

DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING
held on THURSDAY 28TH MAY 2026 at 7:00PM
at The Spetchells Centre, Meeting Rooms 1 & 2 Front Street, Prudhoe, NE42 5AA

Present:

Cllr Jonathan Wheeler (Outgoing Chair) Cllr Chris Barrett, Cllr Kiran Bell, Cllr Dot Dickinson, Cllr Russ Greig, Cllr Jane Johnson, Cllr Val Leslie, Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Mike Smith, Cllr Glenn Simpson, Cllr Angie Scott (and County Cllr Prudhoe West & Mickley), Cllr Carol Stephenson, Cllr Ignasious Varghese, Cllr Holly Waddell

Shirley Ann Gaut (Clerk)
Stephanie Kirby (Deputy Clerk)

County Cllr Lawrence O'Donnell (Prudhoe North & Wylam)

AM2526/002 Election of Chair of Prudhoe Town Council

Cllr Jonathan Wheeler welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Pursuant to section 15 (2) of the Local Government Act 1972, Cllr Jonathan Wheeler invited nominations for Chair of Prudhoe Town Council.

Cllr Jonathan Wheeler proposed Cllr Dot Dickinson; this was seconded by Cllr Glenn Simpson.

No further nominations were received.

Cllr Dot Dickinson was duly elected Chair/Mayor of Prudhoe Town Council.

It was noted that Councillor Wheeler stated that it had been an honour to lead the Council over the past year. He acknowledged that the role had been challenging at times and expressed the view that it was appropriate for another Councillor to assume the position.

It was noted Cllr Leslie thanked Cllr Wheeler for leading the Council over the past year.

AM2627/002 Acceptance of Office

Cllr Dot Dickinson signed and delivered the acceptance of office, in accordance with Local Government Act 1972, s83 (4.)

AM2627/003 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Bryan Futers

AM2627/004 Declarations of Interest

None received.

AM2627/005 Dispensations

None received.

AM2627/006 Public Participation

No items of public participation had been received.

AM2627/007 Draft Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 23rd April 2026

It was **AGREED** to receive the minutes as true record.

AM2627/008 Election of Vice-Chair of Prudhoe Town Council

Cllr Dickinson invited nominations from members for nominations for election of Vice-Chair of Prudhoe Town Council.

Cllr Dot Dickinson proposed Cllr Jonathan Wheeler; this was seconded by Cllr Angie Scott.

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No further nominations were received.

Cllr Jonathan Wheeler was duly elected Vice-Chair of Prudhoe Town Council.

AM2627/009 Responsible Financial Officer

It was AGREED in pursuant to Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, to agree to appoint Shirley Ann Gaut Hall as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) for Prudhoe Town Council for 2026/27.

AM2627/010 Amalgamation of Humans Resources and Finance Committee

It was AGREED to receive and consider Cllr Wheeler's proposal to combine the Human Resources and Finance Committee to include membership of six councillors (excluding ex- officio.)

Cllr Wheeler stated that members were, at times, overloaded with meetings and that attendance had not been particularly strong. He suggested that one way to address this issue would be to merge the two committees, noting that their work became increasingly important during the second half of the year and that there would be value in combining them.

Cllr Simpson supported the proposal.

Cllr Barrett supported the principle of merging the committees but emphasised the need to ensure that no conflicts of interest would arise before any merger took place.

Cllr Price noted that attendance levels were low for maintaining two separate committees and that achieving a quorum was often difficult. He stated that six members should be regarded as the minimum number required and that having eight members would be preferable. Cllr Stephenson expressed support for this view.

Proposed: Cllr Jonathan Wheeler Seconded: Cllr Gerry Price

It was AGREED that the Finance and Human Resources Committees merge with 8 members (inc ex-officio, so 6 members.)

AM2627/011 Review of the Terms of Reference for Committees

It was AGREED to approve the terms of reference for the Town Council's committees.

It was noted that a new Terms of Reference will be created to reflect the merger of the Finance and Human Resources Committees.

In relation to the Planning, Contract and Works Committee, the Clerk clarified that the proposal was to revert to a membership of nine members rather than retaining full Council membership. Members noted that matters considered by the Committee affected all wards and, therefore, considered that full Council membership remained appropriate.

