

Vice-Chair of the Council:
Cllr Paul Metcalfe



Clerk:
Mr Richard Ormerod
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Minutes of the Annual & Ordinary Council Meeting held Monday 11 May 2026 at 7pm in West Cornforth Community Centre, Station Road, Cornforth, DL17 9LA.

Present: Councillors P Metcalfe (in the Chair), J Beetham-Yelland, N Coombs, P Crathorne, P Drew, L Parkins, M Thompson, M Williams & R Vaughan.

In attendance: Mr R Ormerod (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Gary Hutchinson and several members of the public.

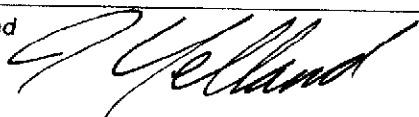
	Part 1 – Annual Meeting
1	Election of Chair for the municipal year 2026-2027 Two nominations were received for Cllr J Beetham-Yelland and Cllr P Crathorne. Both were seconded. A vote took place in which there were six votes for Cllr J Beetham-Yelland and two votes for Cllr P Crathorne. Resolved: That Cllr Joanne Beetham-Yelland be elected Chair of Cornforth Parish Council for the municipal year 2026-2027.
	Councillor Joanne Beetham-Yelland took the Chair.
2	Election of Chair for the municipal year 2026-2027 One nomination was received for Cllr P Crathorne which was seconded. A vote took place in which it was unanimously agreed to elect Cllr P Crathorne. <i>Cllr Coombs abstained</i> Resolved: That Cllr Pauline Crathorne be elected Vice-Chair of Cornforth Parish Council for the municipal year 2026-2027.
3	Apologies Apologies were received from Councillors M Cunningham, S Metcalfe & V Parnaby. Additional apologies were received from County Councillors Jan Blakey & Kyle Genner. Resolved: To receive and accept the apologies.
4	Declarations of interest The Chair invited members who wished to do so to make declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting. Cllrs J Beetham-Yelland, and P Metcalfe declared an interest in item 22 as allotment holders. Cllrs N Coombs and L Parkins declared an interest in item 24 as members of Holy Trinity Churchyard Volunteers. Cllr P Drew declared an interest in item 23 as a member of the Board of the Cornforth Partnership. Cllr J Beetham-Yelland wished to place on record that (in respect of item 22), whilst she had been part of setting up the Cornforth Animal Welfare Society, she had no ongoing interest.

Signed  Date

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5	<p>Members' dispensation</p> <p>None.</p>
6	<p>Public participation</p> <p>A member of the public requested by that the council follow up the issue of the fence on Station Road with Durham County Council. County Councillor Gary Hutchinson agreed to keep pressure on Durham County Council.</p> <p>A member of the public raised the issue of the state of wooded area on the right of Station Road which is owned by Network Rail. County Councillor Gary Hutchinson chase up the matter.</p> <p>A member of the public raised the issue of young people seen carrying rifles in the street in the village. They were advised to contact the police.</p>
7	<p>Minutes</p> <p>Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 13 April 2026.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr N Coombs and seconded by Cllr P Metcalfe, and it was</p> <p>Resolved: That the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 13 April 2026 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair at this meeting.</p>
8	<p>To consider and approve membership of the parish council's committees and working groups and on outside bodies:</p> <p>(The Chair and Vice-Chair are, by reason of their office, members of all committees)</p> <p>Resolved: That the following members be elected to the committees below:</p> <p>Planning Committee (6 members): Cllrs J Beetham-Yelland, P Crathorne, P Metcalfe, S Metcalfe & L Parkins (1 vacancy).</p> <p>Allotments Committee (6 members): Cllrs J Beetham-Yelland, P Crathorne, P Metcalfe, S Metcalfe M Thompson & R Vaughan.</p> <p>Recreation & Amenities Committee (6 members): Cllrs J Beetham-Yelland, P Crathorne, P Drew, S Metcalfe, L Parkins & V Parnaby.</p> <p>Cornforth Community Improvement Working Group (5 members): P Crathorne, N Coombs, L Parkins, V Parnaby & R Vaughan.</p>
9	<p>To consider and approve nominations for parish council representatives to outside bodies:</p> <p>Resolved: That the following members be elected to the committees below:</p> <p>Police & Communities Together (PACT) (1 member plus 2 reserves): Cllrs N Coombs, J Beetham-Yelland (reserve) & M Thompson (reserve).</p> <p>Thrislington Liaison (1 member plus 1 reserve): Cllrs P Crathorne & M Thompson (reserve).</p> <p>Cornforth Village Show (3 members): Cllrs J Beetham-Yelland, R Vaughan & M Williams.</p> <p>County Durham Association of Local Councils – Smaller Councils' Forum (2 members): Cllrs J Beetham-Yelland & V Parnaby.</p> <p>Board of Sedgefield Charities (1 member): Cllr M Thompson.</p>
10	<p>To consider and agree the planned meeting schedules for the municipal year 2026-2027.</p>

