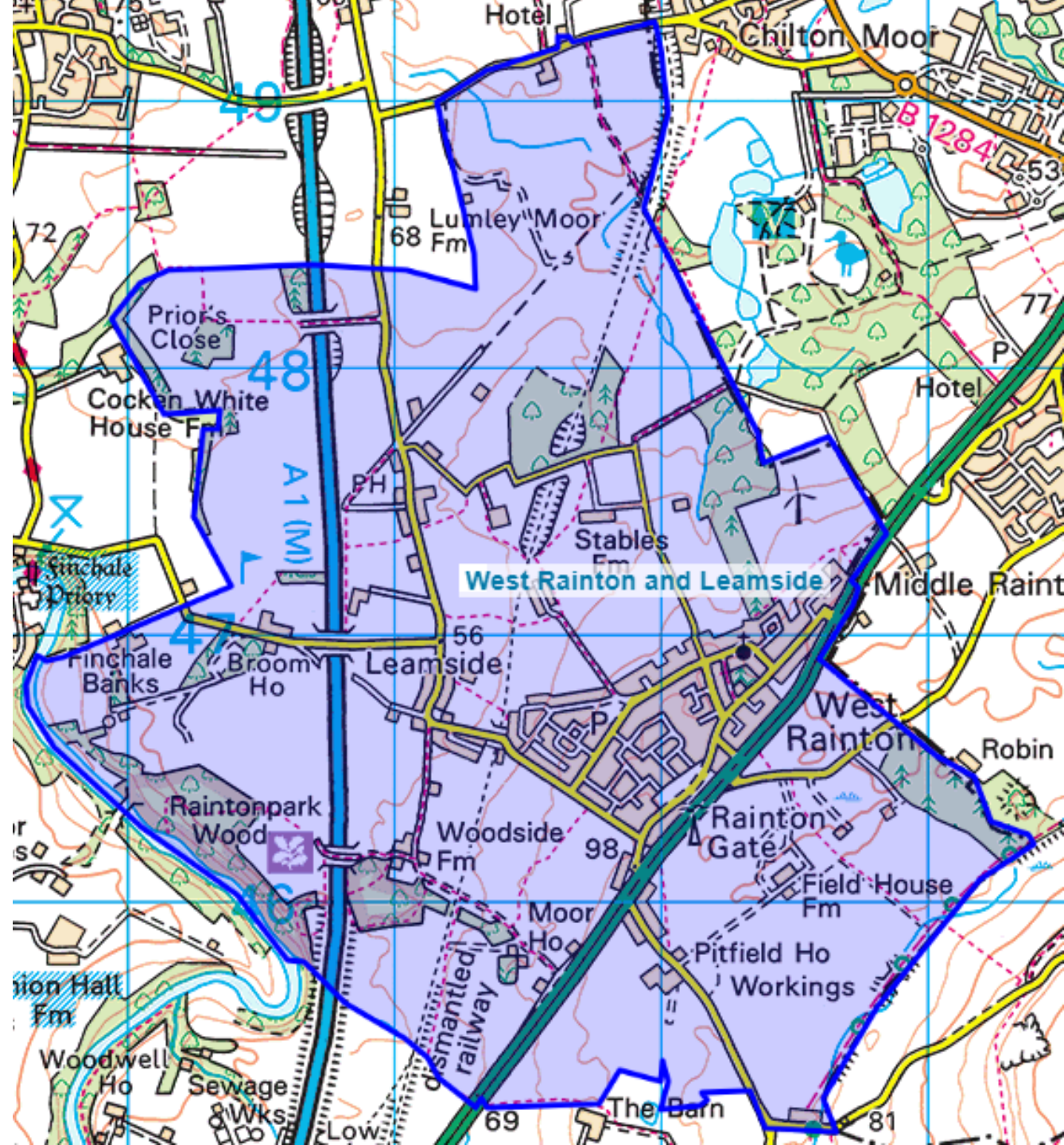
Councillor Ian Diggory
Chair, West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council

AGENDA

1. Introduction by the Chair
2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 8th May, 2025
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
- Regular bus service to Durham & Sunderland
- Some retail/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
Access to a Nature Reserve (74 hectare)

2021 Census:

Population = 2334

Electorate = 1805

Homes ~ 1100

Since then:

Allenson View added 65 houses

Cathedral Meadows adds 150 houses

Community Hub - possibly 20 houses



PARISH of WEST RANTON & LEAMSIDE

In 2028?

