

**GREATER WILLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting**  
**12<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

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**IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor D Hales, Councillor Smith  
Councillor Tinsley, Councillor Henfrey  
Councillor Berry, Councillor C Hales, Councillor Savage  
Councillor McArdle, Councillor Elgie  
Emma McCann (DTC) (Minutes)

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**1. ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Jackson and Councillor Jordan.  
Proposed Councillor Smith  
Seconded Councillor Savage

**2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

*Members are invited to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest in matters appearing on the agenda and the nature of their interest.*  
None received. Members are reminded they can declare any interests during the meeting if something comes up.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

***Resident agenda items requested through the Clerk.***  
None received.

**4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024, as written, and circulated, were agreed as a true record.  
Councillor D Hales signed the minutes.  
Proposed Councillor C Hales  
Seconded Councillor Smith

**MATTERS ARISING (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

None.

**5. TO CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

New Planning Applications

• DM/24/03249/FPA - 15 Greenways Sunnybrow - Two storey extension to side with single storey extension to rear  
<https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=dates&keyVal=SNVMA0GDKG700>

Previous Planning Application Decisions

• DM/23/02085/DRC - Land Adjacent To (East) Ash Drive Willington - Discharge of Conditions 3 (internal highway network), 4 (materials), 5 (surface treatments) and 6 (landscaping scheme) pursuant to DM/21/04140/RM  
Approved – Friday 1st November 2024

- DM/24/02150/FPA - 21 Prospect Terrace Willington – First floor and two storey front and side extension including single storey rear extension  
Approved BNG Not Required – Approved Thursday 31 October 2024
- DM/24/02732/FPA - 11 Richardson Court Willington - Erection of 1.3m high railing to the front of property  
Approved BNG Not Required – Mon 12 November 2024
- DM/24/02145/FPA - The Grange and Learning Centre, Willington - Erection of single storey therapy pod (Use Class C2)  
Approved BNG Required – Tuesday 26 November 2024
- DM/24/02725/TEL - Telecommunications Mast, Willington Cricket Club, Manor Road, Willington - Prior notification for the removal and replacement of the existing 18m monopole supporting 3 no. antennas with a new 20m 5G monopole supporting 6 no. new antennas and ancillary equipment. The installation of 1 no. new 0.3m dish and 1 no. new 0.6m dish. The removal and replacement of 1 no. cabinet with 3 no. new cabinets and associated ancillary equipment within an extended compound and works thereto.  
Prior Approval Required and Granted - Mon 25 Nov 2024
- SCR/24/00017 - Land to The West of Holland Hall Farm Park Street Willington - Request for a Screening Opinion under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 in respect of a proposed solar farm and co-located battery energy storage system  
EIA Not Required – Wed 6 November 2024

#### Previous Planning Applications Waiting Decisions

- DM/24/00171/RM - Land To The East Of Ash Drive, Durham Road, Willington - Reserved matters application (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) within parts of Phases 1 and 2 for the erection of up to 112 No. dwellings with associated landscaping and engineering works pursuant to DM/18/03443/OUT
- DM/24/01313/FPA - The Bungalow 26 Cumberland Terrace Willington Crook DL15 0PB - Retention of static caravan, 4 No. metal containers and metal column for CCTV
- DM/24/02067/FPA - St Aidens House High Street Willington - Change of use of existing building (Use Class E(g)) to a dwellinghouse with ancillary workspace including external alterations
- DM/24/02482/FPA - 169 New Row, Page Bank - Construction of a new triple garage, driveway and 1.8m high closed board fence
- DM/24/02335/FPA – Oxenhope House, 2 Hunwick Lane, Sunnybrow - Demolition of existing garage and replacement with single storey rear and side wrap around extension. 2no. two storey gable extensions to the front and erection of detached double garage to front

The DTC said she had circulated information on a development proposal from Miller Homes. A development of up to 145 dwellings consisting of 1.5 and 2 storey homes with 2 - 4 bedrooms.

Before a planning application is submitted to Durham County Council, Miller Homes would like to welcome residents' views on the design of the proposed scheme. There will be a Public Consultation at Willington Cricket Club on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024 between 3.30pm and 7pm.

Councillor Tinsley informed members he had been in contact with Miller Homes, and they had confirmed there is no commitment yet and no application has been submitted. The Public Consultation is informal.