Cllr Price advised that, historically, meetings of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee and Ordinary Council had been combined. However, this had resulted in lengthy agendas and meetings frequently extending beyond 9.00 pm. Consequently, a decision had been taken to separate the meetings.

It was AGREED for the Planning, Contract and Works Committee to remain as full council membership.

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AM2627/012 Committees and Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair It was **AGREED** to appoint representatives to the following committees and to elect their Chair and Vice-Chair (where applicable), in accordance with Standing Order 4(d)(vi):-

- a) Planning, Contract and Works (PCW) Committee – 9 members plus ex-officio members

Cllr Dickinson invited nominations from members for nominations for election of Chair of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee.

Cllr Glenn Simpson proposed Cllr Mike Smith; this was seconded by Cllr Ignasious Varghese.

Cllr Jane Johnson proposed Cllr Holly Waddell; this was seconded by Cllr Chris Barrett.

Votes were counted for Cllr Mike Smith to take up position of Chair – 8 in favour.

Votes were counted for Cllr Holly Waddell to take up position of Chair – 3 in favour.

Cllr Mike Smith was duly elected Chair of the Planning, Contracts and Works Committee.

Cllr Dickinson invited nominations from members for nominations for election of Vice-Chair of the Planning, Contract and Works Committee.

Cllr Chris Barrett proposed Cllr Holly Waddell, this was seconded by Cllr Gerry Price.

Cllr Angie Scott proposed Cllr Glenn Simpson; this was seconded by Cllr Val Leslie.

Votes were counted for Cllr Holly Waddell to take up position of Chair – 10 in favour.

It was noted that ten members had voted in favour for Cllr Holly Waddell, with no votes cast for Cllr Glenn Simpson.

Cllr Holly Waddell was duly elected as Vice-Chair of Planning, Contracts and Works Committee.

b/c) Finance and Human Resources (HR) Committee – 6 members plus ex-officio members (Chair only):-

- Cllr Bryan Futers
- Cllr Russ Greig
- Cllr Jane Johnson
- Cllr Valerie Leslie
- Cllr Gerry Price
- Cllr Holly Waddell

Cllr Dickinson invited nominations from members for nominations for election of Chair of the Finance and Human Resources Committee.

Cllr Carol Stephenson proposed Cllr Holly Waddell, this was seconded by Cllr Val Leslie.

No further nominations were received.

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Cllr Holly Waddell was duly elected as Chair of the Finance and Human Resources Committee.

d) Cemetery and War Memorial Committee – 6 members plus ex-officio members (Chair only)

- Cllr Russ Greig
- Jane Johnson
- Cllr Angie Scott
- Cllr Carol Stephenson
- Cllr Ignasious Varghese

Cllr Dickinson invited nominations from members for nominations for election of Chair of the Cemetery and War Memorial Committee.

Cllr Angie Scott proposed Cllr Carol Stephenson; this was seconded by Cllr Jonathan Wheeler.

No further nominations were received.

Cllr Carol Stephenson was duly elected as Chair of the Cemetery and War Memorial Committee.

AM2627/013 Financial and Management Risk Assessment, May 2026

a) Financial and Management Risk Assessment

It was AGREED to receive and approve the updated document in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI2015/234.)

b) Authorised Signatories

It was noted that the paperwork for Cllr Johnson and Cllr Waddell was out of date and would need to be updated.

The following are existing signatories:-

- Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer
- Deputy Clerk
- Cllr Scott
- Cllr Carol Stephenson
- Cllr Wheeler

It was AGREED that the following members would be added as authorised signatories with online access:-

- Cllr Dickinson
- Cllr Johnson
- Cllr Waddell

AM2627/014 Assets Register

It was AGREED to receive and approve the updated document in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI2015/234.)

AM2627/015 Insurance Arrangements

It was AGREED to receive confirmation of arrangements for insurance in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI2015/234.)

In response to a question from Councillor Simpson regarding the valuation of assets, the Clerk explained that when items are replaced, the original items are removed from the asset register and the replacement items are added. Where assets have not been replaced for some time, a reasonable estimated value is assigned and compared against current market prices to ensure valuations remain up to date.