Probably have 400 more electors

Population closer to 3000

Occupying 1350+ properties

Demographic in 2028?

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 2025

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

ANNUAL REPORT WEST RANTON & LEAMSIDE PARISH COUNCIL

Follow the link:

[West Ranton & Leamside Parish Council](#)



YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

- WR&L PC is an independent statutory body of up to 9 councillors elected by local residents.
- Councillors are volunteers and receive no payment for their services.
- WR&L PC currently has 1 vacancy.

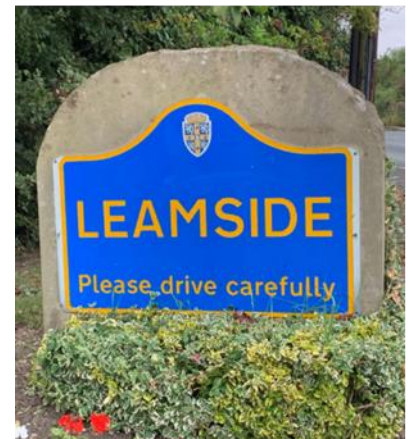
Ian Diggory (Chair)
Kevin Wood (Vice Chair)
Avril Wallage
Allan Langford
Steve Corfield
Malcolm Stabler
Margaret Scott
Michael Potts



The PC employs Mark Ramshaw as its parish clerk. Mark is a paid part-time (10 hr/week) 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.

HOW DO WE SEE 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.