Both County Councillors will be holding a public meeting after the consultation. There will be a lot of opinions regarding this proposal.

Councillor Smith mentioned there had been another application a while ago for Sunnybrow. Councillor Tinsley confirmed that application was for a different field and was opposed at the time.

#### 6. TO APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION (NOVEMBER 2024)

The DTC reported,

The Council began in November with a starting balance of £49,061.67.

There was expenditure of £33,581.08 and credits of £22,275.40, leaving an end balance of £37,755.99.

Proposed Councillor Smith

Seconded Councillor C Hales

#### 7. TO RECEIVE THE BUDGET REPORT AND APPROVE FINANCIAL DECISIONS NOVEMBER 2024)

The DTC reported.

The budget report was circulated prior to the meeting for your consideration.

As you are aware, the budget document that you receive each month had been split into two. The main table was our starting budget which was used to set last year's Precept. Any funding that has been approved since April 2024 has been documented under this table.

I have now added all the approved funding into the main table which has increased some of the different headings.

A breakdown of the increases was supplied.

Heading	Source	Amount	Total
Office	VAT Reclaim	£9,907.50	£9,907.50
Allotments	NB Funding – Fence Springfield Subs	£4,000 £130	£4,130.00
Projects	DCC - Fun & Food – Easter CDCF - Welcome Space DCC – NB – Little Brass Bash DCC - Fun & Food – Summer DCC – SG – Away Days CDCF – Family Fun Day Believe Housing – Family Fun Day Donation – William Clark – Family Fun Day DCC – NB – Pantomime VAT Reclaim	£515.25 £2,026 £1,964 £1,096.56 £500 £2,000 £500 £400 £1,299 £10,000	£20,300.81
Building Works	UKSPF – Roof	£15,960	£15,960.00
Christmas	Vat Reclaim	£584.56	£584.56
Training	VAT Reclaim	£84.34	£84.34

A VAT Reclaim was submitted for £20,576.40 which has now been paid into the account. As agreed at the Town Council on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024, the VAT Reclaim was to be used towards the Family Fun Day and to offset any overspent budget headings. These are included in the table above.

On the budget, you will see there is an overspend on Building Works of £8,890.75. This is the costs incurred from the damp proofing and the purchase of the kitchen and appliances. As discussed at the meeting in October, it was reported about additional

UKSPF funding that had been approved. This has been confirmed to be £19,322.76. This will be added to the Building Works to spend as agreed in the funding bid.

Our previous Budget for 2024-2025 was £123,642.59. Due to the additional grants and funding as detailed above, this has increased our overall budget to £174,609.80.

There is a Spend to Date as of the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024 of £140,881.34. This leaves an Available Resource on Budget of £33,728.46. The funding from UKSPF will be added to the budget once it reaches our account.

Councillor Tinsley asked what period did the VAT cover. The DTC confirmed it was September 2022 until the end of August 2024.

Proposed Councillor Henfrey  
Seconded Councillor Elgie

Great North Air Ambulance Service has written to the Town Council with a funding request. They rely on their helicopters to deliver critical care as quickly as possible. The charity has had three aircrafts since 2004, however, in August of this year they were forced to decommission one of them after technical issues deemed it beyond economical repair. They have been operating on two helicopters since. The result of this is that if one of the remaining aircrafts is under maintenance or out of service for repairs, they are down to one helicopter and the support of the rapid response vehicles. The rapid response vehicles carry all the same equipment as the helicopters but the speed at which the crew can attend an incident is substantially different. GNAAS are now raising essential funds to purchase a third helicopter. The project will take around 5 years and although they are looking to purchase a second-hand helicopter, the estimated cost is around £14million. Previously, the Town Council has provided £200 sponsorship to the GNAAS for a couple of years. They received £200 in November 2023.

Councillor Tinsley asked why this request was in the financial decisions agenda item. The DTC confirmed that the request was a written request for funding and not a Community Fund Application and the Civic Fund had a maximum donation of £50. This was sponsorship, therefore a financial decision.

Resolved1. To provide sponsorship of £200 for 2024-2025.

Proposed Councillor Berry  
Seconded Councillor Tinsley

Greater Willington Town Council and Greater Willington Environmental Improvement Group (GWEIG) jointly applied to the Northumbria In Bloom awards for 2024 under Greater Willington Parish. We were successful for two years running on winning the Small Town category. We have been asked if we would like to enter for 2025. The cost of the entry is £137.50.

