

Longhirst Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in Longhirst Village Hall, on Thursday, 6th November 2025

Present	Cllr Glen Fahy (Chair)	Cllr Andrew Robson (Vice Chair)	Cllr Bill Climson
	Cllr David Jordon	Cllr Janet Quinn	Cllr Julie Murray
	Cllr Richard Tordoff		Barry Flux (Clerk)
In Attendance	Eight members of the public	County Councillor Ed Dungait	

Public questions / speaking

Planning

Members of the public raised concerns about listed building consent at 19 Longhirst Village. It was noted that the application had been refused by the planning authority. Councillors agreed to discuss this further under the planning section of the agenda and consider submitting a comment supporting the refusal decision. Clarification was provided regarding permitted development rights and conservation area restrictions. It was confirmed that any future planning applications would be considered by the Parish Council as consultees when submitted.

Village Maintenance

Issues were raised regarding the area near the bus stop. The Council confirmed that work could occur, with parish funds covering the cost, but that work would likely resume next spring. The condition of the village telephone box was also discussed; the Council confirmed that an engineer's inspection and photographs had been submitted to the regional office, with restoration expected to be scheduled for the next repair season (April–October).

Highways and Road Safety

Concerns were expressed about visibility and speeding when exiting the archway onto the main street. Options discussed included extending the pavement radius and/or installing double yellow lines. The Council has requested a meeting with Highways but has not yet received a response. Members agreed to continue pressing for action.

Police Presence and Community Safety

Residents raised concerns about the frequency of police traffic through the village and the lack of police attendance at parish meetings. Councillors agreed to write to the Chief Constable to seek clarification on the apparent increase in police vehicles and to request regular police representation at future meetings.

Christmas Decorations

A question was raised about how Christmas lights are funded in other villages. It was clarified that such decorations are typically financed by parish or town councils rather than the County Council. Members discussed the possibility of a modest Christmas tree with lights within the parish budget.

Procedural Transparency:

Signed

Date:

A member of the public noted delays in receiving responses to procedural queries. The Clerk agreed that a public information document outlining council procedures should be prepared and displayed in the village hall.

Community Requests

A reimbursement request was raised for costs incurred by a resident for a road mirror installed near the church. It was agreed this would be discussed formally under the agenda item for funding and expenditure.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL UPDATE – Cllr Ed Dungait

Cllr Dungait reported that the County Council meets bi-monthly, with the most recent meeting held the previous day. Two key reports were presented on schools and finance. Overall, the Council's financial position remains sound: budgets are tight, but external audits have confirmed the authority is in a stable condition compared with many others. Current reserves are estimated between £170–200 million, supported by low borrowing costs averaging around 3%. Five school rebuilding projects are currently underway, reflecting positive progress across the county's education sector.

Cllr Dungait noted some minor political changes within the Council: one independent member has joined the Conservative group, and three Reform Party councillors have been expelled, now sitting as independents. These changes have not affected overall council operations.

Bus Stop Request (Broomhaugh area)

A resident from Broomhaugh had requested an additional request-only bus stop (without new infrastructure) between Longhirst and Pegswood. Councillors discussed that buses had previously stopped informally in this location and agreed the request seemed reasonable. It was agreed the Parish Council would write in support of the proposal.

Adoption of Private Road

Cllr Dungait reported that the County Council had confirmed the section of road from the C125 to the Methodist Chapel is adopted, but the remaining section is privately owned, linked to historical land parcels from the former colliery site. The Council stated it is not current policy to adopt additional private roads unless they meet required construction standards. Members expressed frustration, noting the road's long existence and apparent sound condition, and agreed to respond to NCC to express their dissatisfaction with the decision.

Road Maintenance and Drainage

Residents described ongoing issues with road surface condition and drainage near Sydney Cottage. It was noted that a private contractor had recently cleared drains, followed later by County Council activity in the same area. Members agreed the Parish Council should continue raising maintenance concerns with NCC.

Speeding Report

Cllr Dungait advised that a speeding report for the parish is expected shortly. It will be circulated to the lead petitioner, and results are due to be discussed at the forthcoming Community Partnership meeting (Monday 17th November 6pm, Morpeth Town Hall). Councillors expressed frustration at the delays in receiving data and requested updates as soon as available.

Signed

Date:

Agenda Item
<p>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE None</p>
<p>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST None</p>
<p>3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS The minutes from the meeting of 4th September 2025 were approved as a true record.</p>
<p>4. CLERK'S REPORT The Clerk presented an update on parish finances and spending since the previous meeting. It was noted that half of the annual precept had been received during the past two months, adding approximately £4,000 to the council's funds.</p> <p>As of the meeting date, balances stood at:</p> <p>Community Account: £8,069.24</p> <p>Business Interest Account: £14,958.46</p> <p>The Clerk advised that overall expenditure remains within expected limits and that there are no extraordinary schemes currently requiring additional funds. Members were reminded that the 2026/27 budget must be set at the January meeting, and it was suggested that given the healthy financial position the precept should remain unchanged for the coming year.</p> <p>The Council agreed there is no need to raise the precept at this stage. A draft budget will be prepared and presented for approval at the January meeting.</p> <p>The Clerk added that further discussion on reserves and financial policies would take place later in the meeting under the relevant agenda item.</p>
<p>5. PLANNING</p> <p>5 Longhirst Village – Tree Works (Conservation Area) Application for tree works at 15 Longhirst Village (Yew tree – reduce height and width by approximately 50% to enable maintenance) was received and validated on 25 September 2025. The Parish Council noted that this application had been discussed at a previous meeting.</p> <p>Reference: 25/03434/TREECA Decision: No comment; application approved.</p> <p>19 Longhirst Village – Listed Building Consent The Parish Council discussed a listed building consent application for 19 Longhirst Village, which proposed creating a uniform roof height at the rear extension to provide usable ceiling space for a kitchen and shower room. The application had been refused due to non-compliance with heritage and design guidelines. Members noted that an adjacent property had followed planning requirements, while this application had not.</p> <p>Reference: 25/03082/LBC</p>

Signed

Date:

Decision: Parish Council supports the refusal and will submit a letter reaffirming this position. The Council agreed to maintain similar objections on any future retrospective or similar applications.

