

**Minutes from the Meeting of West Allen Parish Council**  
**Wednesday 18 March 2026 at 19:00 – Ninebanks Church & Community Hall**

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

**Apologies:** None

**In Attendance:** Fi Fiddler (FF)

1. Welcome by Chair.
2. **Public Questions** – None but FF thanked the PC for all they are doing for the community.
3. **Minutes of last meeting on 17 December 2025**  
The minutes had previously been circulated, and no issues were raised and therefore they were APPROVED.
4. **Matters arising**
  - a) Cllr Colin Horncastle was not present for update on speaking to Chris Curtis about having the old bus route restarted. Clerk to follow up with him. Fi Fiddler commented that she regularly uses buses when she's walking and recently used the Bellingham to Kielder bus which runs 3 times on a Saturday and she was the only person. Driver confirmed there often was no one. Also there are new routes to Kelso so there must be some way to split costs across borders.
  - b) GD confirmed that Fairplay do not have a satellite phone
  - c) Meeting with Heidi Mottram of Northumbrian Water is a Teams meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> at 9.30.
  - d) Unsatisfactory email received from VMO2 about the batteries – see below.
  - d) HSBC bank account to be closed.
  - e) Reasons for increase in precept discussed and agreed for communication to residents.
5. **Improve the quality of life and the environment in the local area**
  - a) Flooding hotspots had been identified by Chair and HM and reported by Clerk on Fix My Street with W3W location.
  - b) Post Office need to inform BT about the green box at Ninebanks for the IT in van not working properly. It was agreed that the PC needed to inform residents about the postal van by WhatsApp and website – “Use it or lose it”
6. **Working to bring improvements (through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies)**
  - a) **WAPC Resilience Group**
    - Chair is going to create a scenario to test the Starlink which NCC is trialling.
    - Vulnerable people who have a BT line are entitled to a free UPS.
    - An email response was received from VMO2 about the batteries for the mobile mast saying there are batteries, but the topography affects the signal. This was discussed especially as JB lives directly below the mast and didn't get a signal at the last power cut. JB had also tried 999 but it did not work despite being told by the police it would. The batteries worked fine before Storm Amy The chair will send a response and request an on-site meeting.
    - There was a discussion about how BARN cope with power cuts – they have batteries that last 8 hours and then generators if longer but only 2 for the area and it's unclear how they would be allocated. They have suggested a UPS for homes.

- A longer extension for the Ninebanks generator had been purchased and was covered by the NPGF grant.
- 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**  
No comments on new application. All others had been granted by NCC.
- 8. Deciding how much to raise through local tax in order to deliver services**
- a) Bank balance is £2,712.16.
  - b) It was AGREED to pay the clerk's salary of £250pa.
- 9. Correspondence**
- Request from Jean Baird about a bench. It was decided this was a NCC Highways issue and the clerk would contact them.
  - A request for support for the NE War Memorial Project was turned down.
- 10.** Cllr Colin Horncastle was not present for an update. HM asked whether he could prepare a short report for the PC if he was unable to attend and the clerk will contact him about this.
- 11. Any other business**
- HM was due to attend the Community Resilience Forum in Haydon Bridge but it has been cancelled due to lack of people. If she has time, she will attend one in Allendale as will the Chair.
  - Review – the PC had made contacts which helped and would them to keep trying to get things improved. Chair to create a list of contacts for the Clerk
  - The chair now has keys for the Ninebanks and Mohope notice boards.
  - Communications –the best way to deal with getting things to the residents is still via the website.
  - Allendale Almshouses (AA) – there was a discussion about this as GD had attended a meeting. A job description has been prepared by AA and it was agreed to put this on the website and noticeboard to see if anyone was interested in representing West Allen.
  - GD mentioned that Graham from the Old Vicarage had asked about a mirror at the top of Ouston Bank, but it was decided that this is a NCC Fix my Street issue not a PC matter.
  - JB felt the PC should have a list of vulnerable people for information purposes only. It was agreed that people could opt in if they wished – issue to be raised an annual meeting.

**11. Date and time of next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 5pm at Ninebanks Church and Community Hall followed by the Annual Meeting at 6pm with refreshments. All welcome. It was agreed to try to publicise the Annual Meeting more.