Councillor Savage and Councillor D Hales declared an interest in this as being a core committee member of GWEIG.

It was agreed that we enter again.

Proposed Councillor C Hales  
Seconded Councillor Tinsley.

## **8. TO APPROVE THE 2025/2026 DRAFT BUDGET TO INFORM THE PRECEPT REQUEST**

The DTC reported.

The draft budget/precept report was circulated prior to the meeting for consideration. The LCTRS Grant has been reduced gradually year on year. We received £897 2024-2025 but for 2025-2026, the grant has now been removed completely. Our Tax Base has increased from 1,846.7 to 1,873.6 which is an increase of 26.9. With this mind, our net position is £819.22.

The Council Tax for a Band D property for 2024-2025 is £63.76 with a precept of £117,745.59.

As we are in a better position as detailed above, to remain at a standstill of £63.76, our proposed precept for 2025-2026 would be £119,460.74.

The table provided with the report shows figures to;

1. Remain at standstill
2. Increase by 1%
3. Increase by 2%
4. Increase by 3%
5. Increase by 5%

Most properties within our Parish are placed in Band A.  
I have provided the charges for Bands A-D.

The main areas of change in the proposed budget are Office Running Costs, Christmas Lights, Projects, Allotments, Community Fund and Mayor/Civic Events.

The Staffing budget has been allocated on a 'worst case scenario' basis. This would cover for a Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk. Until we know the exact staffing costs, this is the most accurate way to consider our budget implications.

We must submit the Official Precept Request by no later than Friday 17th January 2025.

Councillor Tinsley raised concerns about the draft budget. He expressed that basic running costs, compliance, CCTV and staffing account for around 75% of the budget which means it is costing around £100k to open the doors of the council.

Councillor Smith said all councils are having to make harsh decisions and that when going over the budget recently with the DTC and Town Mayor, the figures were checked diligently to allocate across the budget.

Councillor Tinsley raised concerns that we are not delivering enough for our residents with a projected allocation of £9k to projects. The DTC said that the allocation for the current year was set at £8k and that budget heading at increased due to successful funding bids. Councillor Tinsley confirmed that funding is not dependable as a lot of our funding was provided through the AAPs, which will no longer exist from March 2025. There is also no guarantee for funding from the Neighbourhood Budgets.

Councillor Tinsley said the budget had been set to fit the precept and was not a real representation of what the budget could be. He suggested the Community Fund and Civic Fund could be combined and the amounts changed. Councillor D Hales had suggested this previously.

Councillor Tinsley reported that he could not support the budget or precept request at this stage until a more realistic budget was produced.

Councillor Smith said that all councillors are here for the whole community and that herself and Councillor D Hales have worked with the DTC and with a tight budget. She also said that we must do what is legally correct in connection with appointing a new Town Clerk. The costs associated with staffing was based on the worst-case scenario.

The DTC suggested holding an extraordinary meeting in January 2025. This was agreed. Councillor Smith also said that any councillors who would like to discuss the precept in detail are welcome to meet in the office. The DTC asked for any councillor who would like to meet, to let her know their availability for week commencing 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025, prior to the Extraordinary meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

Councillor Berry commented that it was evident what the council has achieved this year and how much funding has been received. It was appreciated all the work that had been done to gain the funding.

Councillor D Hales reported that during the meeting to discuss the draft budget and precept, we accurately calculated the perceived budget headings taking into account expected rising costs. The new NI contributions for staff had only been received today. This would be factored into the staffing budget. She explained that due to some of the funding received, we were able to improve the building and make it structurally sound and dry. Without this, the building would become unfit for purpose. It is the aim to make use of the whole building, being here for the public and supporting all residents. All councillors are working for the community they represent.

Proposed Councillor Smith

Seconded Councillor Berry

## **9. RECEIVE THE TOWN COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT**

Councillor Savage reported that she met with Rebecca Lee from County Durham Youth Justice Service last week regarding young offenders who rioted in Willington doing some community environmental work around the town.

They will be doing some tidying up of the wildflower area at the end of February on the town green, litter picking, tidying up around the trees and turning over the soil ready for re sowing of the wildflower seeds next spring. They are also making bird boxes for the town council and Robin bird boxes for St Stephen's Church. They have also agreed to make a bug hotel for St Stephen's church.

