

Chair of the Council:
Cllr Janet Snowball



Clerk:
Mr Richard Ormerod
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Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held Monday 8 December 2025 at 7pm in West Cornforth Community Centre, Station Road, Cornforth, DL17 9LA.

Present: Councillors J Snowball (in the Chair), J Beetham-Yelland, N Coombs, P Crathorne, M Cunningham, P Drew, P Metcalfe & 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 S Metcalfe & V Parnaby.</p> <p><i>Resolved: To receive and accept the apologies.</i></p>
2	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <p>The Chair invited members who wished to do so to make declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Vaughan declared an interest in items 13a, 13b and 13c. Cllr Drew declared an interest in item 13b. Cllrs Beetham-Yelland and P Metcalfe declared an interest in item 17 as allotment holders.</p>
3	<p>Members' dispensation</p> <p>Cllr Beetham-Yelland was granted a dispensation to speak and vote on item 17 as mover of the motion.</p>
4	<p>Public participation</p> <p>None.</p>
5	<p>Minutes</p> <p>Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 10 November 2025</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr M Cunningham and seconded by Cllr P Drew, and it was</p> <p><i>Resolved: That the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 10 November 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair at this meeting.</i></p>
6	<p>Chair's Announcements</p> <p>The Chair reported that the parish council newsletters had all been delivered and thanked those who assisted.</p> <p>It was noted that the Christmas lights in the High Street were now all on following some initial confusion with the installers.</p> <p>It was noted that the Chair had met with Willowcrete on site to discuss the fence between the Bill Wilson Memorial Park and the Livin land. The footpaths are to close and the spikes will be smaller than those around the rest of the park.</p>
7	<p>County Councillor's report</p>

Signed

Date

	None (Cllr Hutchinson was on Mayoral duties).
8	<p>Police And Communities Together (PACT)</p> <p>Cllr J Beetham-Yelland had attended the meeting as substitute and reported that the police were aware of illegal hunting in the parish.</p> <p>Resolved: To receive the report.</p>
9	<p>Clerk's update</p> <p>The Clerk had circulated a written report.</p> <p>It was reported that Alan Strickland MP had been in touch regarding 64 High Street and he had been informed that a notice had been served on the freeholder with enforcement action to be taken if necessary.</p> <p>It was noted that the Clerk was still having difficulty obtaining access to the defibrillator at the medical centre, having received no reply from the manufacturers. Different strategies were discussed for obtaining the information.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Crathorne and seconded by Cllr J Beetham-Yelland, and it was</p> <p>Resolved: That the council receive the report.</p> <p>Resolved: That the Clerk approach the primary school to see if their defibrillator is the same model.</p>
10	<p>Planning</p> <p>No issues were raised.</p>
11	<p>Financial matters</p> <p>Members had received the Receipts and Payments Analysis for November 2025, the bank reconciliation at 30 December 2025, the expenditure against budget analysis from 1 April 2025 to 30 December 2025 and the list of pending payments. It was noted that the council had £125,683.40 in its current account and £193,569.50 in the reserve account.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Crathorne and seconded by Cllr J Beetham-Yelland, and it was</p> <p>Resolved: To receive and approve the Receipts and Payments Analysis for November 2025.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Crathorne and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan, and it was</p> <p>Resolved: To receive and approve the bank reconciliation at 30 November 2025 and for it to be signed by Cllr P Drew.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr R Vaughan and seconded by Cllr J Beetham-Yelland, and it was</p> <p>Resolved: To receive and approve the expenditure against budget analysis for the period 1 April to 30 November 2025.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Metcalfe and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan, and it was</p> <p>Resolved: To receive and approve the pending payments.</p> <p>Members discussed the possibility of moving further funds from the council's current account to the reserve account.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Metcalfe and seconded by Cllr M Cunningham, and it was</p> <p>Resolved: To move £75,000 from the current account to the reserve account.</p>
12	<p>Council budget 2026-27</p> <p>It was noted that the council would be likely to lose £18,360 as a result of the likely</p>

Signed

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	<p>cessation of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grants by Durham County Council.</p> <p>A series of possible options had been presented in the Clerk's report. Cllr Drew asked for figures on the number of houses in the parish in each Council Tax Band.</p> <p>Resolved: That the council supports a Council Tax increase of zero or one in line with inflation, and asks the Chair and Clerk to devise a draft budget for approval at the January 2026 meeting of the council.</p> <p>A discussion took place on earmarked reserves. It was noted that the current list was out of date, including some redundant items, and that an item for the potential purchase of 64 High Street be added.</p> <p>Resolved: That the council's list of earmarked reserves be as follows (£):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15,800 Allotment improvements. • 7,365 Rockery/Shrubbery improvements in the Memorial Park. • 3,000 Improvements to seating, planters and bin in Station Road. • 2,000 Elections • 100,000 Purchase of 64 High Street • 35,000 Replacement play equipment and surfacing. • 10,000 Budget support. <p>Resolved: That the Clerk respond to the DCC budget consultation asking for the number of houses in the parish in each Council Tax band, clarification of whether the 5% increase in Durham County Council's precept includes the Social Care Levy, and a request that the council give appropriate consideration to the more deprived areas of the county.</p>
13	<p>Grant applications</p> <p>Applications for funding were received from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cornforth United AFC Youth Children's Christmas Party, West Cornforth Community Centre Friends of West Cornforth Primary School <p>Cllr Vaughan left the meeting for the whole of item 13. Cllr Drew left the meeting for item 13b. It was proposed by Councillor P Crathorne and seconded by Councillor J Beetham-Yelland and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That the council not donate to Cornforth United AFC Youth but be willing to consider again once the club is better established.</p> <p>Resolved: That the council donate £700 to West Cornforth Community Centre for the children's Christmas party.</p> <p>Resolved: That the council not donate to Friends of West Cornforth Primary School but be willing to consider again once the organisation is better established.</p>
14	<p>Land between Bill Wilson Memorial Park and Laburnum Road</p> <p>It was noted that Livin were interested in principle in disposing of the land to the parish council at a "peppercorn rent" but would make a decision in mid-December 2025.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor P Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor M Cunningham and</p>

Signed

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	<p>it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That the council consult residents of Laburnum Road, Ash Terrace and Raisby Terrace as to whether they would be amenable to the setting up of a dog park at this location.</p>
15	<p>Closure of churchyard, Holy Trinity Church, Cornforth</p> <p>It was noted that there had been a meeting with the Interim Change Minister from Holy Trinity Church on 24 November regarding closure of the churchyard, attended by the Clerk and officers from Bereavement Services at Durham County Council. This established the conditions under which DCC would agree to take over maintenance of the churchyard.</p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor J Beetham-Yelland and seconded by Councillor P Crathorne, and it was;</p> <p>Resolved: That the council supports the closure of Holy Trinity Churchyard (Cllr Drew abstained).</p>
16	<p>Durham County Council, Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy</p> <p>A discussion took place.</p> <p>Resolved: That the council take no action.</p>
17	<p>Motions on notice: Cllr J Beetham-Yelland moved the following motion:</p> <p>As the parish council's allotments are now seeing more use, they are becoming a target of thieves, and this has resulted in the theft of tools, of animals from the plots, and an increase in illegal hunting, which has culminated in a pet cat being killed and illegal hunting of wildlife escalating, particularly of owls.</p> <p>As the allotments are primarily used by local people as a source of both leisure and food, and are on private parish property, this council believes that we cannot simply ignore these problems.</p> <p>Fencing</p> <p>As it stands, renters are meant to sort their own fencing, but it may behove us to provide fencing to increase security as some of our allotment holders fall into low-income brackets. With the escalating costs of materials, it may well make allotments a luxury that only the more wealthy members of the community can afford to keep, excluding people already struggling during a cost-of-living crisis, particularly large families and disabled people who could do with a safe place to go in nature, and will use the plot for food.</p> <p>Cornforth Parish Council undertakes to fully investigate the following possible options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the parish council pays out-right for fencing around allotments. 2. the parish council liaises with existing plot holders and purchases the materials a plot at a time, setting up a payment plan for the plot holder that allows them the materials to build a fence, without having to pay everything upfront. <p>Signage</p> <p>Signs have now been designed and temporary versions are in place. These will not however last long.</p> <p>Cornforth Parish Council undertakes to install a more permanent signage system involving three metal signs of the same type and fitting.</p> <p>Trail cams</p> <p>Trail cameras can potentially act as a deterrent to crime, whilst also helping the council put</p>

in for environmental grants.

Cornforth Parish Council undertakes to apply for grants to improve the environment and security at its allotments, with Cllr Beetham-Yelland leading on the project.

Cllr P Metcalfe moved, and Cllr Beetham-Yelland seconded, the following amendment:

Retain all, and add at end: "The council shall obtain relevant costings for approval at a future meeting."

The amendment was carried.

The substantive motion to read:

As the parish council's allotments are now seeing more use, they are becoming a target of thieves, and this has resulted in the theft of tools, of animals from the plots, and an increase in illegal hunting, which has culminated in a pet cat being killed and illegal hunting of wildlife escalating, particularly of owls.

As the allotments are primarily used by local people as a source of both leisure and food, and are on private parish property, this council believes that we cannot simply ignore these problems.

Fencing

As it stands, renters are meant to sort their own fencing, but it may behove us to provide fencing to increase security as some of our allotment holders fall into low-income brackets. With the escalating costs of materials, it may well make allotments a luxury that only the more wealthy members of the community can afford to keep, excluding people already struggling during a cost-of-living crisis, particularly large families and disabled people who could do with a safe place to go in nature, and will use the plot for food.

Cornforth Parish Council undertakes to fully investigate the following possible options:

- 1. the parish council pays out-right for fencing around allotments.***
- 2. the parish council liaises with existing plot holders and purchases the materials a plot at a time, setting up a payment plan for the plot holder that allows them the materials to build a fence, without having to pay everything upfront.***

Signage

Signs have now been designed and temporary versions are in place. These will not however last long.

Cornforth Parish Council undertakes to install a more permanent signage system involving three metal signs of the same type and fitting.

Trail cams

Trail cameras can potentially act as a deterrent to crime, whilst also helping the council put in for environmental grants.

Cornforth Parish Council undertakes to apply for grants to improve the environment and security at its allotments, with Cllr Beetham-Yelland leading on the project.

The council shall obtain relevant costings for approval at a future meeting.