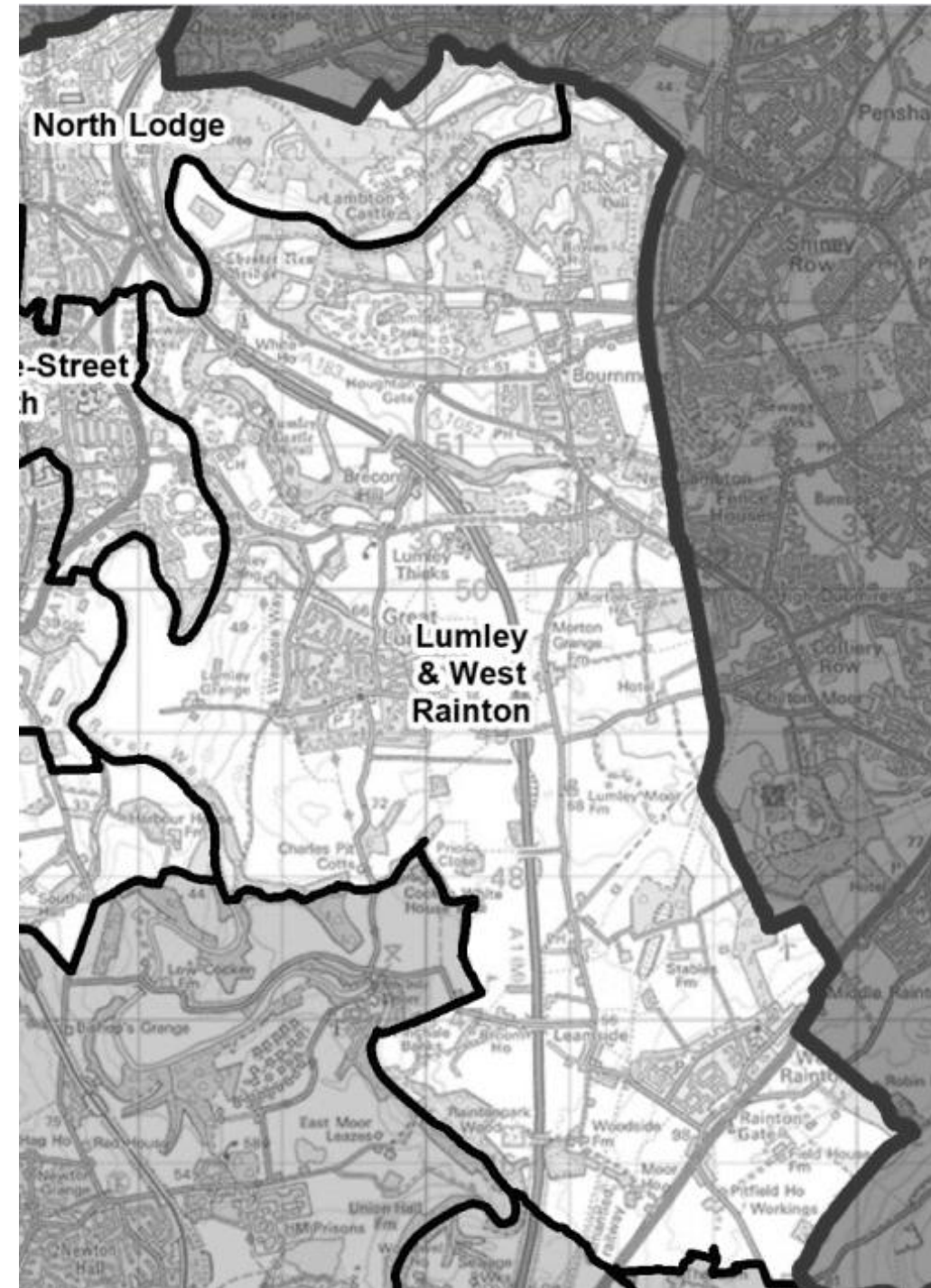
1st May 2025 - LOCAL ELECTIONS

WR&L parish boundary remained the same

WR&L parish is now part of the newly created Lumley and West Rainton division.

In addition to WR&L parish, this new division includes parishes of Bournmoor, Great Lumley and Woodstone Village.

This division elected two county councillors **Alan Bell and Phil Heaviside** to represent our interests at county level.



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' that become available through a variety of agencies.

PRECEPT REVIEW

A summary of income received and payments made in 2025/26 and budget forecast for 2026/27 is given in the report.

In January 2026, the PC reviewed its current financial position and agreed a draft budget for the financial year 2026/27.

Based on these estimates, increasing costs and the fact that we had not increased the precept for a couple of years, PC decided on:

5% increase in precept for 2026/27

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

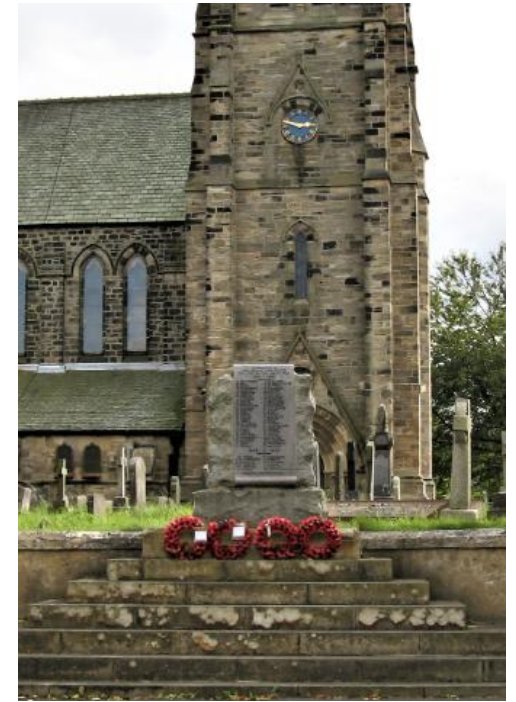
	2024/25	2025/26
Precept	£39,618	£41,483
Other	£11,490	£11,491
TOTAL Income	£51,108	£52,974
TOTAL Spend	£35,958	£47,598
Surplus	£15,150	£5,376
Start of year	£42,795	£57,945
End of year	£57,945	£63,321
Village Improv. plan	£20,000	£20,000
Election reserve	£4,000	£4,000
Reserve Balance	£81,945	£87,321

FORECAST 2026/27

Draft Budget, May 2026	2026/27
Precept	£44,757
Other	£7,387
TOTAL Income	£52,144
TOTAL Spend	£51,638
Surplus for year	£506
Start of year	£63,321
End of year	£63,827
Earmarked reserve	£20,000
Election reserve	£4,000
Reserve Balance	£87,827

GENERAL 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 Xmas Carols event
- Support for refurbishment and management of Jubilee Hall



- 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.

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE WITH RESIDENTS?

- Monthly meetings to which the public are always welcome to attend. Meeting notices and agendas are put on 3 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.

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

Since 1st April 2024 we have a new hosting company to support PC website.

Easier access Clearer presentation Comprehensive information

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

Our thanks to Iain Clifford for keeping information on PC website up to date.

Search News Categories

(3)
(4)
(4)
(1)
(4)
(6)
(2)
(2)

Roads and Traffic

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

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

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.



Search News

[Go!](#)

Search News Categories

Cemetery	(4)
Community	(4)
Community News	(5)
Election	(1)
Environment	(4)
Housing & Development	(6)
Parish Financial	(1)
Parish Vacancies	(1)
Roads and Traffic	(2)
Sport and Leisure	(2)
Uncategorised	(9)

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 in 2024 to seek planning consent for the construction of 20 affordable homes on the site.

October 2024: PC submitted a letter stating it had no objection to the proposed affordable homes 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 retail outlet - as originally planned.

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

May 2025: Parish Council contacted a number of retailers to gauge interest in establishing an outlet on the Community Hub site. Tentative response from Coop, which came to nothing.

COMMUNITY HUB DEVELOPMENT

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

July 2025: Developer submits a planning application which includes a mixture of affordable homes and a retail outlet – but with no tenant identified. Application was approved.

Where are we today:

Developer awaiting result of his planning appeal.

No retailer has come forward to take up retail space.

If the developer wins his appeal he will in theory have the option of developing the site with affordable homes only or with fewer homes and a retail unit.

PROPOSAL FOR LONDIS STORE IN THE VILLAGE

December 2025: An application is made for a “Premises License” to sell alcohol from a proposed Londis store to be sited in the old Methodist Chapel. **License was granted.**

PC requested limit on alcohol selling times – which was granted as a condition of the license.

**Where are we today:
No signs of a Londis store opening.
Methodist Chapel back on the market.**



CATHEDRAL MEADOWS DEVELOPMENT

September 2025: Feedback from Russell Hall MD Banks Group

Development is progressing very well in terms of sales, build quality and customer satisfaction.

Completed sale of 38 of the 150 homes already and have another 11 homes reserved/exchanged.

98 of the homes are already in build. We are targeting full site completion in 2027.

There are no commercial or technical reasons that are preventing our progression.

Hope this helps to dispel any rumours going around.

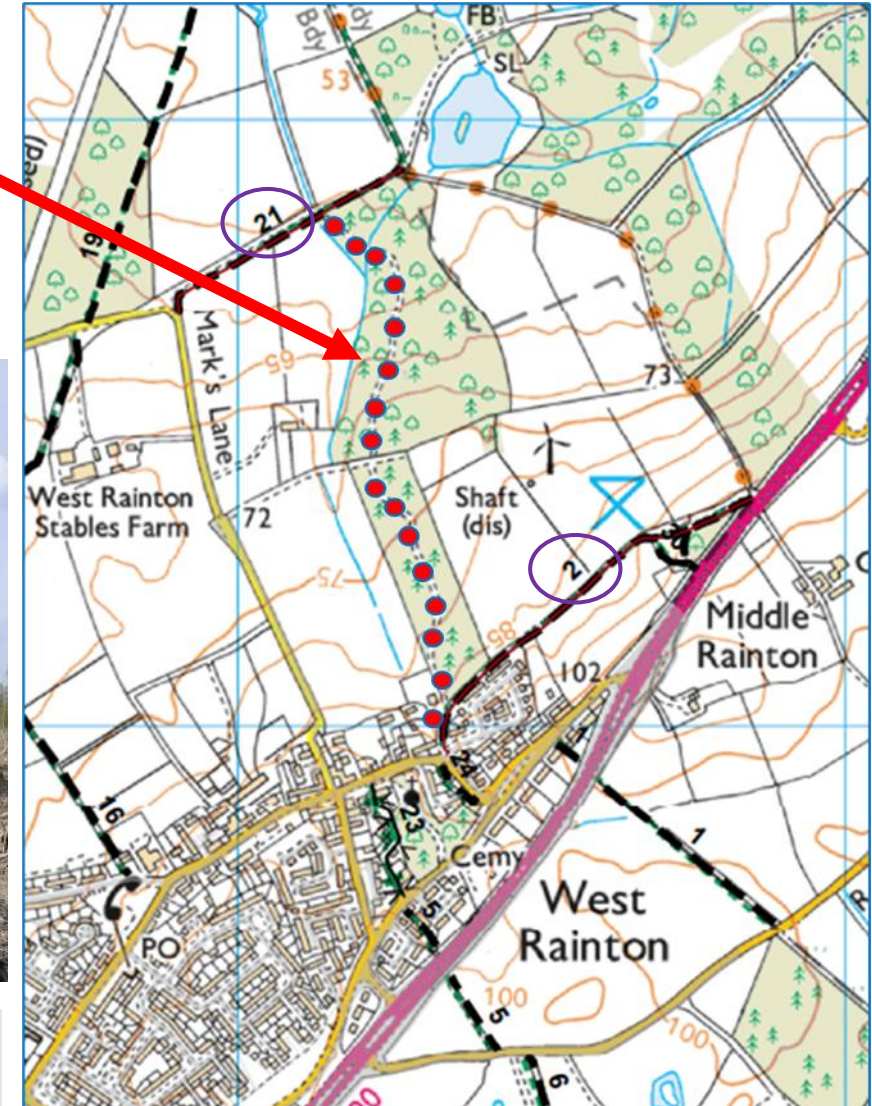
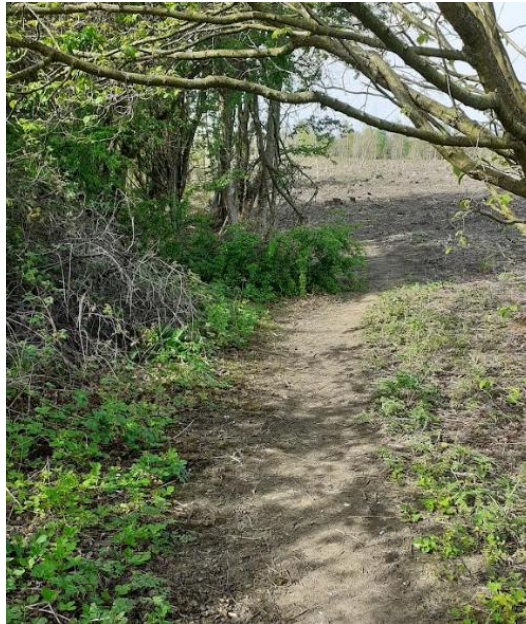


Our community receives a financial benefit from such developments - called Section 106 monies.

UNREGISTERED FOOTPATH

Residents raised concern over access to this unregistered footpath linking the Dene with the Red Track

Dec. 2025: DCC approved registration of this path as a Public Right of Way on its Definitive Map



LANDOWNER to APPEAL the DECISION

SCHOOL AVENUE PARK PROJECT

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

(Grant funding for outdoor gym element secured by DCC.)

(Grant funding for street furniture element secured by the PC)

- ✓ Outdoor Gym with equipment designed for use by residents of all abilities and fitness is in place.
- ✓ Family seating area, consisting of benches, picnic tables and a tree seat has been installed.
- ✓ Many of the large boulders on the border of the site have been transferred to another part of the village.
- ✓ Erection of metal fence around the whole area provides a safe enclosure.



- Request for more play elements, e.g. a climbing frame.
- DCC says village has its quota of outdoor facilities.
- PC would have to apply for a lease on the land and pay for installation
- There would be ongoing costs for maintenance and insurance.

IMMEDIATE THREAT TO JUBILEE HALL AVERTED

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

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

Following discussions with various interested parties the PC set up a **working group**.

Its remit was to **establish a management team** to ensure the long-term future of Jubilee Hall.

- **New board of trustees appointed**
- **New management team in place**



FUTURE PLANS FOR JUBILEE HALL

The new management team has made significant progress in planning refurbishment of Jubilee Hall.