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AM2627/016 The General Power of Competence

It was AGREED that, having satisfied the eligibility criteria prescribed by the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, namely that at least two-thirds of the members of the Council hold office following election or co-option and that the Clerk, Shirley Ann Gaut Hall, holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA), Prudhoe Town Council adopt the General Power of Competence pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, with effect from 28 May 2026.

AM2627/017 Policies and Procedures–

It was AGREED to adopt the following policies and procedures:-

- a. Code of Conduct – previously adopted May 2025
- b. Standing Orders – previously adopted May 2025
- c. Complaints Procedure - previously adopted May 2025
- d. Social Media and Email Policy (including NCC Social Media Guidance) – previously adopted May 2025
- e. Equal Opportunities Policy- previously adopted May 2025
- f. Financial Regulations - previously adopted May 2025
- g. Model Publication Scheme – updated 2026, previously adopted May 2025
- h. Co-option Best Practice – previously adopted May 2025
- i. Data Protection Policy – previously adopted May 2025
- j. Training and Development Policy – updated May 2025
- k. Risk Management Strategy – previously adopted May 2025
- l. Freedom of Information – new May 2026
- m. Health & Safety Policy – new May 2026
- n. IT Policy – new May 2026
- o. CCTV Policy – new May 2026
- p. Meeting Attendance Policy – new May 2026
- q. Working from Home Policy – new May 2026
- r. Mayor's Allowance – new May 2026

The Clerk advised members that the Social Media and Email Policy had been updated to reflect current practices. The Clerk further noted that a CCTV Policy had been introduced following the pending installation of cameras to monitor the Cemetery Chapel in response to recent incidents of vandalism, ensuring that the use of surveillance equipment was managed in accordance with relevant legislation and good practice.

Cllr Waddell highlighted that the Meeting Attendance Policy did not currently include provision for a period of up to one year in respect of maternity or adoption leave. Members noted that this provision would need to be incorporated into the policy

It was noted that a further review of the Mayor's Allowance Policy was required to ensure that it remained appropriate and reflective of arrangements. Members agreed that the policy should be revised accordingly, with proposed amendments to be brought forward for consideration at a future meeting of the Council.

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AM2627/018 Representatives on Outside Bodies 2026/2027

It was **AGREED** to appoint the following members as representatives of the Council on the following outside bodies:-

OUTSIDE BODY	CURRENT PTC REPRESENTATIVE(S) 2026-2027
Prudhoe Town Twinning Association	Cllr Chris Barrett & Cllr Jane Johnson
Prudhoe Community Partnership (3 rd Tuesday of the month, bi-monthly)	Cllr Dot Dickinson
Northumberland Association of Local Councils County Committee	Cllr Jonathan Wheeler & Cllr Holly Waddell
East Tynedale Local Council's Forum	Cllr Holly Waddell & Cllr Jonathan Wheeler
Essity Community Consultation Forum (lunchtime meetings at the Mill, when permitted)	Cllr Bryan Futers, Cllr Dot Dickinson & Cllr Val Leslie
Prudhoe Pathforce	Cllr Angie Scott & Cllr Carol Stephenson
NCC Town and Parish Council Liaison Working Group	Cllr Holly Waddell
Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership	Cllr Gerry Price & Cllr Holly Waddell
Prudhoe Youth Project (PYP) (previously met monthly on a Monday evening)	Cllr Dot Dickinson & Cllr Gerry Price
Borderlands	Cllr Bryan Futers & Cllr Mike Smith
Tyne Valley Parish Council Active Travel Route	Cllr Chris Barrett & Cllr Jonathan Wheeler
Prudhoe Community Partnership Working Group	Cllr Val Leslie, Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Mike Smith & Cllr Jonathan Wheeler
Climate Change and Biodiversity	Cllr Russ Greig, Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Mike Smith, Cllr Carol Stephenson & Cllr Jonathan Wheeler
East Centre Advisory Group	Cllr Dot Dickinson, Cllr Val Leslie & Cllr Carol Stephenson
Trustee Friends of Eastwood Park	Cllr Jane Johnson
Poverty Coalition	Cllr Val Leslie & Cllr Mike Smith
Eastwoods Park Playzone Steering Group	Cllr Angie Scott