Action: Clerk to contact the Planning Officer for an update and circulate any response.

Longhirst Colliery – Telecommunication Pole

Planning application for the erection of a 9-metre telecommunication pole at Longhirst Colliery. Members reviewed the application and determined there were no grounds for objection or comment.

Reference: 25/03253/MISC

Decision: No comment.

Land At John Dobson Drive - Tree Works (Conservation Area)

Trees in a Conservation Area: T2 (Willow)-Fell, T3 (Sycamore)-Fell, T4 (Pine)-Fell, T5 (Pine)-Fell, G6 (Mixed Trees) - 2 x Beech -Crown Lift by 3m, Overhanging Trees prune lower branches back up to 5m, higher branches 1.5m, G7 - (Mixed Trees) Prune back with Kerb line by 1m. Members reviewed the application and determined there were no grounds for objection or comment.

Reference: 25/03975/TREECA

Decision: No comment.

6. POLICY AND PROCEDURES REVIEW

Safeguarding Policy

The Clerk highlighted that, in relation to potential funding applications, the Parish Council may be asked to provide an up-to-date safeguarding policy. Currently, the Council's safeguarding policy has not been reviewed or updated for four to five years.

It was proposed that a revised safeguarding policy be brought to the next meeting for approval, to ensure the Council is prepared for any future funding applications. It was also suggested that all policies be reaffirmed at the AGM unless there are legal changes or other requirements necessitating amendments.

Action: Clerk to prepare and present an updated safeguarding policy at the next meeting.

Reserves Policy

The Clerk noted that while the Council has a general finance policy, there is no specific reserves policy. It was suggested that, given the Council's modest precept of approximately £8,000, a target reserve level of around twice the annual income would be prudent to cover any emergency or unforeseen expenditure.

Members were asked to consider this proposal, with a view to formalising a reserves policy at a future meeting. Comparisons with other parish councils indicate this is a common approach, adjusted for the Council's size and budget.

Action: Members to review and consider the adoption of a reserves policy at the next meeting.

7. GENERAL ITEMS

Signed

Date:

Community Governance Review

The Clerk provided an overview of the Northumberland County Council Community Governance Review, noting that it is a county-wide review of all parish councils. The Clerk advised that Longhirst Parish Council should submit a response to the survey for completeness, although most questions are not directly relevant to the parish. Key points agreed:

- The Council currently has the right number of councillors.
- The parish should remain unwarded.
- The parish should remain ungrouped with no boundary changes.
- There are no concerns regarding the parish's viability.

Action: Clerk to submit the Council's response to the review.

Requests for Funds

Churchyard Maintenance: The Church requested an increase in funding from £700 to £1,000. After discussion, members agreed to maintain the existing £700 contribution, noting the need for clarification on how the funds are spent. Any future increase would require detailed justification.

Village Hall/Defibrillator Funding: The Council agreed to fund £200 towards the maintenance of defibrillators and paddles, subject to receipt/invoice submission.

Action: Clerk to communicate decisions to applicants and request invoices where appropriate.

Speeding

Members noted ongoing concerns regarding speeding in the parish. No new information was available pending a meeting with Highways.

Action: Await feedback from Highways for further discussion.

Remembrance Sunday

Members confirmed that wreaths have been ordered for both the village and colliery. The vicar from Longhirst Village will attend the ceremony. Members discussed the contribution towards the bugler, confirming arrangements.

Noticeboards

It was agreed to conduct an audit of all parish noticeboards to determine location, condition, and any need for replacement or relocation, including the request to move the noticeboard at the bus stop near the War Memorial.

Action: Clerk to organise audit and report back to the Council.

Article for Longhirst Leader

Members discussed reporting on Council activities. The Clerk confirmed that draft articles will continue to be provided shortly after each meeting to allow timely submission.

8. AOB

The Forge, Ulgham

With Purchase of The Forge at Ulgham looking unlikely, it was requested that the clerk write and ask for return of £500 donated. It was agreed that if purchase ever were to look likely that the parish would look to re-donate the £500.

Mirror

Parish Councillors felt that the new mirror erected in the village to help motorists was an asset to the community and as such asked for an invoice of cost in order to reimburse the resident who erected it.

Pub night

Cllr Jordon suggested that a least one parish councillor should attend the pub night at the Village Hall by way of being an unofficial surgery to find out about issues within the parish. This idea was warmly received. Discussion took place as to whether funding was needed to make the pub night occur. It seemed at this juncture it is not, but this would be monitored.

9. ITEMS FOR THE JANUARY MEETING

- Budget approval.
- Updates from Highways.
- Feedback from ongoing community initiatives, including potential pub night “surgery” events.
- Discussion on any outstanding funding requests or new proposals.

It was agreed to message the clerk with any items for the next meeting.

10. NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 8th January 2025. It was agreed to alternate meetings between Longhirst Village Hall and Longhirst Colliery Hall going forward with the January meeting at Longhirst Village Hall.

Signed

Date: