**WOODLAND PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Meeting held on**

**Thursday 10 July 2025**

**at**

**Woodland Village Hall**

**Present**

Cllr Hall (Chair), Cllr Peckett (Vice Chair), Cllr Timms, Cllr Snowdon, Cllr Blackwood, Cllr Gardner, Cllr Abbott, Cllr Robert Potts (DCC Evenwood and Barony), David Buckee (Parish Clerk)

11 members of the public were present

Cllr Hall opened the meeting by welcoming all present saying that as a newly elected Parish Council in May, the Councillors put their time in for the village and to work for and with the residents of the village. He set out some ground rules for meetings: All comments to be directed through the Chair, the public participation within the agenda will be limited to 15 minutes to keep the length of the meeting as short as possible, and any comments made will be either discussed at the time, taken away for further discussion and written response provided, or scheduled as an item for the next meeting.

**1. Apologies**

None

**2. Declaration of Interest**

**(Members are asked to consider if they have a conflict of interest either personally or pecuniary in any matter included within the agenda)**

None declared

**3. Acceptance and signing of minutes from meetings 15 May 2025 & 12 June 2025**

Draft minutes have already been sent to Councillors, who agreed to accept them in full. Proposed by Cllr Hall, seconded by Cllr Gardner. Minutes of both meetings signed by Cllr Hall.

**4. Matters Arising**

Cllr Gardner raised a few items from the May meeting.

* Speed awareness – there have been two recent incidents where cats were killed by speeding vehicles. Cllr Gardner has spoken with Annalisa Ward, Community Development Officer, Local Network to raise the issue. DCC Highways team have said that (a) the existing traffic survey data for Woodland is significantly outdated and no longer provides an accurate reflection of current vehicle speeds through the village, (b) any concerns regarding speeding should first be directed to Durham Constabulary. If they identify a need for further investigation, the matter may then be referred to Highways, at which point traffic surveys could be commissioned as required. If an individual or organisation wishes to request a new traffic survey independently, this would be subject to a charge, (c) the database shared with Durham Constabulary shows there have been no reported personal injury collisions within Woodland in the past 5 years, this being their standard search criteria.

Cllr Potts advised that Highways Department will not do sad face / happy face signs as these are down to Parish Councils to arrange. Vehicle activated speed signs (VAS) can be installed by Highways who then make a charge to DCC. He said that if the PC decided to go down this route he would have no objection to putting some of his Councillor budget towards it, but advised to get an application in early before the budget is fully allocated.

* Overhanging tree branches – these have now been removed
* Tree planting – Facebook page has been updated. The planted trees are doing well
* Playpark – the removed bench and litter bin are being stored by Cllr Gardner pending a decision regarding relocation of them. The litter bin has a large amount of concrete around the base which will need removing if decided to re-site it. Cllr Hall said that there are a couple of new bins in the cemetery chapel which could be used
* Work has started on sorting through the old parish council records which have been stored at the cemetery chapel.
* VJ Day Friday 15th August – the Village Hall are happy to do a joint venture with the Parish Council. It will be led by the PC and the village hall will not charge for use of the hall.

**5. Approval of Policies**

The Clerk confirmed that the updated policies agreed at the last meeting have now been put on the website. There is a slight amendment to the Freedom of Information policy to change the date for response from 10 to 20 working days in line with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) and one new IT Policy. Proposed by Cllr Hall, seconded by Cllr Timms. All Councillors happy to adopt.

**6. Finance and Financial update**

The Clerk provided an update. Bank balance currently stands at £11,494.98. The cost of the recent election is still awaited and there is still a refund due back of VAT paid on the second instalment of the play equipment £4,444.16. Once these items have been paid and received, a decision can be made regarding splitting monies to apportion funds to allocated reserves to leave a working capital to better reflect the PC finances available for day to day spending.

Invoices paid since the May meeting are to CDALC £60 (election training), £28 (Good Councillor Guides), £44.35 (NALC & CDLAC subs), Zurich Insurance £737.17 (insurance renewal), AR Toward £125 (first grass cut) and Woodland Village Hall 2 x £22.50 (room hire March & May meetings)

Invoices to pay £90 to Internal Auditor Tanya Roberts and £105.60 to Playsafety (ROSPA inspection). Agreed by Councillors

**7. Playpark & CCTV**

Cllr Hall said that the recent work on the playpark is only the second time the playpark has had work done on it in almost 20 years. There have been some issues, possibly caused initially through installation, but there have been other instances where items have been removed, the most recent being the removal of some caps which has been done deliberately, and this is not the first time these caps have been removed. Additionally nuts have been removed. All these cause safety issues. The most recent ROSPA report was done on 3 July 2025 and the Parish Council is currently doing weekly inspections of equipment to identify any ongoing issues.

CCTV – A discussion took place regarding the possible installation of CCTV

Cllr Gardner said that she is not in favour of CCTV per se but with there now being 4 incidents of damage within the playpark over the last 6 months, the Parish Council has a responsibility to protect its assets and needs to do everything possible to protect the significant outlay on the new equipment. She made the point that CCTV is now common in any public space.

Cllr Peckett said that previous meetings have mentioned the possibility of a camera being sited on his property specifically to cover the playpark, which he is happy to accommodate without cost to the PC with access being given to certain individuals to view. It was confirmed that recordings would only be accessed if there was an incident, any recordings would be held only for a certain period of time, and that only 2/3 members of the PC would be granted access. These individuals would have an enhanced DBS check which should provide reassurance to the public that there was no likelihood of any recordings being used for the wrong purpose. Recordings would only be shared with police to assist in any investigation.

A member of the public asked if any permission is required if a camera was sited on the property and covered the road between the house and the playpark. Cllr Abbot said that as long as all Information Commissioners Office requirements are met no specific requirements are required. There is a long list of requirements, such as having to register with ICO, put up CCTV signs, restriction of access to recordings, secure storage of data.

It was questioned whether a data protection impact assessment is needed, and it was suggested that an open consultation with parents and other interested parties would be a good idea to give people the opportunity to be fully involved in the process, Cllr Hall and Councillors agreed that this would be a good idea and had no objection to a consultation taking place.

Cllr Abbott suggested that there are two alternatives for CCTV installation (a) on the property as previously mentioned, in which case it was questioned how good the images would be at that distance, or (b) a standalone camera in the playpark. His view is that if it were his grandchildren playing in the park, he would want them to be covered by CCTV as it would provide protection for them.

Cllr Gardner said that if anyone has an alternative solution as to how the equipment can be protected, to keep it as safe as possible for children using it, their views would be welcomed by Councillors.

A question was asked about involving the police where incidents of vandalism/damage occur. It is accepted that it is likely that they will not take any action, but they may have suggestions to look at going forward, and it is better to be proactive now before major damage is done which leads to a child being injured and a subsequent claim on the insurance and increased insurance premiums.

Two further points were raised regarding a camera being used that was installed on Cllr Pecketts property. (a) as the playpark is covered by a licence from Raby Estate and not owned by the PC, permission needs to be sought from the landowner (b) Cllr Peckett would be acting on behalf of an authority, and completely different rules would then apply, particularly regarding where images are stored. A member of the public who works with Raby estate land agent said that agreement from Raby Estates would be required for a camera in the playpark, and it was unlikely that this would be granted.

It was agreed that the weekly inspections of the playpark will continue and the matter will be reviewed again at the next Parish Council meeting. This time will allow parties to investigate legalities. In an ideal world, if incidents of malicious damage stop, then no further action will be necessary regarding CCTV

A question was asked regarding whether anything can be done regarding stopping parking outside the playpark, such as no parking signs, double yellow lines, or the provision of a separate parking space(s). Cllr Gardner said that Highways have been approached previously, and unfortunately there is nothing that they will do, apart from renewing the zigzag lines.

**8. Speeding traffic**

As a former driving instructor of many years, Cllr Blackwood said that in his experience the only way to reduce speed is through the use of speed humps. He suggested initially seeking the views of residents as to whether they are in favour of speed humps or not. As an indication, the cost of the cheapest speed humps (ramps) would possibly be around £6k, and for the larger ones around £30k. Cllr Potts said that highways are reviewing every project carefully having had their budget significantly cut, and it is accepted that as Woodland does not have an identified speeding problem in the view of DCC as previously mentioned, our case would not be particularly strong at the moment.

Cllr Potts said that it is essential that any incidents of speeding, near misses, etc are reported to DCC and similarly cases of damage to play equipment are reported to the police, as these will all be recorded and will strengthen the case that there is a problem to address. If nothing is reported, the authorities believe that there isn’t a problem.

A joint approach with Lynesack & Softley will be necessary as Woodland is split across these two parish councils.

Cllr Abbott said that other Parish Councils locally (such as Staindrop and Gainford) are joining forces to try and get things done by DCC. Simon Land mentioned that our local MP raised this in Parliament at the end of June to try and get local parish councils to have a greater say in road safety through their villages, and suggested that we approach him. Agreed that it is worth reaching out to other local PCs to join forces regarding the issues of speeding and road safety.

The headmistress of Woodland School has approached both Woodland and Lynesack & Softley parish councils to ask for help with the issue of speeding outside the school. The Clerk of Lynesack & Softley PC has written to DCC as the school falls within their parish.

A point was raised that the British Horse Society has been running a very successful campaign where a horse rider can easily log issues caused by vehicles directly on their website, and these are then compiled leading to convictions. It was asked whether this is something that can be replicated locally where any incident is reported to the PC and then the findings are taken en-masse to the relevant authorities. Cllr Potts felt that whilst it is a good idea in theory, the practicalities would make it very difficult as a PC is unlikely to have the resources to undertake it, and the police would need details of everyone who has raised an issue so that they can investigate and speak direct with those parties. He reiterated that the important thing is for every item to be reported by the individual direct to the police

**9. Public participation**

On behalf of Woodland Village Hall, it was asked if the Parish Council would be prepared to make a donation towards Woodland Show again this year. Councillors agreed to discuss separately.

Alistair Rutter asked about the relationship between the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee. Cllr Abbott explained that at present the Parish Council is Custodian Trustee of the Village Hall. In practical terms this means that on a day to day basis the Parish Council has no involvement or input in to the Village Hall. In the event that the Village Hall became insolvent or the Village Hall Committee ceased to exist, the Village Hall would then transfer to the Custodial Trustee, currently the Parish Council. However, following recommendations by the Charity Commission, an application has already been submitted by the Village Hall Committee for the Charity Commission to take over as Custodial Trustees, with the latest expectation that this may happen before the end of the year.

**10. Planning**

Nothing to report

**11. Clerk’s matters – correspondence received**

Routine correspondence has already been circulated to Councillors for information. The only other items worthy of note are a Freedom of Information request, and a request to remove a document from the Parish Council website which was felt to contain factually incorrect information. A response has been issued by the Parish Council to the individual concerned.

**Date of next meeting**

Next meeting provisionally agreed for Thursday 11th September 2025 at Woodland Village Hall, with anything urgent in the meantime being communicated by email.

*These are true and accurate minutes of the meeting as agreed by the council*

**Date ………………………………………..**

**Signed ……………………………………..**

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**Please note, all parish council meetings will be audio recorded for the purposes of accurately producing the minutes. The recording will be retained by Woodland Parish Council until the minutes have been agreed and signed. The recording will then be deleted unless the retention is requested by a lawful authority.**