Plans have been approved and a new café/meeting room area has been set up. A volunteer team has come together to manage the café.

Parish Council continues to work closely with the Community Association in its efforts to refurbish Jubilee Hall.



April 2026: At our April meeting we resolved to establish a fund from the Village Reserve to support projects in Jubilee Hall, helping to secure future of this vital community asset.

June 2026: From June onwards the monthly parish council meeting will be held in the newly opened café area in Jubilee Hall.

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 to consider the cost, supply and maintenance of any trees to be planted and develop a plan to progress this project.



PARISH ENVIRONMENT: HERITAGE GARDEN



PARISH CEMETERY

Following representations from residents, new cemetery rules and regulations were drawn up and came into force on 1st April 2025.

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



Cemetery maintenance costs are significantly greater than the income generated from burials, but this will always be the case.

The Cemetery is a valued community asset and the PC continues to invest in maintaining its appearance and safety for the benefit of all.

- **Specialist tree company consulted over condition of cemetery trees**
- **Remedial work carried out on height of central avenue of lime trees**
- **Overhanging tree branches cut back from neighbouring property**
- **Steps and handrail installed to provide access to new burial area**
- **Stress testing of headstones to be carried out**
- **New noticeboard set up on cemetery wall**

WEST RANTON & LEAMSIDE PARISH COUNCIL - ANNUAL PLAN 2026

Theme 1	Communication and Engagement with Residents	How well do we communicate with residents and community groups? What measures are we taking to ensure good communication and what measures might we take to improve those communications?
Theme 2	Addressing Road Safety Concerns	Speeding and illegal parking are two issues that residents regularly raise. What actions can we take to address these and other road safety issues?
Theme 3	Protecting and Improving our Environment	We monitor our built environment by vetting all planning applications. Is there anything else we should do? Our extensive green environment covers village trees, planters, woodland, streams, footpaths, grass verges, play parks, etc. Problems include litter and fly tipping. Are there actions we can undertake, probably in collaboration with Green Group, to maintain and improve our green environment?
Theme 4	Community Well-Being	Are there any initiatives we can take to improve or extend support for activities or groups who bring benefit of our community? These can include any kind of recreational facilities that promote improved physical and mental well being
Theme 5	Maintaining Good Governance in Parish Council operations	Openness, Transparency and Accountability are three watchwords of good governance. What do we do to demonstrate the parish council is compliant, efficient and well managed? Is there room for improvement and if so what actions should we undertake to achieve such improvements?
Theme 6	Cemetery Management	The parish council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the parish cemetery. It does this through a range of policies that are reviewed on a regular basis. This theme is intended to document the activities that we as a PC undertake in relation to the operation of the cemetery and its grounds as well as responding to cemetery-related concerns raised by residents.

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

Example from Annual Plan.

Relates to actions under Theme 4: Community Well-Being

4. Community Well-Being				
Theme 4	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Status
4.5	Continue to support the Community Emergency Group (CEG) with its development of a Community Emergency Plan.	Cllr Wallage	Development of the Plan is now complete. The final plan document is now complete and registered with DCC, Civil Contingency Unit. This was developed by the Community Emergency Group (CEG) volunteers. The group is now a member of the Village Partnership. The next stage is the training of other volunteers, the testing of the plan with support from the CCU, and then promotion and publication within the community and those partner organisations named in the plan that need to know about it. Cllr Wallage is a member of CEG but in an individual capacity as a community volunteer not a representative of the Parish Council. No further action needed by the Parish Council on the plan development. However, should the plan be activated the Parish Council will be kept informed of any communications arising. The Clerk will be the initial contact who will share info and updates received from the CEG with members and the community via website and facebook. However, in an emergency, email communication may not be the most effective form of communication and all groups within the "communication tree" set out in the plan are encouraged to set up a Whatsapp group.	
4.6	Assess improvements to the safety and usage of Adventure Park	Cllr Wallage in consultation with Local Ward Members	Carry over from 2023/24. Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) project near football pitches planned with support of the AAP and DCC Member funding. Ongoing	
4.7	Additional defibrillator in the village. Determine location, costs and funding opportunities in consultation with Village Partnership-	Parish Clerk. Cllr Diggory & Cllr Wallage	Cllr Stabler reported on types of defibrillator available and potential costs. VP consulted but no location determined. Suggestion of Homer Hill Farm. Manager contacted and is amenable, but needs follow up discussion. Ongoing	

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026/27

- Support the Community Association in developing 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 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



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

What sort of parish do you 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.

