

DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE ORDINARY MEETING
held on THURSDAY 25TH JUNE 2026 at 7:00PM
at The Spetchells Centre, Meeting Rooms 1 & 2 Front Street, Prudhoe, NE42 5AA

Present:

Cllr Dot Dickinson (Chair), Cllr Bryan Futers, Cllr Jane Johnson, Cllr Val Leslie, Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Angie Scott (and County Councillor Prudhoe West & Mickley) Cllr Mike Smith, Cllr Carol Stephenson, Cllr Holly Waddell, Cllr Jonathan Wheeler.

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

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

OM2627/018 Welcome by Chair

Meeting opened by Chair Cllr Dot Dickinson.

OM2627/019 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Chris Barrett, Cllr Ignasious Varghese, Cllr Kiran Bell, Cllr Glenn Simpson, Cllr Russ Greig.

OM2627/020 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Price as a trustee of Prudhoe Youth Project declared a non-pecuniary interest in item agenda 6.

Cllr Dickinson as a trustee of Prudhoe Youth Project declared a non-pecuniary interest in item agenda 6.

Cllr Johnson as a trustee of

OM2627/021 Dispensations

None received.

OM2627/022 Public Participation

No items of public participation had been received.

OM2627/023 Prudhoe Youth Project

It was noted that Gemma Nixon was unable to attend the meeting in person and that any questions could be submitted to the Clerk.

Cllr Stephenson asked if there was any feedback from Gemma, following engagement with schools regarding the vandalism at the cemetery chapel. The Clerk advised that work is ongoing with a small cohort of students.

- a) **It was AGREED** to receive the first quarter update report.
- b) **It was AGREED** to release the 2026/27 first quarter funding of £7,500.

OM2627/024 Draft Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026

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

OM2627/025 Internal Audit 2025/26

- a) **It was AGREED** to receive the Annual Internal Audit Report for year ending March 2026, carried out by Susan Saunders, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, part 2 (5)
- b) **It was AGREED** to receive the Audit Checklist carried out by Susan Saunders, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, part 2 (5)

OM2627/026 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Year Ending March 2026

- a) **It was AGREED** to receive and respond to the Annual Governance Statement, Section 1, and signed by the Chair and the Clerk. *The Clerk noted that 'No' response had been given for **Assertion 10**, and that the external auditor required an explanation on a separate sheet and how

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the authority will address the weakness identified. The explanation will be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

- b) **It was AGREED** to receive and approve the End of Year Bank Reconciliation, March 2026
- c) **It was AGREED** to receive and approve the Accounting Statements, Section 2 for the year ending March 2026.
- d) **It was AGREED** to approve submission of AGAR for year ending March 2026, and publication on the Town Council website, as required.

OM2627/027 Notice of Public Rights and Publication of unaudited Annual Governance and Accountability Return

- a) **It was AGREED** to approve the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights of inspection as 29th June – 7th August 2026
- b) **It was AGREED** to publicise the notice.

OM2627/028 Internal Audit 2026/2027

It was AGREED in accordance with Account and Audit Regulations 2015, part 2 (1), to re-appoint Mrs Susan Saunders as the Internal Auditor for 2026/27, and to agree that the Town Clerk/Financial Officer signs the terms of engagement.

OM2627/029 Reports

a) Chair's Report

On Thursday, 28 May, I was voted in and received many congratulations from a wide range of people, which was greatly appreciated.

On Saturday, 30 May 2026, I attended the Highfield Festival. It was a beautiful sunny day and a very well-organised event. My thanks go to everyone involved in organising it, including the Clerk and all those who helped on the day.

The skateboard and BMX competitions were fantastic. The youngest skateboard competitor was just five years old, which was remarkable to see. It was also inspiring to watch a young girl competing on her BMX bike.

On 6 June, I walked around my ward and throughout Prudhoe.

Unfortunately, the cemetery was not looking its best. Cut grass had been left behind and not collected, and there had been no strimming. One lady visiting her relatives' graves expressed her disappointment, saying that previous springs had looked beautiful, whereas this year the cemetery appeared neglected. While walking down Station Bank, I noticed a broken fence on the right-hand side before Castlefields. The piggy bank at Castle Dene is also very overgrown, creating a hazard for pedestrians and for those using mobility scooters or prams.

