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Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held Monday 9 December 2024 at 7pm in West Cornforth Community Centre, Station Road, Cornforth, DL17 9LA.

Present: Councillors P Metcalfe (Chair), N Coombs, M Cunningham, P Drew, S Drew, J Ratcliff, J Snowball & R Vaughan.

In attendance: Mr R Ormerod (Parish Clerk) and one member of the public.

1	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillors J Beetham-Yelland, P Mayhew, S Metcalfe, V Parnaby and M Walker.</p> <p>Resolved: To receive and accept the apologies.</p>
2	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <p>The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to make declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that Cllr P Drew declared a personal interest in items 14 and 20 as a member of the board of the Cornforth Partnership.</p>
3	<p>Members' dispensation</p> <p>The Clerk informed the meeting that there were no dispensations for this meeting. It was noted that there were no dispensations.</p>
4	<p>Public participation</p> <p>None.</p>
5	<p>Minutes</p> <p>Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 11 November 2024</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr M Cunningham and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan, and it was</p> <p>Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings of the council held on 14 October 2024 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman at this meeting, subject to the correction that it was Cllr Snowball that seconded the proposal on Item 13.</p>
18	<p>Public transport</p> <p>Standing orders were suspended in order to receive a report from Mr Jonathan Mitchell, Network Planning and Services Manager at Durham County Council. A question and answer session followed.</p>
6	<p>County Councillor's report</p> <p>County Councillor Elaine Peeke addressed the meeting. It was noted neither the church nor Durham County Council wanted to take responsibility for the maintenance of the churchyard, and that it appeared as though each was waiting for the other to act. Cllr Peeke said she was not in favour of DCC taking over and that she would take up the</p>

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Date

	<p>matter with the diocese.</p> <p>Cllr Peeke reported that across her four years as County Councillor, approximately 42% of her Neighbourhood Budget had been spent in Cornforth and that she had tried to be equitable between Cornforth and the other areas in the division.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr J Ratcliff and seconded by Cllr S Drew, and it was</p> <p><i>Resolved: That the council receive the report.</i></p>
7	<p>Chairman's announcements</p> <p>The Chairman thanked members for their work during 2024 and wished them and their families a happy Christmas.</p>
8	<p>Police And Communities Together (PACT)</p> <p>Councillor N Coombs reported on a meeting set up by Livin which was an attempt to identify partner organisations and raise the profile of the village. Priorities identified included energy efficiency, facilitating litter picks, dealing with the problem of off-road vehicles and facades on the High Street.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr J Ratcliff and seconded by Cllr S Drew, and it was</p> <p><i>Resolved: That the council receive the report.</i></p>
9	<p>Area Action Partnership</p> <p>Cllr J Snowball informed the meeting that the AAP was not meeting until February 2025. It was noted that the police drone, paid for in part by the AAP, would be used in the parish at times.</p>
10	<p>Clerk's update</p> <p>The Clerk had circulated a written report. The Clerk also informed the meeting that he and Cllr Snowball would be meeting with the Neighbourhood Warden on 10 December to carry out a "walkabout" to discuss areas of concern.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Drew and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan, and it was</p> <p><i>Resolved: That the council receive the report.</i></p>
11	<p>Planning</p> <p>A discussion took place on the changes being made to land between the Flintlock Inn and 42A High Street.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr J Snowball and seconded by Cllr M Cunningham, and it was</p> <p><i>Resolved: That the Clerk contact Building Control at Durham County Council to ask whether permissions are needed and to try to establish ownership of the land.</i></p>
12	<p>Financial matters</p> <p>Members had received the Income and Expenditure Analysis for November 2024, the bank reconciliation at 30 November 2024, the expenditure against budget analysis from 1 April 2024 to 30 November 2024 and the list of pending payments. It was noted that the council had £115,297.26 in its current account and £185,261.12 in the reserve account.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor J Snowball and seconded by Councillor R Vaughan and it was;</p> <p><i>Resolved: To receive and approve the Income and Expenditure Analysis for November 2024.</i></p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor R Vaughan and seconded by Councillor M Cunningham and</p>