Steering Group: Formed by members of the community which met monthly for a year.

Questionnaires: Steering group drafted key questions based on issues identified at initial consultations and from previous village surveys.

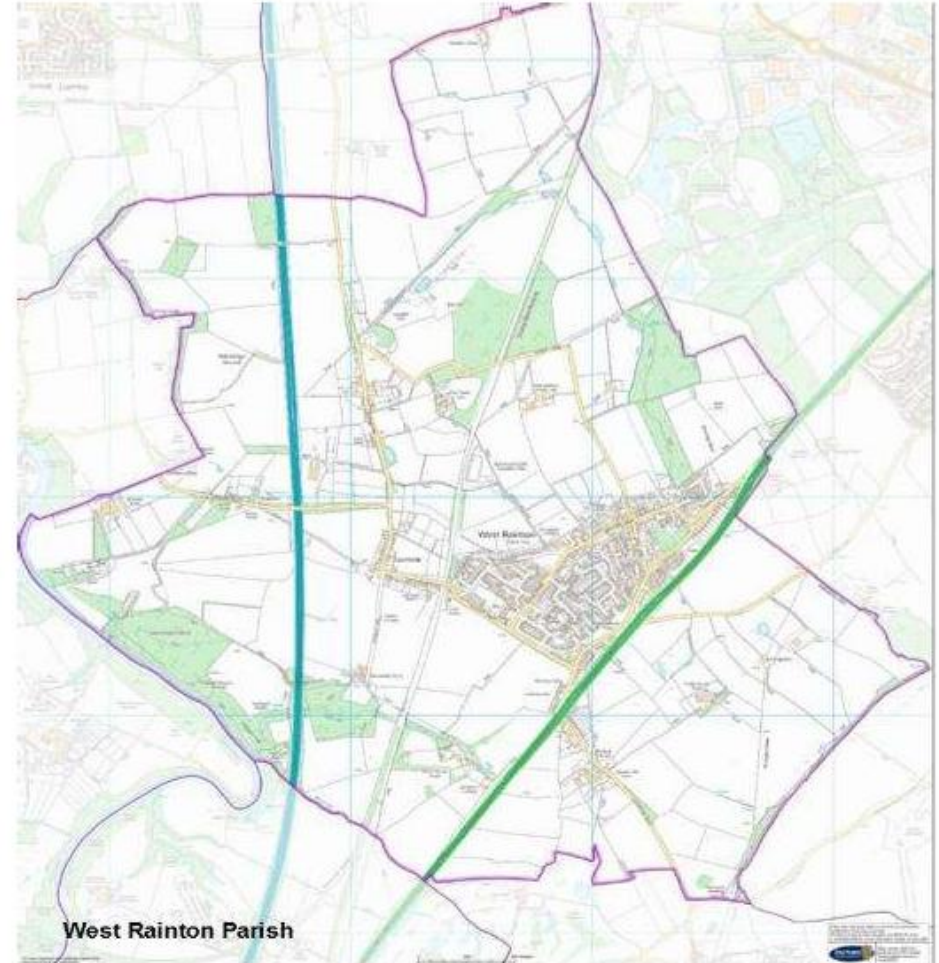
- Environment and Housing,
- Transport and Traffic,
- Social & Community,
- Your Village

Distributed to all residents (young and old) and businesses

Parish Plan: Results from questionnaires, and feedback from the consultation events were collated to produce an **Action Plan** that was incorporated into the **Parish Plan**

10 years on:
Perhaps we should revisit the Parish Plan?

West Rainton Parish Plan 2017



Final version – 9th May 2017

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 Community Association, etc.
Community engagement	Greater involvement of residents, etc.
Road Safety	Traffic control measures, cycle tracks and walk-ways
Telecommunications	Ultra-fast broadband, etc.
Energy	Conservation, off grid generation, renewables, etc.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING



THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING