Minutes from the Meeting of West Allen Parish Council
Wednesday 23 September 2026 at 17:00 – Ninebanks Church & Community Hall

Present: Lis Dales (Chair), Helen Manson (HM), Jane Braybrook (JB) Gilly Davies (GD) & Fiona McIlroy (Clerk)

Apologies: Cllr Colin Horncastle (CH)

In Attendance:

1. The chair welcomed everyone.

2. **Public Questions** – No public present.

3. **Minutes of last meeting on 27 May 2026**
The minutes had previously been circulated, and no issues were raised and therefore they were APPROVED.

4. **Matters arising**
a) Bus - see below
b) No response yet from NCC about replacing the waymarkers on Mohope Moor.
c) No further update on feasibility study by Northumbrian Water despite chasing.
d) The resurfacing of Chapel Bank to Ward Way has been done. HM commented that nothing had been done about the retaining wall so she would report it on Fix My Street. Mark Mather had contacted the chair to say there were some snagging issues.
e) Still no further forward on the batteries at the mobile mast but Joe Morris MP was following up with NPG as to why there were so many power outages. Still no further forward with another option for NPG to contact vulnerable people in a power outage
f) No date set yet for Starlink trial.
g) Rowland Hull has agreed to be the West Allen Parish representative of the Allendale Almshouses.
h) The chair suggested we need a new noticeboard at Carrshield and would ask for a volunteer to make one.
i) We now have a GDPR policy template, and the clerk will prepare and upload one to the website.

5. **Improve the quality of life and the environment in the local area**
a) An email had been sent to Colin Hall of The Environment Agency (with direct contacts at NCC) about the flooding spots, but no response has been received so the chair will chase.
b) NCC have issued Guides to Roles and Responsibilities for Flooding and Hedges, Trees & Verges and the clerk will forward to the councillors
c) There was a discussion about the horse boxes parked at Far Pasture Cottage since June and the 5 dogs left in them, fouling the verges and barking and howling. The RSPCA had been contacted but they would not attend. The chair would follow up with NCC.

7. **Working to bring improvements (through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies)**
a) WAPC Resilience Group
- The Starlink test has been postponed and awaiting further dates from NCC.
- The Mohope Youth Hostel has been removed as a registered centre, and the updated Emergency Plan was agreed.

- The Mohope generator is being stored by Rowland Hull. The chair mentioned that the Abbey may like to buy it. There followed a discussion about whether the Abbey could be a resilience centre for that end of the valley and have both the generator and store bottled water when received. The chair would discuss with the Abbey.
- HM commented that the Ninebanks generator needed to be moved as the Hodgsons were starting work on their shed soon. There followed a discussion about where to site it, and a plan was agreed which HM will follow up on. JB has a small shed that can be used to protect it if required.

b) Bus

The chair had been in touch with Nigel Easton from NCC who came up with 3 solutions:

- Not adverse to cross funding with Westmoreland
- An adapt bus just for the valley one day a week
- Divert one of the Allenheads buses.

GD who regularly uses the bus commented that the service was being reviewed in October. It was noted that Wrights were struggling to find drivers.

7. Influencing and shaping the long-term development policy for the Parish, and as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish

There was a discussion about Spartywell and the fact that the old barn had bats but had been taken down without any consultation about the bats. It was agreed that the PC would comment on the application saying the new build should be of the same materials as previously (stone and slate) and that a bat/biodiversity survey would be usually expected to be done.

There was a discussion about the vary of condition for Bench Mark where a small concrete area is to be grassed. Highways have concerns about access and egress and commented that there is insufficient information to give a substantive response. JB commented that there has always been a garage there and the change proposed was no different to how it was now. The Highways comments were noted by the PC, but there were no objections.

8. Deciding how much to raise through local tax in order to deliver services

a) Bank balance is £3,556.19.
b) It was AGREED to pay the 2 invoices for the use of the hall.
c) The clerk explained that the "free banking" period has ended and there would be a monthly charge going forward and that this had been budgeted for.

9. Correspondence

- Sport Tynedale had requested a donation, but it had previously been agreed not make donations outside the parish
- There followed a discussion about the memorial bench and the fact that NCC wanted to charge Mrs Baird £1,200 plus VAT to install it. JB suggested a contact, but he had been unwell so was not sure of his availability.
- An email about the NCC revised Local Plan had been received and the clerk agreed to send on to the councillors to look at if they wished.
- The clerk keeps receiving information about the digital switchover and has put information on the website.

10. CH was in hospital and therefore unable to attend.

11. Any other business

- Project Keystone – the chair explained that NCC would be putting more work on to Parish Councils and that when this happened the precept would have to increase to accommodate this. The project was a consultation exercise with PCs to assess what support they needed to take on additional responsibilities.
- Review – the chair had created a list of contacts, and the clerk would maintain it. GD asked if we could see how many hits the website gets, and the clerk said she would ask Hugo Fox. And whether the clerk could see who had signed up for alerts and again the clerk will ask Hugo Fox.
- HM understood that Allendale and Allen Valleys Mapping Team were looking to extend their map of places of interest to include West Allen. The clerk confirmed she had not been approached.
- Communications –the best way to deal with getting things to the residents is still via the website.
- Training – the chair has had wildfire training.

11. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 16th December 2026 at 5pm at Ninebanks Church and Community Hall.