

FULL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER 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 16TH SEPTEMBER 2026 at 7.00 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Neil Collinson, (Chairman) and:
Councillors: Tony Armstrong, Lindsey Aston, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Dorothy Bowman, Richard Burchell, Arun M. Chandran, Chris Clement, Luke Ellis, George Gray, Phil Hawkins, Andy Hill, Richard Hutchinson, Sharon Hutchinson, Sandra Kirby, Vijaya Kotur, Jackie McFadden Lewis, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Kyle Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

One member of the public was present.

62. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tunde Akinsanya, Martin Ashcroft and Brian Sowerby.

64. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

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

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

66. GUEST SPEAKER

Community Wellbeing Hub and Volunteer Officer, Samantha Townsend, provided a presentation and a talk on the 'Making Every Contact Count' initiative.

The project approach uses the everyday conversations we all have with family, friends and other people, to help and support each other to make positive changes to physical health, mental health and wellbeing, based on the idea that every interaction we have with someone is an opportunity to help them.

It was agreed that the presentation slides, training dates, and contact information would be circulated to members. Members thanked Ms Townsend for attending.

67. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

68. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Chris Clement, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Council held on the 22nd July 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

69. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A list of the Mayor's most recent appointments were submitted for information and received.

The Town Clerk reminded members of the importance of keeping their Register of Interests forms updated with any changes and of declaring any interests at meetings, where relevant.

He also provided an update on the issue of gov.uk emails to all councillors advising that a number of councillors still needed to activate their emails and that this was holding up the achievement of the Cyber Essentials accreditation and the commencement of the use of the emails. He reminded Councillors Sandra Kirby, Jackie McFadden-Lewis, Richard Hutchinson, Kyle Robinson, Michael Stead, George Gray, Tracey Williams, Dorothy Bowman and Brian Haigh to contact the Corporate and Policy Officer to arrange the activation of their emails as soon as possible.

70. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(a) Recreation Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Luke Ellis, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 2nd September 2026 be received.
- ii) That the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(b) Environment Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Luke Ellis and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill; and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 2nd September 2026 be received.
- ii) That the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted.

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor Tony Beddard proposed that the minutes be approved subject to it being noted, in relation to Minute 39 b), that the Council seeks clarification, for the benefit of due process and good governance relating to the use of tax payers funds, on how the unspent grant funds with Lifeline Community Action will be used. He added that was not a question of officers or the charity, just ensuring transparency on the use of the funds. This was seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 9th September 2026 be received.
- ii) That the minutes and recommendations be approved and adopted subject to officers seeking clarification from Lifeline Community Action on how the unspent grant funds will be used.

71. BANK MANDATE CHANGE

The Town Clerk submitted a report to seek approval for an amendment to the Council's bank mandate, which is required as a result of the change in the Council's Finance Manager.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

RESOLVED – as follows;

- i) That the required change to the Council's bank mandate following the change of Finance Manager be approved.

72. CODE OF CONDUCT DECISION NOTICE

The Town Clerk submitted a report to advise the Council that a Code of Conduct complaint has been made against a Member of the Council, and to report the outcome of the investigation by the Durham County Council Solicitor, as required by Council Standing Order 32 – Code of Conduct Complaints. He advised that the Decision Notice can be viewed on Durham County Council's website.

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hill, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and;

RESOLVED – as follows;

- i) That the report be received; and;
- ii) That the outcome of the Code of Conduct Complaint and the publication of the Decision Notice be noted by members.

73. LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST

Members were asked to approve a leave of absence request for Councillor Tunde Akinsanya from September 2026 to December 2026.

Councillor Tony Beddard asked for clarification and what the request meant in practice.

The Town Clerk explained that the leave of absence request would excuse the councillor from submitting apologies for meetings and from being subject to the six-month attendance rule. It would be up to the councillor to advise whether they will continue to be available to answer enquires from residents and if they wish to pause their members' allowance payment. He added that Councillor Akinsanya will remain contactable and continue to receive his allowance, and there was no need to replace him on committees and sub-committees during the absence period.

Members all agreed the leave of absence request.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) that the request be received; and
- ii) that the Council approve a leave of absence for Councillor Akinsanya until December 2026.

74. COUNCILLOR RESIGNATION FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

It was advised that Councillor Tony Armstrong had resigned from the following sub-committees:

- Service Review Sub Committee;
- Asset Management Sub Committee;
- Santa Tours Sub Committee; and
- Planning Sub Committee.

The Town Clerk asked the Council to consider whether they wish to appoint replacements to the vacant positions.

It was proposed by Councillor Lindsey Aston and seconded by Councillor Michael Stead, that Councillor Vijaya Kotur be appointed to both the Service Review and Asset Management Sub Committees.

It was further proposed that Councillor Carl Robinson and seconded by Councillor Richard Hutchinson that Councillor Carl Robinson be appointed to the Planning Sub Committee.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) That Councillor Vijaya Kotur be appointed to the Service Review and Asset Management Sub Committees.
- ii) That Councillor Carl Robinson be appointed to the Planning Sub Committee.
- iii) That the Santa Tours Sub Committee vacancy be left unfilled.

75. OUTSIDE BODIES

Members received reports from representatives on the following Outside Bodies:

- (a) **County Durham Association of Local Councils**
The Town Clerk advised that no meetings have been held.
- (b) **County Durham Association of Local Councils Executive Committee**
Councillor Arun Chandran advised that the meeting had taken place today and items discussed included the increase of 2027/28 affiliation fees and NALC's A.I. assistant programme 'NORA'. Also discussed was the tenure of appointees to the local area networks and that two years were suggested. The meeting had also discussed the councillor DBS check motions which had been submitted by Great Aycliffe Town Council and Shincliffe Parish Council and it has been agreed to send the motions to the AGM with the recommendation to defeat both. The CDALC AGM will be held in Easington on 24th October.
- (c) **Aycliffe Village Community Association**
Councillor Carl Robinson updated members on the new developments at the village hall and some upcoming social events.
- (d) **County Durham Association of Local Councils Larger Council Forum**
The Town Clerk advised that there had been no meetings.
- (e) **Newton Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society**
Councillor Chris Clement updated members with details of the various Heritage Open Days and running days with the buses driving around the town. He advised that the membership base was also increasing which is very positive.
- (f) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**
Councillor Sharon Hutchinson advised that the group are holding the community fun day at Heighington Station on 27th September and will be attending the Full Council meeting in October as guest speaker.
- (g) **Western Area Partnership**
Councillors Kyle Robinson advised that no meetings have been held but that Livin were seeking to arrange a meeting in the coming weeks.
- (h) **Cornforth Partnership**
Councillor Tony Armstrong advised that a youth hub has been set up in the Leisure Centre and that there was a family fun day in August. He advised that he could arrange for a representative of the Cornforth Partnership to attend a future meeting as guest speaker.
- (i) **Community Hub Development Group**
The Town Clerk advised that no meetings have been held.
- (j) **Oak Leaf Golf Club**
The last meeting had coincided with the Policy and Resources Committee and therefore members were unable to attend.

76. EXEMPT BUSINESS

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and;

RESOLVED – that it was in the opinion of the Council that due to the confidential nature of the following item, it was advisable to exclude the press and public.

77. COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AND AWARDS SCHEME NOMINATION

A report was submitted from the Town Clerk asking members to consider a nomination received under the Council's Community Recognition and Awards Scheme.

Councillor Carl Robinson spoke in support of the nominee.

Councillor Arun Chandran supported the nomination on the basis of their service to the community.

Councillor Tony Beddard asked if the Council could consider a frame for all Community Recognition Scheme certificates.

The Town Clerk suggested that the issue of a frame should be made standard practice for successful nominations in future and this was agreed.

It was agreed by all members that the nominee receive a framed community recognition certificate and a 'local hero' medal.

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and;

RESOLVED – as follows:-

- i) That the report be received;
- ii) That the nominee identified in the report receives a community recognition scheme medal and framed certificate.
- iii) That frames be issued with all certificates moving forward.

78. RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

CHAIRMAN