

Minutes of the Meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Thursday 9th October 2025
in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Rooms, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

1. Present – Marge Rastall (Chair), John Austin, Nicola Matthews, Gill Whatmough, Edward Parker, County Cllr Colin Horncastle.
2. Apologies for Absence – Lauren Kristensen, David Flatman, Roger Rutherford.
3. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 11th September 2025 – Approved
4. Declarations of Interest – None
5. Matters Arising –

5.1 Lilswood Caravan site – NM chased Alex Campbell for an update about the remaining breach of conditions, including the colour of certain units. The Breach of Condition Notice was served in June 2025 and the site owner has until 15th December 2025 to comply. The planning department will do a site visit in late December and if the breach is continuing, prosecution will be considered.

5.2 Local Transport Plan – A letter had been received from Derwent Gibson requesting that the road from Rennys Barn to Viewley be included in the Council's request to NCC for road improvements. It was agreed that Doctors Lane, which has been badly damaged by heavy vehicles, be our first request, followed by the road to Viewley, and then the road from Whitley Chapel heading to Harwood Shield, particularly the bends near Mire house.

5.3 Governance Review – A Questionnaire regarding the Council's views on the size of the council, and whether it should be divided, or merged with other local parish councils was discussed and completed on the basis that we thought the present arrangements worked well and no changes were necessary.

5.4 Internal Thermal Camera (arrangements for public access) – there have been some issues regarding the company selling the camera being willing only to sell to certain type of companies, so a further supplier is being sourced. When purchased, it is proposed that the camera be kept in a locked cupboard in the hall, and be loaned out to parishioners when requested, with a register being kept as to who has possession of the camera at any given time.

6. Public Participation - Neil and Tracy Pattison were in attendance. They have a planning application under consideration with NCC and wished to observe the council meeting.

7. Matters for discussion with the Unitary Councillor

7.1 25/03263/VARYCO Land West of Windy Hill – JA expressed surprise that the Highways Department supported the variation application to increase the area of landfill, when so much damage has already occurred to the road as a result of the heavy wagons transporting the materials, but noted that the Highways Department response has since been removed from the planning portal, and the title has been changed to add “Partly Retrospective”. Councillor Horncastle said he would email Karen Blyth to ask: - a) why there is no link between Highways Development and Highways local officers to get the views of local people, before they make comments; and b) should conditions not be added to permissions to require the land owners to repair roads damaged by heavy wagons importing materials to a landfill site.

7.2 – Schools – NCC are building new schools in Berwick and Amble, and a new school has opened in Seaton.

7.3 QTS Data Centre in Blyth – Site preparation is now underway ahead of construction work. The project represents investment of up to £10 billion.

7.4 Revision of NCC Local Plan – This is necessary as a result of much higher house building quotas being demanded of county councils by the Government. A “Call of Sites” has just ended. Councillor Horncastle said it was inevitable that new houses would be built west of Hexham. It will take 2-3 years for the new local plan to be concluded.

7.5 Library van – GW reported that a library van had been regularly visiting Whitley Chapel, but without prior notice being given, and in an unmarked van, so no one knew it was there. Councillor Horncastle suggested that GW contact Wendy Pattinson, who is the responsible Cabinet member at NCC, to suggest that a timetable be published etc.

8. Resilience Hub

Tom Kristensen has relocated the generator. Ross Henderson has carried out a service. A fault has been found. Tom has contacted the manufacturer to discuss this because even though the generator is out of warranty, it has been used so little, and shouldn't be faulty. A response is awaited.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Play Inspection Company – Repeat Order form. It was agreed NM would respond to book a play ground inspection in June 2026.

10. Finance

10.1 – Lloyds Bank Complaint to the Financial Ombudsman – GW has submitted the complaint and a reply is awaited.

10.2 Internal Thermal Camera – Not yet paid, as not yet purchased.

10.3 Microsoft Subscription – The Microsoft licence on the council laptop has expired. Microsoft 365 costs £85 p.a. NM will check with DF as to whether this is required to keep all parish records backed up, and if so, it was agreed that the subscription should be purchased.

11. Planning Applications

11.1 - 25/03263/VARYCO Land West of Windy Hill - It was recorded that an objection had been submitted to the planning portal before the meeting to meet the deadline for comment. The reasons for objection are:- a) the landfill site on the original application has already been exceeded; b) there should be a condition requiring road repairs; c) the drawings may not be accurate, they weren't clear; d) there should be controls to ensure vehicle movements don't cause a safety risk to the public; and e) there seems to be no justification for the increase in the size of the tip nor its position.

12. Highways, footpaths and BOATS

No outstanding issues.

13. Reports

13.1 Wetlands – GW to request Juliet Rogers to remove the ponies by the end of October.

13.2 Hall – The new boiler and defibrillator batteries have been installed.

13.3 School – Nothing to report.

13.4 Dukesfield Arches – Nothing to report.

13.5 Sportsfield & Play Area – Rick Horton will carry out repairs shortly.

14. Any Other Business

14.1- MR had attended an NCC Parish Council Chairs meeting. Minutes were circulated. It was apparent that most other Parish Councils have the same issues with NCC and there is widespread frustration about responsiveness, planning processes and service delivery. An online forum for Parish Council Chairs is to be explored. JA had also attended a Parish & Town Councils Meeting hosted by Glen Sanderson, NCC Council Leader, for councillors to inform NCC what they wanted NCC to do more or less of over the next four years. JA reported the main concern was lack of communication from NCC.

14.2 Nomination – National World Events – a nomination has been sent with regard to a local parishioner.

14.3– Parish Clerk vacancy – no applicants so far, so advertising will continue.

14.4- Hexham Courant Correspondent – no one has come forward so far, so a volunteer is still being sought, although Ruth Marlee is continuing for the time being.

Meeting closed at 9 pm