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AM2627/019 Reports

a) Chair's Report

Former Chair Cllr Jonathan Wheeler gave the following report:-

It was reported that a meeting of Prudhoe Goes Green had been attended, during which discussions took place regarding the national film *Emergency Briefing*, which focuses on climate change and the challenges associated with achieving net zero. Members were advised that a number of other towns and communities had hosted screenings of the film to raise awareness and encourage public engagement. It was noted that there may be an opportunity to arrange a screening in Prudhoe, and this possibility would be explored further with relevant partners and community groups.

b) Clerk's Report

The Clerk reminded members that Highfield Fest is scheduled to take place on Saturday 30 May 2026 and noted that any assistance from members before, during, and after the event would be greatly appreciated.

c) County Cllrs Reports

County Cllr Lawrence O'Donnell (Prudhoe North & Wylam)

- I attended the Prudhoe Place Partnership meeting on 5th May. It was reassuring to get an update from the regeneration team at NCC on the revised schedule and to hear that BTIP part A has been submitted.
- I attended the Prudhoe Goes Green meeting on 13th May. I would like to thank Prudhoe Town Councillors and all members of the group for their valuable contributions to the community. At the end of the meeting, the new wicker ladybird was installed in the flowerbed beside the hub, with many more exciting proposals in the pipeline.
- I continue to work with the Police concerning inconsiderate and dangerous parking on Castlefields Drive.
- I have asked for a further letter from NCC to be sent to residents on Rolley Way to ask them not to park on the corner to allow the bin wagons to operate without hindrance.
- I have been in regular contact with Bellway regarding grass cutting in the unadopted areas of Castlefields. The previous contractor went out of business, which has resulted in the grass not being cut this year. The agreed schedule is twice monthly cuts from March to September and once monthly during the winter. A new, reliable local contractor has now been appointed, and cutting will begin shortly.
- I met with Highways and Tree Officers from NCC to discuss ongoing maintenance of Broomhouse Lane. Work to trees will hopefully take place in the next two months with a request sent to Northumberland Estates to maintain the oak and elm trees. I am in contact with the Environmental team to request maintenance of the rest of the lane.
- I was delighted to visit the Prudhoe Castle Open Day on 2nd May. Several hundred people visited this valuable piece of our local heritage.
- I'm meeting with Transport Officers to discuss progress in improving bus services from surrounding villages to Prudhoe to support local businesses.
- There is a consultation for double yellow lines to be extended on Dukes Way, Low Prudhoe, to ensure HGV access to a business.
- Congratulations to Openworks, a rapidly expanding business in Low Prudhoe for winning the UK's most prestigious award for enterprise – the King's Award for Enterprise.
- Congratulations to Essity for the opening of their £35m recycling plant on Princess Way. It is not only a huge vote of confidence in Prudhoe and their workforce but will also significantly reduce their carbon footprint and reliance on imported materials.
- After meeting with Officers from various departments on site, proposed parking restrictions at the Tyne Riverside Country Park, Prudhoe, are out for consultation. If it succeeds, it will allow long term parking at the top end whilst leaving shorter café and park visitor parking available near the entrance. It will not require a disc and will be enforced by Parking Services civil enforcement officers.

County Councillor O'Donnell congratulated Councillor Dickinson on her election as Chair/Mayor and extended his thanks to all members for their continued contributions to the local community.

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In addition, County Councillor O'Donnell provided an update on local bus services. Although some of the current issues may appear to have limited relevance to the town, he advised that work is ongoing to improve connectivity. In particular, concerns were raised regarding the 686 service from Wylam, which currently ceases operation at 3.00 pm. Transport officers are exploring options to extend the service. He also highlighted the Friday demand responsive Adapt service from Ovingham, noting that residents of Ovingham can currently travel to Hexham in approximately half an hour, but journeys to Prudhoe require travelling first to Wylam. It is hoped that improved arrangements can be secured.

Cllr Wheeler asked whether any successful lines of communication had been established regarding the Castle. County Councillor O'Donnell advised that no progress had been made directly, although the local MP's office had maintained contact.

Cllr Barrett referred to the possibility of a community minibus service, suggesting that a 16-seat adapted transit vehicle could potentially be used and would be capable of crossing the bridge.

County Cllr Gordon Stewart (Prudhoe South)

Barclays bank

Another change:-

<https://www.hexham-courant.co.uk/news/26115591.barclays-bank-site-close-prudhoe-northumberland/>

Banking hub

It has been busy and is working fine.

Library Consultation

This has concluded, officers are working through the responses.

Veterans Hub

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/news/northumberland-secures-funding-launch-groundbreaking-armed-forces-support-hubs>

Borderlands/East Centre

Information drop-in session 22/4/26 was busy.

Highfield Development -

It appears the developer is pushing ahead with their proposals, against officer advice and many public objections.

As always Town Cllrs and your officers are welcome to contact me on any day to discuss issues.

Thank you for organising the various events during the year.

County Cllr Angie Scott (Prudhoe West & Mickley)

I have received reports of youngsters swimming in the river. Due to the serious safety concerns and associated risks, I have contacted local police and the youth service to request support and preventative engagement with young people.

Residents have also contacted me regarding concerns at the cemetery. These concerns have been passed to the Clerk for further investigation and action where appropriate.

In addition, a number of residents have raised ongoing concerns regarding speeding across several areas of the town. I have requested a meeting with an officer from Northumberland County Council to discuss these concerns further.

OM2627/020 Financial Update

To receive reports and raise any questions:

a) Schedule of Accounts Paid/To be Paid

It was AGREED endorse those accounts paid via delegated authority, and approve those accounts to be paid, since 23rd April 2026.

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b) Bank Reconciliation

It was AGREED to receive Bank Reconciliation from 10 April – 8 May 2026

c) Statement of Budget and Expenditure

d) It was AGREED to receive statement to date.

AM2627/021 Reports from Outside Bodies

It was AGREED to receive following reports:-

- a) Poverty Coalition update – circulated 24/04/2026 & 14/05/2026.
- b) Borderlands meeting change of date 05/05/2026 – circulated 27/04/2026.
- c) Prudhoe Goes Green minutes from meeting 13/05 – circulated 18/05.
- d) NCC Town and Parish Council Liaison Working Group update - circulated 22/05/2026

AM2627/022 Free Summer Swimming for Children in Prudhoe

It was AGREED to receive Cllr Scott's proposal to provide free swimming sessions for children in Prudhoe during the summer holidays.

Following on from last year's initiative of four free swimming sessions in August held at Prudhoe Waterworld, consideration is being given to expanding the initiative to run throughout the summer holiday period.

It was AGREED the sessions would take place on each Sunday for an hour duration between 4pm-5pm throughout the summer, with places allocated on a first-come, first-served basis to ensure a fair and transparent booking process. This expanded approach is intended to improve access to local leisure facilities, encourage increased physical activity, and provide wider community benefit over the holiday period.

The sessions will be held on each Sunday 4pm-5pm:-

- Sunday 19th & 26th July
- Sunday 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th August 2026.

AM2627/022 Correspondence

It was AGREED to receive the following correspondence:-

- a) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin – circulated 28/04, 30/04.
- b) Tyne Rivers Trust, Big Give Earth Raise Match Fund – circulated 27/04.
- c) RSN Weekly Newsletter – circulated 28/04, 30/04
- d) West Road Cemetery Bulletin– circulated 27/04, 11/05, 18/05.
- e) Healthwatch Together newsletter – circulated 29/04.
- f) Thriving Together newsletter – circulated 01/05.
- g) Tynedale Community Partnership meeting scheduled 19/05 – circulated 12/05.
- h) Invitation to Sport Tynedale Annual General Meeting scheduled 04/05 – circulated 21/05.
- i) National Public Information briefing (via Hexham Town Council) – circulated 22/05.

AM2627/023 Date of Next Meeting

It was AGREED that the next Ordinary Meeting will be held on Thursday 25th June 2026.

Meeting ended 8.30pm