I was also informed about issues with dog fouling and overgrown shrubs and trees.

All of these matters have been reported through FixMyStreet, with photographs provided.

Sadly, the cemetery chapel has been damaged again. Cameras have now been installed and will hopefully act as a deterrent.

b) Clerk's Report

Grant Aid 2026/2027

All approved Grant Aid payments have now been processed and issued to the relevant organisations and community groups. Each recipient has been notified that payment has been made and has been requested to confirm receipt of the funds.

An initial planning meeting has been held to discuss arrangements for the proposed celebration event. A provisional date, with the event scheduled to take place at Prudhoe & District United Services Club (Legion) on Friday 11 September 2026, commencing at 6.00pm.

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The venue was selected due to its accessibility, central location, and suitability for accommodating attendees, ensuring that the event is inclusive and accessible to all invited guests. Additional information and updates will be provided as planning progresses and arrangements are finalised.

Free Summer Swimming for Children in Prudhoe

Information regarding the free summer swimming programme has been circulated to local schools and local organisations in advance of the summer holiday period to maximise awareness amongst children, young people, and their families. The initiative aims to promote physical activity, encourage healthy lifestyles, and provide accessible recreational opportunities during the school holidays.

The programme will consist of a series of free one-hour swimming sessions, taking place each Sunday from 4.00pm to 5.00pm throughout the summer holiday period. The confirmed dates for the sessions are:

- Sunday 19 July 2026
- Sunday 26 July 2026
- Sunday 2 August 2026
- Sunday 9 August 2026
- Sunday 16 August 2026
- Sunday 23 August 2026
- Sunday 30 August 2026
-

Schools have been asked to share the information with pupils and parents/carers to ensure that eligible participants are aware of the opportunity. Promotion of the programme will continue through additional communication channels to encourage participation and maximise community engagement.

c) County Cllrs Reports

County Cllr Angie Scott (Prudhoe West & Mickley)

Weeds and grass cutting continue to be an issue across various areas of the town. These concerns have been reported accordingly.

There have been reports of missed garden waste and general waste bin collections. These have also been reported to the relevant service.

Concerns have been raised regarding the Drill Hall building site, specifically a missing gate. This issue has been reported.

Reports have been received regarding the use of electric scooters and electric bikes around the town. I encourage residents to report any concerns or incidents involving these vehicles directly to the police.

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

- Trees have been cut back on Broomhouse Lane following onsite visits with Highways, NEAT, Tree and Green Spaces Officers.
- The tractor and flail from the NEAT team have cutback the verges.
- Hedges will be cutback after the nesting season in the winter.

Cockshot Dene Path

- I have asked the NEAT team to clear the path.

Bellway Grass cutting

- I'm disappointed that it has taken so long for Bellway to action their maintenance responsibilities in Castlefields. A reliable, local contractor has been given the contract but after promising it would be cut in 10 days, 33 days later Bellway still hadn't sent the particulars to the contractor. It's been a frustrating process, but the first rough cut has now been carried out.

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Prudhoe Castle

I'm pleased that Historic England are opening Prudhoe Castle with free entry on the first Sunday of each month at the following times:

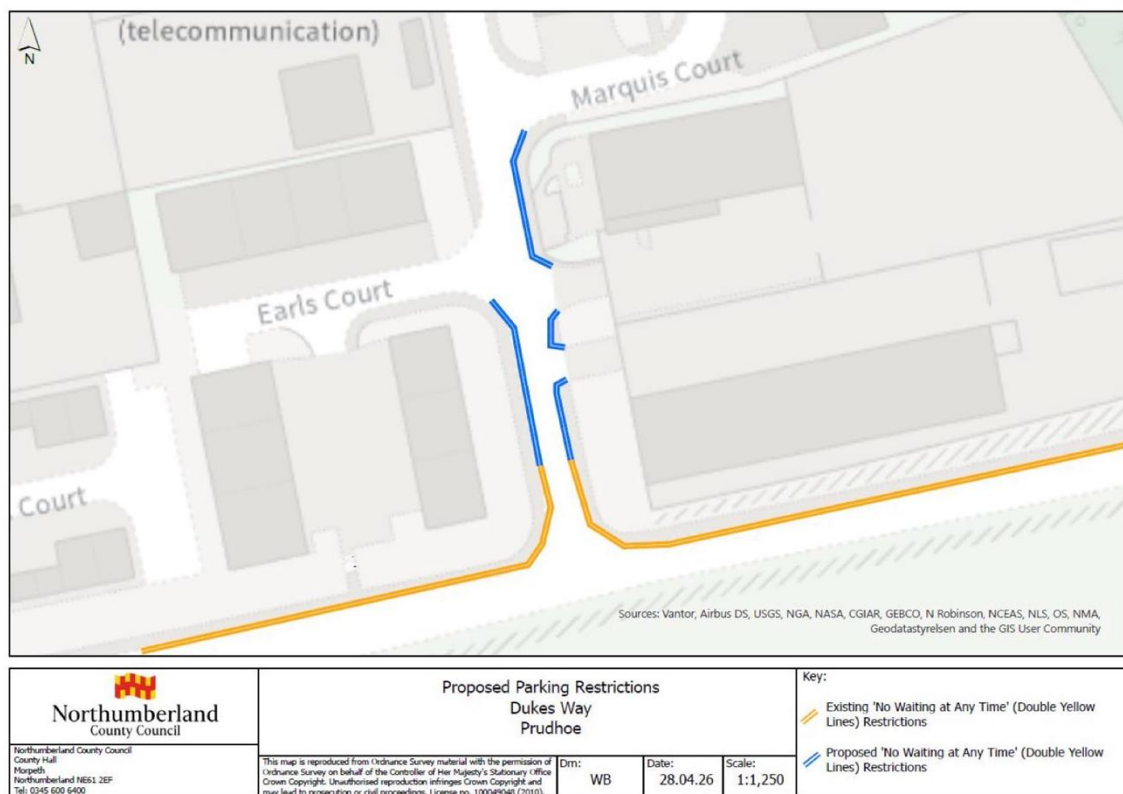
- Sunday 7 June 2026, 11am-3pm
- Sunday 5 July 2026, 11am-3pm
- Sunday 2nd August 2026, 11am-3pm
- Sunday 6th September 2026, 11am-3pm
- Sunday 4th October 2026, 11am-3pm

MLIS funds

- I have contributed £5000 of my Members Local Improvement Fund towards Prudhoe Parish Hall's refurbishment.

Dukes Way Consultation

The consultation on extending the parking restrictions on Dukes Way is now closed. It has been signed off and approved, the next stage is a Traffic Regulation Order which allows formal objections to be received for 21 days. Below is a map of the proposals.



Events attended

- Prudhoe Community Partnership Trustees meeting.
- Digital Skills Roadshow, Low Prudhoe.
- Prudhoe Summer Celebration at the Tip Top.
- East Tynedale Forum.
- Tynedale Community Partnership.

Cllr Leslie expressed thanks to Cllr O'Donnell for his contribution towards the funding of the Prudhoe Parish Hall refurbishment project.

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County Cllr Gordon Stewart (Prudhoe South)

East Centre Planning Application.

Demolition, new build construction with the retention and conversion of a section of the building to create a new community facility, providing a youth centre, community space, associated meeting/ staff spaces, business/ training units, an arts and crafts workshop, community led retail unit and 3no. residential units, along with associated external works and landscaping.

Consultation has ended, awaiting officer's proposal.

Library consultation

This has concluded, officers are working through the responses.

Waterworld Playpark.

Some of the equipment is awaiting repair.

The NW Pipe in West Wylam.

A location where young people have gathered over many years, has been badly damaged by young people.

NW have carried out repairs, but more work is planned.

Highfield Development -

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

Police 101 Call Delays

Many residents say they do not report incidents as the delay in getting through to the Police is so slow. I have raised this with the PCC.

Weed Spraying

This has been carried out; it will take 7-10 days for the weeds to die.

Empty premises

Including the Falcon PH, the premises have been left in a very poor state, the owners are spending a lot of time, effort and money in dealing with it, the owners are keen to reopen it as a Pub.

I am in contact with other property owners who currently have properties on the market.

Cottier Grange Entrance

Road safety improvements will be installed next month; the main part will be a larger pedestrian refuge with dropped kerbs.

Waterworld Success

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/news/waterworld-welcomes-positive-inspection>

Book Banks

The company finds these are no longer viable.

During the summer months there will be many local events, organised by several community groups.

Cllr Leslie asked County Cllr Stewart what his regular contact with Gentoo referred to. He advised it relates to complaints from residents in relation to speeding and water coming off the bank side, the future of the Walled Garden and Prudhoe Hall, as well as future developments. Cllr Leslie asked for

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further details on Prudhoe Hall and County Cllr Stewart advised two individuals have shown interest and are working with Gentoo, but as it is still under discussion he cannot comment further.

Cllr Smith asked for an update on the Fuse. County Cllr Stewart advised Collingwood School are in the process of moving out, but he is unable to provide an update on the future due to contractual provisions. Cllr Smith questioned whether there had or would be any community consultation on the Fuse's future, however it was noted there would not be, unless from a planning perspective.

Cllr Leslie asked for figures relating to the number of young people who will be impacted by changes.

It was suggested that any questions particularly where they did not relate to items included within the circulated reports, be submitted to the Clerk who would forward them to the appropriate officer for response.

OM2627/030 Financial Update

To receive reports and raise any questions.

a) *Schedule of Accounts Paid/To be Paid*

It was AGREED to endorse those accounts paid via delegated authority and approve those accounts to be paid since 28th May 2026

b) *Bank Reconciliation*

It was AGREED to receive the Bank Reconciliation from 9th May – 9th June 2026

c) *Statement of Budget and Expenditure*

It was AGREED to receive statement to date.

OM2627/031 Review of the Terms of Reference for Committees

It was AGREED to review and approve the terms of reference for the Town Council's Finance and Human Resources Committee.

OM2627/031 Community Governance Review – Consultation on Boundary Changes – Prudhoe and Stocksfield Parishes

It was AGREED to receive correspondence from Northumberland County Council following stage one consultation period. Suggestions relating to boundaries between the parishes have been received from stakeholders participating in the review:-

- a) Grouping with neighbouring parishes to improve efficiency and support common goals.
- b) Including Mickley within Stocksfield Parish.
- c) Reviewing parish boundaries.
- d) Removing the ward structure.
- e) Increasing the number of parish councillors.

It was AGREED to consider the following:-

- Whether the proposals would provide for effective and convenient local governance;
- Whether the proposals appropriately reflect the identities and interests of the local community;
- The potential impact of any changes on local representation and community engagement;
- Any practical, administrative or financial implications arising from the proposals;

The Clerk advised this is following what was submitted in October 2025, as well as the public consultation that followed.

In addition, the Clerk reported that a discussion had taken place with the Clerk to Stocksfield Parish Council. It was noted that a meeting would be arranged to discuss the proposed merger and the implications it may have for both councils.

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Cllr Price commented that the Council's response should be strengthened to reinforce its previously stated position. He emphasised that the Council's views remain unchanged and that it wishes to retain its current way of operating.

Cllr Smith further suggested that the response should include the view that the consultation process has diverted the attention and resources of both councils, impacting their ability to carry out their respective functions as effectively as they otherwise could.

It was AGREED after a lengthy discussion to respond to Northumberland County Council, reinforcing the Council's original comments and that our viewpoint has not changed. Councillors are happy with the way the Council operates, and do not wish to see any changes.

OM2627/032 Sponsorship of National Emergency Briefing Film Screening

It was AGREED to consider Cllr Stephenson's proposal further to Prudhoe Town Council's declaration of a climate emergency in October 2023 that the Council sponsor a free public screening of National Emergency Briefing (at The Fuse Cinema in September 2026 (date to be confirmed.)

