

Minutes of the Meeting of Hexhamshire Parish Council held on Thursday 13th November 2025 in the Malcolm Caisley Meeting Rooms, Whitley Chapel Parish Hall

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

5.1 – There was a discussion about the Construction Method Statement recently uploaded to the planning portal by the Applicant. Most of the points included are retrospective. It states that the only material yet to be delivered is concrete (approx. 9 wagon loads). The next stage is stated to be “Consultation” on 27th November 2025.

5.2 Donation made to Tyne Rivers Trust – Christopher Porter had informed the council that the Tyne Rivers Trust initiative to install camera posts in various locations, such as our Wetlands, is going ahead, so the council has paid the re-agreed donation of £250.00.

5.3 Internal Thermal Camera – the camera has now arrived. David Flatman will test it out and find some instructions on YouTube to provide to parishioners who wish to borrow the camera. Please contact your local parish councillor to arrange to borrow the camera.

6. Public Participation - None.

7. Matters for discussion with the Unitary Councillor - Councillor Horncastle was not in attendance.

8. Correspondence

8.1 Prevent Handbook – This has been received from NCC and copies distributed to all councillors. It is in relation to addressing the causes of radicalisation and to improve early intervention for those at risk of being radicalised.

8.2 Free Trees from NCC – NCC have free trees to distribute to local organisations and residents. Availability has been advertised on Whitley Chapel Parish Hall Facebook page.

8.3 Letter from Ben Haywood Smith re BT Open Reach Fibre to Property – the letter inquired whether the parish council knew if this was to be rolled out in Hexhamshire, as it has been in Corbridge. The Open Reach website says, “There are no major plans to build”, in our area. Councillor Horncastle had been approached prior to the meeting, and he responded to say that he thinks that the way ahead to better internet for Hexhamshire, is via B4RN, as in Allendale. B4RN put up notices around Hexhamshire a while ago and asked for anyone interested to register with them. Apparently 19% of properties expressed interest, which B4RN consider to be “reasonable”. They say a volunteer has approached some of the larger landowners, but one of them hasn’t responded. B4RN would like some volunteers in Hexhamshire to help drive things along. They are happy to attend a parish meeting about the project, and therefore the council plan to organise such a meeting, which will be open to the public and advertised appropriately.

9. Finance

9.1 – Lloyds Bank Complaint to the Financial Ombudsman – A detailed reply is still awaited.

9.2 - Microsoft Subscription – It was agreed to purchase the Business version of Microsoft 365 at a cost of £138p.a. including VAT.

9.3 - Invoice for Council meeting room hire of £45.00 was approved for payment.

10. Planning Applications

10.1 25/04089 FUL Land West of Windy Hill – Erection of Agricultural Building

11. Highways, footpaths and BOATS

There was a discussion about the fact that the Fix My Street website is effective for road issues, but not for footpath issues. It was agreed that we would continue to use Fix My Street but also raise footpath issues by email to the footpaths officer at NCC.

12. Reports

12.1 Wetlands – The ponies have been removed.

12.2 Hall – Tom Kristensen is still pursuing the generator manufacturer regarding the fault. The Hall is holding a Christmas Fayre on Sunday 7th December from 10am – 2pm and a panto on 12th December.

12.3 School – The school is holding a quiz night on 15th November to raise funds for the forest school. The children are enjoying their new forest cabin.

12.4 Dukesfield Arches – Nothing to report.

12.5 Sportsfield & Play Area – Rick Horton will be chased about carrying out the repairs. The Young Farmers will be requested to reduce the size of their bonfire in future years as some trees on neighbouring land suffered minor fire damage this year, due to wind.

14. Any Other Business

13.1 Parish Clerk vacancy – no applicants so far. The advert will be reworded to include more detail about hours and salary to try to attract more interest.

13.2 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.

13.3 Library van – GW reported before the meeting that the library van would visit Whitley Chapel every six weeks but for the time being it will be in an unmarked van. Dates will be advertised on the Whitley Chapel Parish Hall Facebook page.

13.4 David Flatman reported that a parishioner had complained about the fact the verges had not been cut on the ring road starting at Broadwell. This will be highlighted to NCC close to next year's the verge cutting season.

13.5 Bench near Kingslaw – This is in a damaged state. Lauren Kristensen will ask Hilary Kristensen if the bench belongs to the council, and ask Tom Kristensen/Matthew Hope whether it can be repaired or needs to be replaced.

Meeting closed at 8.30 pm