

HEDLEYHOPE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 17 February 2026 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, East Hedleyhope

Present

Chair: Deb Warde (DW)

Cllrs: Pete Ayling (PA), Judith Patrick (JP), Tony Reeve (TR), Sarah Stuart (SS), Jean Thorburn (JT)

County Cllr: Matt Burnard

Officer: Gillian Bell (Clerk)

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Sarah Woodroffe, PCSO Paige Hart

2. Declarations of Interest

None to declare.

3. Public Participation

No members of the public present.

4. County Councillor's Report

Cllr Matt Burnard reported that the County Council's budget for 2026/7 would go to full Council for approval on 18 February. There would be no increase in the core council tax but a 1.99% increase in the social care element. He outlined the Council's spending plans including: special educational needs places (£200m), repairing schools (£44.3m), care in the community (£7m), disabled facilities (£22.5m), highway maintenance (£47m), footpaths (£4m), drainage (£1.5m), town and village enhancements (£5m) and the Local Networks scheme (£5.2m).

Section 106 funding was still available in Deerness ward, some of which had been allocated to the Langley Park and Bearpark cricket team. It was noted that the Parish Council wished to make an application in order to replace some of the play equipment. There was a smaller amount of S106 funding allocated to public art which Cllr Burnard had suggested could be used to provide a remembrance bench to each of the villages in the ward.

A number of local matters were raised: the flooding in West View, Deerness View and along the road towards Commercial Street following any heavy rainfall; clearing the leaves and debris on the pavement from Deerness View to Rose Terrace; the nature reserve and meadow, including strimming the paths and future management plans; the 20mph speed limit signs, and the ongoing problem with the erosion of the surface over the culvert on the track leading to Stanley Hall Farm. Cllr Burnard agreed to follow up on these issues and the Clerk would forward further information.

PCSO briefing

A written report had been circulated.

- Consett Neighbourhood Team had executed a drug warrant in Lanchester and seized a number of cannabis plants. The investigation was ongoing.
- Reports had been received of dismembered deer being left in black plastic bags and these were being investigated.
- There had been several reports of poaching which were being followed up with the affected farmers. A warning letter and a community protection warning had been issued.

6. **Minutes and recommendations therein agreed from previous meeting on 27 January 2026**

Proposed by TR, seconded by JP.

7. **Budget update**

Balance as of 17 February 2026:

Income: £13923.59
Expenditure: £14447.12

Earmarked project expenditure:

Seat repair and installation: £1000
Windfarm Community Fund (seating project): £1803

The bank reconciliation for January 2026 had been circulated.

8. **Appointment of Internal Auditor**

It was agreed to appoint Gordon Fletcher as the independent internal auditor for 2025/6.

9. **Matters relating to the village hall, village green and nature reserve**

Upgrading the kitchen

JT had not received a reply from the kitchen company she had approached. It was agreed that the Clerk would try to find a fitter from one of the trades websites and other kitchen suppliers would also be considered.

Windfarm Community Fund projects - update

A quote of £140 + VAT had been received to fit a timer to the festoon lights and it was agreed that the Clerk would contact the electrician to arrange for the work to be carried out.

New Windfarm Community Fund application – furniture for the village hall and step repair

DW had obtained a quote of £150 from DCBS to create a non-slip surface on the village hall step. There was also an option to use slabs and a quote would be requested.

S106 play area project - update

The Clerk had contacted DCC to check if the revised work on the play area could go ahead and was waiting for a reply.

10. **Diseased ash tree in West View**

Two residents in West View had contacted TR regarding an ash tree which they thought had ash dieback. The upper branches were also close to overhead wires. In discussion it

was suggested that this was a rowan tree, which had been healthy last year. It was felt that it would be better to wait until the spring before making a decision on whether it needed to be removed. Cllr Burnard suggested contacting one of the DCC tree officers to check if the tree was diseased and it was agreed that the Clerk would do this.

11. **Future Projects**

No further projects were raised.

12. **Members' reports**

None to report.

13. **Clerk's report**

Financial

Payments made in February 2026:

G Bell	£ 461.28	January salary & IT costs
SafetySigns4Less	£ 22.18	Fire safety signs for village hall
TalkMobile	£ 6.95	Village hall WiFi
20i	£ 12.00	Website hosting – February 2026
Octopus Energy	£ 138.60	Village hall electricity charges: Jan 2026
Total:	£ 641.01	

Payments received:

Cuppa 'n' Cake	£ 20.00	Village hall hire
Total:	£ 20.00	

Petty cash float: £1.88

- The Clerk would put up new fire safety signs in the village hall.
- DCC Road Safety had been contacted regarding the 20mph signs but no reply had yet been received.
- Makepeace Landscapes had been asked for a quote for slabs for the restored seat bases.
- DCC had been contacted regarding making good the area around the gate into the meadow.
- A planning application from Clean Earth Energy regarding retaining infrastructure to allow the continued operation of the High Hedley windfarm had been circulated and there were no objections. Further information can be found on the DCC Planning Portal using reference DM/26/00231/FPA.

14. **Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 24 March 2026 at 7.30 pm

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Signed

Cllr Sarah Woodroffe
Chair
24 March 2026