Signed

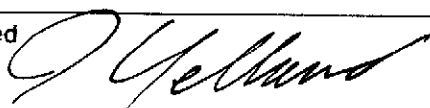


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	Resolved: That the proposed schedule of meetings be adopted and published on the council website.
11	Annual review of the council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Members' Code of Conduct Resolved: That the council re-adopt its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Members' Code of Conduct.
12	Annual review of the council's insurance cover Three quotes had been sought for provision of an insurance policy tailored to the parish council. This resulted in three prices being received (from two providers). It was proposed by Cllr P Metcalfe and seconded by Cllr P Crathorne, and it was Resolved: That the parish council enter into a three-year deal with Zurich Municipal to provide a full insurance policy for the parish council, at a cost of £2,376.63 (first year price).
13	Annual review of the council's bank mandate (signatories) It was noted that, due to resignations of members, the parish council was down to the minimum of two bank signatories (Cllrs P Crathorne and V Parnaby). Resolved: That Cllrs J Beetham-Yelland, P Drew and M Thompson be added to the list of bank signatories.
	End of Annual Meeting Part 2 – Ordinary Meeting
14	Chair's Announcements The Chair formally thanked members for electing her as Chair of the council. Resolved: To receive the announcements.
15	County Councillor's report County Councillor Gary Hutchinson gave a verbal report. Topics included untaxed cars, meetings of Livin and Thrislington Quarry, speeding vehicles on Station Road, potholes on the High Street and loose horses. Action was being taken in respect of all of the above. Resolved: To note the report.
16	Police And Communities Together (PACT) Cllr N Coombs had attended a recent meeting at which off-road motorbikes were discussed. It was noted that volunteers who had agreed to watch out and supply evidence of illegal riding were reluctant to do so in their own villages, so a "swap" had been organised between Cornforth and Bishop Middleham. Resolved: To receive the report.
17	Clerk's update The Clerk had circulated a written report. It was also noted that no election had been called to fill the vacancy on the parish council caused by the resignation of Janet Snowball. It was proposed by Cllr R Vaughan and seconded by Cllr P Metcalfe, and it was Resolved: That the council receive the report.
18	Planning No issues were raised.