They may be able to do other work, but risk assessments need to be carried out, Councillor Savage will update if she gets more information. If anyone has any suggestions where and/or what they would like the young offenders to do, please let her know and she will pass this on to Rebecca Lee.

DCC have planted a bulb mix on the grassed area at West Road. The Police and Crime Commissioners Office supplied these bulbs.

County Councillor Gunn said that Councillor Tinsley had been contacted regarding ASB in the area and what could the youths do. Councillor Tinsley suggested environmental work in Willington and the officer involved was delighted they had something to work on and contacted the Town Council.

Councillor Henfrey said he had received lots of positive feedback about the Christmas lights. He expressed he was impressed with the number of trees that had been planted around the town.

Councillor McArdle had attended the Patient Participation Group meeting. It was an open agenda. There are now two new receptionists at the doctor's surgery. The surgery is working on trying to reduce the pressure points throughout the week. There are 6 e-appointments a day. They have provided advice on how to apply for extra medication for during periods of holidays. They require the start and end day of the holiday etc.

Councillor Berry thanked the County Councillors again for the work done on getting the new playground in Oakenshaw.

Councillor C Hales said it is quiet on the allotments at this time of year. There was recently a meeting regarding Rosedale & Victoria Allotments and an issue that had arisen. This has been resolved.

Councillor Smith thanked both County Councillors for the letters they had distributed to residents updating them on what is happening since the explosion in June. She expressed that the residents have many concerns about the site as it has now reached 6 months. Lots of the residents are suffering with the affects of the explosion. Some residents have contacted Mary Kelly Foy as has Councillor Smith. County Councillor Gunn confirmed that Mary Kelly Foy had responded quickly in relation to this.

#### **10. TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLORS MONTHLY REPORT**

Councillor Gunn provided an update on the explosion at Coronation Terrace. She has been in touch with the Civil Contingencies team at DCC. It is a complex issue. Homes are privately owned. There is now a Project Manager, and they are liaising with the Civil Contingencies team regularly.

Councillor Tinsley recently distributed letters to all the homes affected by the explosion. They have no control over the dates that have been set. He confirmed that himself and Councillor Gunn had provided the update to residents as it was the right thing to do. Contact can be made via DCC and Mary Kelly Foy who is putting pressure on the utilities companies. It has been reported there will be no work done until after Christmas.

Councillor Gunn reported that they are confronted every day by angry residents because of this. They will ensure there are updates provided every step of the way.

Councillor Tinsley explained the situation with the delay in the buildings being sorted. He said that everyone must adhere to the Building Control Act. The process is wrong, but it must follow a procedure. Councillor Smith said some residents are keen to get the media involved to highlight the situation. Councillor Gunn said there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes.

Councillor Gunn reported the Spectrum is now all fenced off. The responsibility of the building and grounds is with the owner. Contact will be made with the owner to alert them to any issues that arise.

DCC had a motion where the Cross Party Group produced an Empty Buildings Strategy. This was passed.

Councillor Gunn informed members that she had attended the Green Fare at the Open Door Church, Willington. It was a great day, and she commented how wonderful the GWTC display boards were with their relevant information. Councillor Gunn confirmed the DCC team who attended with her, received lots of issues from residents regarding bins etc. She hopes there is another Green event soon.

Councillor Tinsley reported that the public toilet on the town green has been through an internal consultation regarding the possible removal. A public consultation will need to take place and then possibly be removed in the summer.

He reported that the new supermarket has hit further delays and should now start works in the New Year.

Regarding the proposed development at Sunnybrow, Councillor Tinsley confirmed he would be attending the public consultation at the Cricket Club.

County Councillors have been working on Traffic Calming measures for Hunwick Lane to Rockingham Road. They should be implemented next year.

#### **11. TO CONSIDER COMMUNITY FUND APPLICATIONS**

None received.

#### **12. TO CONSIDER CIVIC FUND APPLICATIONS**

None received.

#### **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)**

PACT Meeting – Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 6pm  
Town Council office will close at 3pm on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and reopen at 9am on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

- 14. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**  
Extraordinary Meeting – Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 6pm.  
Ordinary Meeting - Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 6pm.