About the film: National Emergency Briefing explores the impact of climate change on the UK and presents credible, positive responses available. It is being screened in cinemas, church halls, and community centres across the UK. Ovingham, Wylam and Hexham are among a number of towns and villages in Northumberland to show the film; support from Prudhoe Town Council would allow the people of Prudhoe and Mickley to access this event which provides an opportunity for public debate, education. It is hoped that the event will act as a catalyst in the development of a locally based response to the climate crisis.

Cllr Stephenson advised that in 2023 the Council declared a Climate Emergency, whilst significant progress has been made in relation to biodiversity initiatives, it was noted that comparatively little has been undertaken to address the wider climate emergency. Hosting the proposed event would provide an opportunity to reinvigorate the Council's work in this area and help initiate further climate-related action. The estimated costs are around £435.00, covering the screening, venue hire and refreshments. It was further noted that a guest speaker had agreed to attend and would do so free of charge.

It was AGREED to support Cllr Stephenson's proposal, seconded by Cllr Scott. It was noted final costings will be provided to the Clerk once agreed.

OM2627/033 Reports from Outside Bodies

It was AGREED to receive following reports and record any questions for response:-

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

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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

- a) Borderlands Prudhoe BTIP Part A – circulated 26/05
- b) East Tynedale Community Forum 2 June – circulated 28/05.
- c) Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership News – circulated 19/06.
- d) Northumberland Borderlands Place Programme Supporting information – circulated 19/06.

Cllr Johnson advised that a successful weekend for Town Twinning was held with a visit to Mitry Mory on 4th – 8th June 2026. The visit included a tree planting ceremony in memory of former councillor George McCreedy, whose wife and three children were also in attendance. The event was well attended and documented in the Courant.

Cllr Futers advised that no meetings have been held by Essity and that, at present, no future meetings have been scheduled.

OM2627/034 Correspondence

It was AGREED to receive, and to agree any matters to be added to future agenda:-

- a) West Road Cemetery Bulletin– circulated 02/06, 08/06, 15/06.
- b) Report on work carried out 2526 Escape – circulated 02/06.
- c) Thriving Together newsletter May edition – circulated 02/06.
- d) NALC Chief Executive Bulletin – circulated 08/06, 11/06, 19/06.
- e) Update from Councillor Mather, Cabinet Member NCC Highways – circulated 12/06.
- f) Declaration of Interests, new section 32A of Localism Act 2011 – circulated 12/06.

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OM2627/035 Date of Next Meeting

To note the next Ordinary meeting will be held Thursday 23rd July 2026.

OM2627/036 Exclusion of the Press and Public

It was AGREED to approve a motion to invoke Standing Order 3d) to exclude the press and public, for the remainder of the meeting, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, permitted under Schedule (12A) Local Government Act 1972, paragraph 3, that they relate to contractor's quotes.

OM2627/037 Prudhoe Town Council Website

It was AGREED to receive quote from Aubergine (for the creation and population of additional website pages, with content to be supplied by the Council and page development and formatting to be undertaken by Aubergine.

Under the following menus:

- Information: 4 pages (made up of: Mayor (1), Mission (1), Contracts (1) and Vacancies (1))
- The Local Area: 3 pages (made up of: About Prudhoe (1), Community Groups & Voluntary Orgs (1), Town Twinning (1))
- Finance: 4 pages (made up of: Grant Aid (4))
- Town council Services: 19 pages (made up of: Allotments (1), Cemeteries (1), Lychgate War Memorial (1), Play Area (5), Street Scene (4), Environmental (4), Christmas Lights (1), Noticeboards (1), Events and Community Engagement (1).

In addition; it was noted that Cllr Stephenson suggested that it would be beneficial for Prudhoe Town Council's website to include a range of publicly accessible maps. These could include ward boundary maps, green space maps, and other relevant mapping resources to assist residents in identifying council wards, local amenities, open spaces, and areas of environmental interest. It was noted that providing such information online would improve accessibility and enhance the information available to the public.

It was AGREED to accept the quote and proceed with the additional content. The cost of the additional pages is £450, excluding VAT.

Meeting ended 7:44pm.