

**GREATER WILLINGTON PARISH**  
**21<sup>st</sup> May 2024**  
**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**

---

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Ken Henfrey, Councillor Angela Smith, Councillor Margaret Elgie,  
Councillor Emma Berry, Councillor Dorothy Hales, Councillor Charles Hales,  
Councillor Emma Jordan, Councillor Ursula McArdle, Councillor Jackson  
Emma McCann (Deputy Town Clerk)

5 residents

---

At the start of the meeting, a resident of the community approached County Councillor Olwyn Gunn and told her that she is ineligible to attend this Meeting due to her living outside of the Parish.

County Councillor Gunn alerted us to this issue which both herself and fellow councillors were unaware if the resident's information was correct.

The DTC passed comment that County Councillor Gunn has an interest in the Parish in her role as County Councillor and supports the area with funding and her commitment. The resident was adamant that the law states that only Parish electors can attend this meeting.

County Councillor Gunn was very understanding and informed the Chair of the meeting that she would leave to ensure the meeting goes forward without any issues.

Councillor D Hales expressed her appreciation to County Councillor Gunn and said that she would seek further clarification from Durham County Council following the meeting.

**WELCOME**

Councillor D Hales opened the Parish meeting and welcomed those in attendance. Health and Safety procedures and comfort facilities were given.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Tinsley, Councillor Savage and Helen Cogdon Town Clerk.

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL AND OF PREJUDICIAL INTEREST**

None received

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON THE 16<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023**

In order to facilitate business, the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting had been ratified at the next available meeting which was 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Resolved1. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023 as printed and circulated have already been approved and taken as a true record.

**4. THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Councillor D Hales presented the report as follows;

Signed by the Chairperson .....

Dated: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Dear Resident,  
I have pleasure in presenting the 2023/24 Annual Report.

The current council now consists of members who were elected unopposed in May 2021 and as there were still vacancies, they were filled with co-opted members in May 2022. A big thank you must be extended to parish residents who have volunteered their time to become a Town Councillor. They take an active part in supporting the Town Councils various neighbourhood and environmental activities. During this year we have continued to encourage community involvement and enjoyment.

A successful bid to provide a 'Welcome Space' allowed us to extend our offer to two days per week with the option of a hot sandwich and soup. This has been well received. The 'Get Crafty' craft club continues to meet on a Monday under the guidance of Judith.

The building is also used for monthly PACT meetings, Labour Party Meetings, Durham County Council Councillors meeting local residents, and until recently, the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Town Council manages three allotment sites with a total of 96 plots at Park Top, Springfield, and Oakenshaw. We own and lease Rosedale & Victoria Allotments. The rents paid by tenants covers the cost of the water supply, providing skips, hedge trimming, grass cutting where applicable and maintaining the boundaries. The portfolio holders for allotments are Councillor Berry and Councillor C Hales. They undertake regular allotment reviews and meet allotment holders. There are annual Allotmenters Growing Awards as well as an Allotment Newsletter.

All councillors know how important it is to be approachable and try to support the networking of community activities outside of the Council.

We offer financial support to community groups and clubs through our Civic and Community Funds. This year we have supported Charity Shop 4 U, St Stephens Church, Willington Cricket Club, Sunnybrow Community Centre, Willington Football Clubs and the Black Horse Inn.

We continue to work in partnership with Durham County Council Councillors Olwyn Gunn and Fraser Tinsley. Other partnership work we support are;  
Durham County Council Care Connect who monitor the CCTV provision  
Durham Constabulary for PACT meetings  
Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service who attend our community events throughout the year  
Durham County Council Street Lighting who install our Christmas lights and dress the tree  
Willington Wombles who work hard to keep the areas around where they live tidy.

We must also remember the amazing work carried out by Willington Open Door Methodist Church, St Stephens Church of England, and Our Lady & St Thomas Roman Catholic Church who respond to resident's needs.

Signed by the Chairperson .....  
Dated: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Greater Willington Environmental Improvement Group have been proactive this year, restocking the various planters around the parish, extending the bulb planting, and creating wildflower planting around the fence line at Dante's Heap.

A new initiative was to provide hanging baskets on the lighting columns and to local businesses in the summer. They were well received and made a colourful display on the High Street.

We entered Willington in to the Northumbria In Bloom Awards and were delighted to achieve the best small town category gaining a silver gilt award.

Our annual programme of events included a celebration of King Charles III coronation, in conjunction with Northern Heartlands we held a celebration of Willington's past and future 'Hyem Fest', we held a family picnic on the town green with all the rides and activities free of charge. In September we held a music festival 'Autumnus Mabon'.

There were two 'Away Days' to South Shields and Beamish and three fun days for children, 'Seeds and Beaks', 'Superheroes in the Making' and 'Animals About Town'.

For the first time since 2019, we held the Civic Carol Service at Our Lady and St Thomas Roman Catholic Church followed by the lighting of the Christmas Tree.

Our usual events Easter, Halloween Disco, Remembrance, and the Pantomime also took place.

With Angela Smith, Deputy Town Mayor, we have visited the four Primary Schools to meet their School Council's. We were extremely impressed with the young people. They were so articulate, very polite but also had very clear ideas about what they would like to see happen in Willington and the surrounding areas. We are continuing to work with the schools, these young people are the future.

Helen Cogdon, Town Clerk and Emma McCann, Deputy Town Clerk continue to work hard on behalf of GWTC. They provide the administration and advisory support to the council and its members. They provide all the necessary documents, agendas, and minutes for the meetings. They also support residents with any issues by offering advice and guidance.

As Town Mayor, I have been very honoured to have represented GWTC at various Civic Events throughout the year, supported by my consort, including the chair of DCC Christmas Event and visiting Locomotion where I got to sit in the engine driver's seat of the Flying Scotsman!

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for their support, both residents and councillors. It is very much appreciated.

Dorothy Hales  
Town Mayor

Signed by the Chairperson .....  
Dated: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

## 5. COMMUNITY FORUM

Councillor D Hales welcomed the residents in attendance to this Annual Parish Meeting. She asked that when speaking, residents do it in turn, while listening carefully, taking on others' views and being respectful.

One resident expressed concerns relating to the main street through Willington. Many of the shop fronts of old buildings are an 'eye sore' due to absentee landlords. The environmental improvements that have taken place across the town over the last year have made a great impact on the parish, but the shop fronts let it down.

It was explained that this is not a Town Council issue that we can enforce but we will consult with DCC and look at the possibility of extending the Shutterblight Project, replacing old shutters.

Another resident raised concerns on the amount of dog fouling in the area, particularly near the allotments.

It was discussed how the Town Council have been in contact with Believe Housing regarding extra signage and a dog bin to be situated at this site but to no avail. Unfortunately, dog fouling is a constant problem in the town and we are working closely with DCC on trying to combat these issues.

Another resident who lives at the bottom of Willington expressed his frustration at the lack of dog poo bins at Wear Valley. Delivery vans crossing the grass at Cedar Crescent since the bus shelter was removed is causing many diverts and ridges in the grassed area. There is only one waste bin and one salt bin. Also, that since new housing is happening, the Doctors are going to be over run and appointments are already hard to get.

This is also out of the Town Councils area of remit. We will arrange a meeting with the Clean and Green Team to discuss the possibility of installing dog poo and litter bins.

Another resident mentioned that Willington will have access to s106 money when available due to the new housing developments; that a Neighbourhood Plan is needed for all the Parish as Oakenshaw has one already. Currently we have very little say in what is being developed in our area, but a Neighbourhood Plan will change this.

The website is now much better than it was but still requires improvements and the ssd needs updating; Communication is dire between the Town Council to residents; events are often last minute. The Northumbria In Bloom entry was made by the Environment Group and residents were not informed. Newsletters are saying what we have done, not what we are planning for the future. Some funding applied for excludes some people who are not on benefits. Parking issues on Commercial Street; Antisocial behaviour. These issues were taken on board, explanations given and agreement was made regarding some consultation work with other agencies.

Councillor D Hales mentioned about the A690 improvements. She is attending a meeting tomorrow to discuss Willington as she says the Town Council is aggrieved that Willington appears to be overlooked yet again.

She also reminded everyone that the Greater Willington Environmental Improvement Group meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month at 10am to discuss and undertake

Signed by the Chairperson .....

Dated: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

areas of work. The meeting for 5<sup>th</sup> June will not go ahead as this day is being used for a Thank You Event. Nominations of unsung heroes can be given to Emma at the office.

**6. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

To be confirmed following the Annual Meeting of the Council.

Meeting closed at 6.40pm.

Signed by the Chairperson .....  
Dated: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024