

FULL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 28TH JANUARY 2026 – 7.00 p.m.

Minutes of the proceedings of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 28TH JANUARY 2026 at 7.00 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Neil Collinson (Chairman) and:
Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Arun M. Chandran, George Gray, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Sandra Kirby, Jacqui McFadden Lewis, Carl Robinson, Brian Sowerby, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the public present.

A short presentation ceremony was held before the start of the meeting, at which the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Neil Collinson presented both Paul Howarth and Carol Gaskarth with a Community Recognition Scheme Certificate and Local Hero Medal in recognition of their many achievements and community work for the Parish.

105. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

106. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Tunde Akinsanya, Dorothy Bowman, Jordan Gill, Brian Haigh, Richard Hutchinson, John Moore, Kyle Robinson and Ken Robson.

107. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

There had been no requests for dispensations under disclosable or non-disclosable interests.

108. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

109. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

110. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and;

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 10th December 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

111. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A list of the Mayor's most recent appointments was submitted for information.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the announcements be received.

112. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(a) Recreation Committee

It was proposed by Councillor George Gray, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill; and;

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 14th January 2026 be received.
- ii) That the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(b) Environment Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 14th January 2026 be received.
- ii) That the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 21st January 2026 be received.
- ii) That the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

113. NOMINATIONS FOR ROYAL PARTY GARDEN PARTY

The Town Clerk presented a briefing note from the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) following the allocation of Royal Garden Party tickets for each County Association. The date allocated for the 2026 Royal Garden Party is Friday 8th May.

The Lord Chamberlain's Office provided updated 'terms and conditions' which was attached for potential nominees to familiarise themselves with.

The Council was asked to make a nomination to CDALC for the ballot.

Councillor Carl Robinson proposed that Councillor Neil Collinson and his wife should be nominated. This was seconded by Councillor George Gray.

It was further proposed by Councillor Jackie Mcfadden-Lewis that Councillor Tony Armstrong and should also be nominated. This was seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson.

It was highlighted by Councillor Arun Chandran and confirmed by the Town Clerk that the Council could only nominate one councillor plus guest and the second proposal was therefore withdrawn.

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor George Gray; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That Councillor Neil Collinson plus his wife, be nominated for the ballot to attend the 2026 Royal Garden Party on behalf of Great Aycliffe Town Council.

114. LAMP LIGHT OF PEACE AND FLAG OF PEACE

The Town Clerk presented correspondence received from the Royal Pageant Master requesting the Council's consideration for participating in a new 'Lamp Light of Peace' initiative to help promote world peace on Armistice Day each year.

This would involve the Council purchasing a Lamp Light of Peace and Flag of Peace which would be lit / flown on Armistice Day each year to signal the Council's shared commitment to peace.

The cost of the Lamp Light of Peace is £55, and the Flag of Peace is £67.65, and, if agreed, it was suggested that these items would be funded from the Council's Civic Hospitality Budget.

The items would be incorporated into the plans for Armistice Day, alongside the suggested proclamation, reading and prayer.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft spoke in support of the initiative and requested that the correct size flags be purchased for both the flag pole outside of the Council Offices and at St. Clare's Church.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft; and

RESOLVED – as follows:-

- i) That a Lamp Light of Peace is purchased at a cost of £55, and that two Flags of Peace are purchased at a cost of £38.99 and £67.65 and funded from the Civic Hospitality Budget.
- ii) That the items would be incorporated into the plans for Armistice Day, alongside the suggested proclamation, reading and prayer.

115. CDALC ELECTIONS FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – COUNCIL NOMINATION

The Council considered nominating an alternative councillor for one of the Larger Council positions on the CDALC Executive Committee as Councillor Martin Ashcroft's is unable to take up his nomination.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson; that Councillor Arun Chandran be nominated.

RESOLVED – as follows:-

- i) That Councillor Arun Chandran be nominated as the Council's representative for one of the Larger Council positions on the on the County Durham Association of Local Council Executive Committee.

116. SETTING OF THE 2026/27 COUNCIL PRECEPT

The Finance Manager provided a report and supporting documents to seek approval from the Council for the setting of the Council's 2026/27 Precept, thereby allowing the submission of the Precept Request Form to Durham County Council and the setting of the Town Council proportion of the Council Tax.

The report also provides Members with information on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of the Council's balances and reserves in accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.

It was noted that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 prohibits a local councillor, in council tax arrears for at least two months, from voting on the setting of a precept or any recommendation, resolution or other decisions which might affect the calculation of the precept.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft; and

RESOLVED – as follows:-

- i) That the 2026/27 Council Precept at £2,190,100 be approved.
- ii) The Chairman is authorised to sign the Precept Form.
- iii) That the Precept Form is sent to Durham County Council following this meeting.
- iv) That the information provided regarding the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the Council's balances and reserves is noted.

117. OUTSIDE BODIES

Members received reports from representatives on the following Outside Bodies:

- (a) **County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC)**
The Town Clerk advised that there had been no meetings.
- (b) **Aycliffe Village Hall Association**
Councillor Carl Robinson gave a verbal update on the village hall.
- (c) **Woodham Village Community Association**
Councillor Jackie Mcfadden-Lewis advised there had been no meetings. Councillor Michael Stead expressed concern at the lack of communication from the community association and asked if officers could find out why there had not been any invitations to attend their meetings. Councillor Arun Chandran echoed these concerns, highlighting the importance of the Council having representation on community associations. It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, that the Town Clerk be requested to visit the community centre to discuss councillors' concerns with the chairman of the community association. The Deputy Mayor offered to accompany the Town Clerk as he is a trustee of the community association.
- (d) **Larger Local Councils' Forum**
The Town Clerk advised that there had been no meetings.
- (e) **Newton Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society**
There were no updates to report.
- (f) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**
There were no updates to report.
- (g) **Western Area Partnership**
Councillor Tracey Williams advised that there has been no correspondence regarding meeting dates. The Town Clerk advised that there had been a turnover of staff at the partnership adding that he had made further enquiries and will update in due course.
- (h) **Cornforth Partnership**
Councillor Jackie Mcfadden-Lewis advised there had been no meetings.
- (j) **Community Hub Development Group**
Councillor Jackie Mcfadden-Lewis advised there had been no meetings.
- (k) **Oak Leaf Golf Club**
The Town Clerk advised that the next meeting is on Tuesday 3rd February. The Golf Club AGM had been held on 21st January at the same time as the Council Policy and Resources Committee.

CHAIRMAN