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Date

	<p>it was;</p> <p>Resolved: To receive and approve the bank reconciliation at 30 November 2024 and for it to be signed by the Chairman.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor J Snowball and seconded by Councillor R Vaughan and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: To receive and approve the expenditure against budget analysis for the period 1 April to 30 November 2024.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor M Cunningham and seconded by Councillor R Vaughan and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: To receive and approve the pending payments.</p>
13	<p>Budget and precept for 2025-26</p> <p>The Clerk and Vice-Chair had devised a draft budget which had been circulated to members. This estimated net expenditure in 2025-26 of £77,129. The Clerk reported on budget options and process. A discussion took place.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor P Drew and seconded by Councillor S Drew, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: To approve the draft budget.</p> <p>A discussion took place on the precept to be set and the level of reserves to be used to fund expenditure. Several members expressed a desire to “freeze” the precept at the current 2024-25 level.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor R Vaughan and seconded by Councillor S Drew, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: To request from Durham County Council a precept for 2025-26 of £67,411, resulting in a Band D charge of £110.33, and to use £9,717 from reserves to fund the remaining planned expenditure.</p>
14	<p>Renewal of lease for Cornforth House</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor J Snowball and seconded by Councillor S Drew, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That the council instruct Meikle’s solicitors of Sedgfield to proceed with the drawing up of a draft lease for Cornforth House, at a cost of £750+VAT.</p>
15	<p>Grounds Maintenance contract</p> <p>A discussion took place. Some members were of the view that the maintenance of the churchyard is not the responsibility of the parish council, and that maintaining it created insurance risks that should not be taken.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor P Drew and seconded by Councillor P Metcalfe, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That the maintenance of the churchyard be removed from the contract, with all other areas remaining the same.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor P Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor R Vaughan, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That the timetable for determining the contract be as follows:</p> <p>Thursday 19 December 2024: Advertise for tenderers</p> <p>Friday 24 January 2025 (12 noon): Closing date for submitted tenders</p> <p>Monday 27 January 2025: Clerk, Chairman and/or Vice Chair open and assess tenders.</p> <p>Monday 10 February 2025: Report to Ordinary Meeting of Council to consider and</p>

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Date

	<p>agree successful tenderer.</p> <p>Tuesday 11 February 2025: Notify successful tenderer and arrange pre contract meeting.</p>
16	<p>Tree works and survey</p> <p>Members had seen quotes from three companies with identifying information redacted. A discussion took place.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor R Vaughan and seconded by Councillor J Ratcliff, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That the work of undertaking the tree survey be offered to the firm submitting quote 2 (Batson Groundcare).</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor J Snowball and seconded by Councillor P Metcalfe, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That Cllr J Snowball be authorised to make an application for free trees from Durham County Council as part of its "Tree Week".</p>
17	<p>Dog fouling</p> <p>Resolved: That the matter be deferred to the January 2025 meeting of the council and in the interim that the Clerk provide members with a map of areas which are the responsibility of the parish council.</p>
19	<p>Royal Garden Party 2025</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor S Drew and seconded by Councillor P Drew, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That the council nominate Cllr N Coombs to attend.</p>
20	<p>Motions on notice</p> <p>1. Councillor R Vaughan moved, and Councillor J Snowball seconded, the following motion:</p> <p><i>Cornforth Parish Council shall approach Cornforth Partnership's Management Board with a view to purchasing 64 High Street and renting it to the Partnership (on a similar basis as the current situation with 66 High Street). This will support the Partnership to expand its valuable work and introduce new services, such as "pop up" shopping - which will benefit residents who are unable to travel easily outside of the village.</i></p> <p>Cllr R Vaughan pointed out that the purpose of the motion was simply to start discussions with the Cornforth Partnership.</p> <p>Resolved: That the motion be carried.</p> <p>2. Councillor J Snowball moved, and Councillor J Ratcliff seconded, the following motion:</p> <p><i>Cornforth Parish Council shall re-establish its Recreation and Amenities sub-committee with a view to identifying potential actions and improvements which the council might consider taking in relation to the feedback received from residents who responded to the recent residents' survey. The sub-committee shall focus on those areas which the parish council has responsibility for, with a view to developing an action plan (which could be used to identify possible external funding opportunities to develop amenities).</i></p> <p>Resolved: That the motion be carried.</p>

Signed

Date