

FULL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 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 22ND APRIL 2026** at **7.00 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Ken Robson (Chairman) and:

Councillors Tunde Akinsanya, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Luke Ellis, George Gray, Brian Haigh, Phill Hawkins, Andy Hill, Richard Hutchinson, Sandra Kirby, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Kyle Robinson, Brian Sowerby, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Miss. Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

There were 15 members of the public present.

136. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Lindsey Aston, Neil Collinson and Jackie McFadden Lewis.

138. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

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

139. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

140. GUEST SPEAKERS

Inspector Simon Peele and Sergeant Michael Clarkson from the Newton Aycliffe Neighbourhood Police Team, and the Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall were in attendance and gave an update on anti-social behaviour, crime figures, the process for dealing with offenders as well as the location of the police station, budgets and partnership working initiatives.

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall, sent apologies on behalf of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Joy Allen and provided a summary of the work that the PCC's Office is carrying out, including prioritising the tackling of anti-social behaviour and appointing an Anti-Social Behaviour Champion, the 'Safer Streets' initiative, which saw £1 million invested in higher visibility patrols until March this year, and also prioritising and tackling retail crime such as shoplifting.

He added that a lot of anti-social behaviour goes unreported and he stressed that people need to report incidents as much as possible so that this is recorded and analysed to identify trends. This then allows the Neighbourhood Policing Teams to plan and implement short term or long-term actions, working with partnership organisations including Durham County Council and the Youth Engagement and Offending Services.

Parental involvement is secured with 'Acceptable Behaviour Agreements'. This is a voluntary agreement which supports the County Council and police to get an injunction, which can be escalated via the Council and to the police with a Criminal Behaviour Order. If this is breached, arrests can be made and this can also result in a ban from certain areas. This has had a significant impact.

The PCC have invested in compliance and a case review, so that if a member of the public is not satisfied with how their case was handled, a case review can be requested. This is made up of independent members who are trained and will listen to cases. More victim support is also available.

He also reported the positive development of a new Youth Hub within Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre, which will be opening in May, and which will provide young person with a citizenship and intervention programme and will also support their families.

Inspector Simon Peele advised that he was new to post in February and has a team of 24 in total, comprising himself, two sergeants, 12 police officers and 9 police and community support officers (PCSOs), covering the areas of Newton Aycliffe, Shildon, Trimdon, Sedgfield and Fishburn.

He advised that policing coverage in Newton Aycliffe is much better now with staff in Aycliffe every day.

He outlined the various achievements over the past couple of months, including the issuing of a criminal behaviour order, and a number of community protection warnings and notices, as well as a number of banning orders for the town centre.

He highlighted partnerships with Durham County Council and Livin including the issuing of tenancy warnings to tenants whose children are causing trouble which has had an impact with the risk of eviction. Action on private tenancies have been successful as well.

He highlighted the additional patrols being undertaken in hot spot areas including the town centre, Tesco and the Town Park, with officers working from the Fire Station office. Ringleaders are being targeted.

The team are also working closely with the town centre management with a dedicated PSCO allocated to the town centre..

As part of a government funded scheme there is more proactive working around anti-social behaviour.

PCSO's are working in primary schools to promote the prevention of anti-social behaviour in later life.

Regarding police premises, some officers work from the Fire Station Office, but the main base of operations and the local response team is the Glow Centre.

Legal negotiations are also taking place with a view to the police having an office in the Community Hub in the town centre.

An update was provided on the situation with regard to the rapid response CCTV cameras. Inspector Peele advised that they are keen to see the current CCTV cameras remain where they are and to increase the number of cameras. Two cameras are not working at the moment but discussions have been held with the supplier who will be undertaking the necessary repairs under warranty. He highlighted that identifying people can be difficult, especially with face coverings.

Inspector Peele gave an update on crime and anti-social behaviour figures and response times, providing statistical information, highlighting that crime overall is down by 8% between 2025 and 2026 compared to 2023 to 2024.

He highlighted there has been a change in anti-social behaviour recently, from mud throwing at cars to off-road bikes. He highlighted the use of a drone and the roads policing department to help address this ongoing problem and getting the CCTV cameras up and running will help.

Sergeant Clarkson provided details of the 'Shopwatch' initiative, linking with what is already available, use of group chat and better sharing of information but stressed that tackling anti-social behaviour does take time.

Inspector Peele added that there is lots of work going on behind the scenes, with the beat team visiting vulnerable individuals, focus on victims of crime, building intelligence etc.

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall noted that there had been high turnover of police staff but that the Assistant Chief Constable is trying to ensure that there is continuity in the neighbourhood teams.

Regarding the police station accommodation, he advised that there are no plans to move out of Newton Aycliffe, and that they are committed to signing a lease for an access point / office in the Community Hub in the town centre.

He advised he would welcome any ideas for suitable locations for a permanent police station in the town.

He highlighted that there is a review of CCTV cameras in County Durham and there is an opportunity to comment on this.

He advised that the P.C.C. holds the Chief Constable to account and ensures that public priorities are delivered and invested in.

Councillor Questions

The Chairman asked for questions from Councillors.

Councillor Arun Chandran asked if a youth was committing an offence, if there are facilities available to keep the child at a place of care and await their parents to collect them. He also asked how many officers are on shift at any one time.

Inspector Peele advised that custody facilities are not available locally and advised that the number of officers on shift varies depending upon the time of day or week. Planning of numbers is linked to what is going on, where possible, and they allocate as many officers as they can. There are competing demands and is difficult to coordinate but they are as robust as possible.

Councillor Tony Armstrong noted that the drug driving initiative was a positive, however, he had reported vehicles with no plates and asked about information sharing.

Insp. Peele advised that for reporting this kind of incident, to email the local beat officer.

Kate Ward, Senior Safer Places Officer at Durham County Council, added that work is ongoing regarding vehicle crime, and they liaise with the police and the anti-social behaviour team, and neighbourhood wardens and have regular meetings.

Councillor Tracey Williams highlighted personal safety issues with members of the public out in dark areas with headphones on.

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall added that Head Teachers have discussed this and it could be rolled out as part of the education process.

Councillor Michael Stead commended the Neighbourhood Policing Team for Newton Aycliffe and was pleased that there is now more coverage.

He asked if there are monies available for a new police station site, and if so had these been earmarked and how much was set aside.

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall said that the police had considerable reserves but that they need to look at investment priorities in a balanced way taking into consideration all other capital commitments, including accommodation, I.T., vehicle fleet, new reforms etc.

Councillor Tony Beddard commented that the Glow Church was too far out of town and not accessible, and asked what the response had been to the 12-day town centre period of anti-social behaviour, including arson, and if there is a £200 limit on following up shoplifting thefts.

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall agreed adding that when the Community Hub access point is finalised, this will improve accessibility and they will need to publicise the facilities that will be available.

Inspector Peele added that the response to the town centre incidents had been intense and utilised partners in identifying those involved and is now working with partners to prevent further antisocial behaviour.

He stated that the £200 shoplifting limit was a myth and is taken seriously regardless of the amount of the theft..

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall added that there is legislation going through to protect retail staff from abuse and physical violence.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft suggested that taxi firms could be used for intelligence gathering.

Inspector Peele agreed to take this suggestion on board.

Councillor Tunde Akinsanya asked what deterrent or punishment is given to a shoplifter.

Inspector Peele added that there is a meeting every morning to discuss incidents that have been reported and all of them are dealt with. The circumstances are investigated, if it is first time offending, they look at what is the bigger picture and what sort of response is proportionate.

Councillor Andy Hill requested the Beat Officer contact information is circulated to all councillors which Inspector Peele agreed to follow up on.

141. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A member of the public stated that they felt the anti-social behaviour problem was much bigger than it is and that many people are not reporting it for fear of reprisals, highlighting that the summer holidays would potentially be a flashpoint.

They praised the local police team, but questioned the increase in police precept when police officers numbers had reduced historically.

They questioned the lack of progress on the search for police station premises on the town.

Finally they asked if the P.C.C office is being disbanded, and what will happen to the money that is saved, adding that Aycliffe is 'Cinderella' compared to Bishop Auckland and Spennymoor.

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall reiterated that the P.C.C. is lobbying for more officers and reform of the funding formula, and that there are many other spending commitments that sometimes take funding away from the front line. Public consultation is undertaken on spending plans and the P.C.C. scrutinises how money is spent.

With regard to the future of the P.C.C., the role will be abolished in 2028 but the government have not decided how the savings will be used or what will replace the P.C.C.'s. It maybe that the regional mayors will take over the responsibilities with budgets transferred, but nothing is certain.

With regard to the police station, the police estates department have failed to identify a suitable location, but the commitment to find suitable premises remains, and the preference would be to have a police station in the town.

With regard to police numbers, this is based on factors such as population size and levels of deprivation.

He reiterated the need to please report all incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour.

A member of the public suggested that the historic loss of the town's police station was big mistake, and that this could be the reason behind the slower response times. They asked what the criteria is when looking for a new site, and suggested that redeveloping the derelict multi-story car park may provide an option.

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall stated that the area that the Glow Church and fire station operationally cover and response times were good and there is support from Bishop Auckland and Darlington.

He questioned the feasibility of the multi storey car park location which is due to be demolished, and added that amongst the criteria for the new location there would be a key need for parking and security for police vehicles, and the cost of developing land or adapting premises would also be a key factor.

A member of the public asked if there was a place available in Newton Aycliffe for a young person to be held safely.

Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Graham Hall reiterated the youth hub within the town centre leisure centre will be operational in May with multi-agencies involved.

A member of the public asked if Ministry of Defence properties could be considered which the Deputy County Durham Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to investigate.

The Chairman thanked the police guests for coming along and a brief adjournment was permitted.

142. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 11th March 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

143. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

The Town Clerk asked the Council to record condolences in the minutes following the sad news of the passing of former Works Manager Don Thompson highlighting that he had served the Council with commitment and integrity, and helped to deliver a number of improvements to facilities and services across the Parish.

A minute's silence was held in memory of Mr Thompson.

The Corporate and Policy Officer updated members on the ongoing roll out of their new email accounts.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the announcements be received.

144. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(a) Recreation Committee

It was proposed by Councillor George Gray, and seconded by Councillor Richard Hutchinson; and;

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 8th April 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 8th April 2026 be received.
- ii) That the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead, and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 15th April 2026 be received.
- ii) That the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

145. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS UPDATE

Members considered a report from the Finance Manager setting out the updated Financial Regulations for approval, prior to their formal adoption at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 13th May.

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

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the report and update be received,
- ii) That the proposed changes be agreed and adopted.

146. STANDING ORDERS FOR CONTRACTS AND PROCUREMENT UPDATE

Members considered a report from the Finance Manager setting out the updated Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement for approval, prior to their formal adoption at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 13th May.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Phillip Hawkins; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the report and update be received,
- ii) That the proposed changes be agreed and adopted.

147. COUNCILLOR DBS CHECKS

The Corporate and Policy Officer submitted a report to provide members with information regarding the feasibility of the Council implementing Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks for councillors.

This followed a motion raised by Councillor Michael Stead at the 11th March 2026 Council Meeting.

Officers have contacted the Disclosure and Barring Service and North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO) regarding eligibility of councillors for DBS checks and the appropriate level for these. Following their advice and further research undertaken, Town and Parish Councillors are not eligible for Enhanced or Standard DBS checks but are free to undertake a Basic DBS check.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Richie Hutchinson; and

RESOLVED – as follows:-

- i) That the report and information be received;
- ii) That all Members receive a Basic DBS check;
- iii) That the process of seeking councillor DBS checks be delayed until NEREO's system accepts the basic check, later this year.

148. MAYOR'S CADET POLICY AND PROTOCOL

The Town Clerk submitted a report asking Members to approve a new Mayor's Cadet Policy following the discussions with 1407 Air Cadets to establish this initiative.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Richie Hutchinson; and

RESOLVED – as follows:-

- i) That the report be received;
- ii) That the Mayor's Cadet policy be approved.

149. 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 CDALC meet once a year in October.
- (b) **CDALC Executive Committee Meeting**
There had been no meeting.
- (c) **Aycliffe Village Hall Association**
Councillor Carl Robinson gave a brief update.
- (d) **Woodham Village Community Association**
There was no update to receive.
- (e) **CDALC Larger Local Councils' Forum**
There had been no meeting.
- (f) **Newton Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society**
There had been no meeting. The mayor added that the recent Open Day was very well attended.
- (g) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**
There had been no meeting.
- (h) **Western Area Partnership**
There had been no meeting. The Town Clerk requested the contact information for the new organiser of the meetings.
- (i) **Cornforth Partnership**
There had been no meeting.
- (j) **Community Hub Development Group**
The Town Clerk provided a brief update following the receipt of correspondence from the Community Hub, advising that the police office is progressing, providing details of the operation of the café, the planned launch of a People's Pantry, that a partnership group is to formed to replace the development group, and that members are invited to visit hub to have a look around.
- (k) **Oak Leaf Golf Club**
Councillor Tony Beddard wished to pass on the compliments of the Golf Club which had been received at the meeting on the condition of the golf course.

150. COUNCILLOR VACANCY – WOODHAM WARD

Durham County Council Election Services have confirmed that the councillor vacancy in the Woodham Ward has not been called to by-election by the local electorate and that the Council can now proceed to co-option.

The Town Clerk advised that in accordance with the requirements of the Co-Option Policy, the vacancy will be advertised for a period of four weeks on the Council notice boards and website and in the local press, from Friday 24th April, with the Co-Option Meeting taking place at the Council Meeting in June.

CHAIRMAN