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19	<p>Financial matters</p> <p>Members had received the Receipts and Payments Analysis for April 2026, the bank reconciliation at 30 April 2026, the expenditure against budget analysis from 1 April 2026 to 30 April 2026 and the list of pending payments. It was noted that the council had £81,197.17 in its current account and £272,441.60 in the reserve account.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Crathorne and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan, and it was Resolved: To receive and approve the Receipts and Payments Analysis for April 2026.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Crathorne and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan, and it was Resolved: To receive and approve the bank reconciliation at 30 April 2026 and for it to be signed by Cllr P Drew.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Crathorne and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan, and it was Resolved: To receive and approve the expenditure against budget analysis for the period 1 April 2026 to 30 April 2026.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Crathorne and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan, and it was Resolved: To approve the pending payments.</p>
20	<p>Report of the internal auditor</p> <p>Members considered the report from the council's internal auditor, Mr Scott Thornley. Whilst generally very positive, some areas for improvement had been noted, such as inaccuracies on the council website, non-earmarked reserve levels being relatively high and council policies being due for review.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Metcalfe and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan and it was: Resolved: That the council invite Mr Gary Stokoe (website manager) to the next council meeting to discuss improvements to the council website and email system.</p> <p>Resolved: That the council develop a rolling programme of reviewing its policies with one every other month coming to council for review across the council term.</p>
21	<p>Play equipment and surfacing, Bill Wilson Memorial Park</p> <p>The Clerk had circulated a report describing comments received from residents in response to the recent consultation.</p> <p>A discussion took place.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr P Drew and seconded by Cllr R Vaughan and it was: Resolved: That the council give the School Playground Specialists instruction to go ahead with the work of resurfacing and installing new equipment in the toddler play area in June 2026.</p> <p>Resolved: That the council investigate the possibility of obtaining a contribution from county councillors' Neighbourhood Budgets towards the cost.</p>
22	<p>Allotment improvements</p> <p>Two quotes for hedging in the parish council allotment site had been received and were considered.</p> <p>Cllr J Beetham-Yelland left the room.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr R Vaughan and seconded by Cllr N Coombs, and it was Resolved: To accept quote 2 for the provision of hawthorn and blackthorn hedging</p>

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	at the allotment site. Cllr P Metcalfe abstained.
23	<p>Request for financial assistance: Cornforth Partnership</p> <p>The Cornforth Partnership had requested financial assistance towards a trip to Flamingo Land for the older young people of West Cornforth during the summer holidays.</p> <p>Cllr P Drew left the room.</p> <p>Resolved: That the council make a donation of £887 towards the costs.</p>
24	<p>Motions on notice: Cllr N Coombs moved the following motion, seconded by Cllr L Parkins:</p> <p>Churchyard, Holy Trinity Church, Cornforth</p> <p>Cornforth Parish Council shall consider taking on maintenance of the graveyard attached to Holy Trinity Church in Cornforth, so that it remains a respectful, safe, and well-maintained space for residents, visitors, and those with loved ones buried there.</p> <p>If this is agreed, Cornforth Parish Council shall seek input from the church authority, obtain cost estimates from contractors and agree on a formal maintenance arrangement.</p> <p>A discussion took place.</p> <p>Cllr P Crathorne moved the following amendment, seconded by Cllr P Metcalfe:</p> <p>Delete paragraph 2 and replace paragraph 1 with:</p> <p>Cornforth Parish Council shall support maintenance of the graveyard attached to Holy Trinity Church in Cornforth by the probation service, so that it remains a respectful, safe, and well-maintained space for residents, visitors, and those with loved ones buried there. This could include funding or part-funding of mobile toilet facilities by the parish council, if agreed.</p> <p>A discussion took place.</p> <p>The amendment was carried by five votes for to three against and became the substantive motion.</p> <p>Cllr N Coombs moved the following amendment, seconded by Cllr L Parkins:</p> <p>Add at the end of the motion:</p> <p>"The parish council shall fund the maintenance of grassed areas in the churchyard."</p> <p>A discussion took place.</p> <p>The amendment was defeated by three votes for to five against.</p> <p>Council voted on the substantive motion which was carried by five votes for to two against, with one abstention.</p> <p>Resolved: Cornforth Parish Council shall support maintenance of the graveyard attached to Holy Trinity Church in Cornforth by the probation service, so that it remains a respectful, safe, and well-maintained space for residents, visitors, and those with loved ones buried there. This could include funding or part-funding of mobile toilet facilities by the parish council, if agreed.</p>

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