

WARK ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Chairman: Mr Edward Jeffrey **Contact:** clerk@warkparishcouncil.gov.uk

Meeting to be held 14th May 2026 at 7pm in Wark Town Hall

Draft minutes

1. Welcome, declare the meeting is being recorded for the purpose of the minutes: PRESENT:

Councillor Edward Jeffrey (EJ) (**chair**), Councillor Judith Weir (JW), Councillor Jason Riches (JR), Councillor Sean Miles (SM), Councillor Lisa Lorraine (LL), County Councillor Antonia Azocar-Nevin (AAN) Chris Reid (CR) (Clerk)

2. Apologies for Absence: None received before the meeting. Councillor Steve Batey (SB) sent apologies the next day.

An addition to the meeting Chair invited Nigel Fisher, a Civil Contingencies Officer, to talk about what plans are in place if there is a possibility of flooding from Kielder reservoir. Nigel pointed out that Kielder is low risk of flooding and there is a generic document that is in place to deal with problems with any reservoir within Northumbria.

3. Report from Chair: Chair read his report, see below

Wark Parish Council chairmans report 2025-2026

After the Parish Council elections in May 2025 a new parish council was elected, 5 from Wark and 2 from Stonehaugh ward. Our long-standing councillor, Annie Hutchinson, stood down from her many roles for Wark P C, but sadly died in the autumn. Her funeral was well attended by her family and many friends. There was a wonderful turn-out at her wake in Stonehaugh Village Hall.

We have a new county councillor in Antonia Azocar-Nevin, who replaced Nick Morphet, both represent the Green Party.

We installed 3 Moving Vehicle signs in Wark, on north, south and west roads. The cost of the third sign was donated by Nick, the outgoing county councillor. Thank you.

The election in May was going to cost the parish £2,708 pounds, but we queried this and after a meeting at county offices, two representatives from county agreed the fees were high and reduced this to £1,292 pounds. Myself and councillor Riches were in attendance.

Grass cutting at Stonehaugh has been done by Rupert Hollom and, according to locals, has been good.

The grass cutting in Wark is being done by The Monday Club and this work is also in good order.

The star gazing at Stonehaugh had a couple of loads of hoggin delivered, to be used to replace the rotten wood floor, but, unfortunately has still not been used.

A member of the public wanted to install a wooden seat in Stonehaugh in memory of a family member, which was agreed.

A councillor from Stonehaugh has resigned so we need a new representative from the ward.

We have a new clerk, who replaced Louise, who resigned because of work commitments.

We have opened an on-line banking account with Lloyds as the branch at Hexham has closed. This enables us to make bank transfer payments to most of our payment schedules.

My thanks go to all our councillors for their input in this working year.



4. **Election of Chair and Declaration of Acceptance of Office** – EJ elected chair **Proposed JW**
Seconded SM
5. **Election of Vice Chair**- SB elected **Proposed EJ** **Seconded JW**
6. **Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:** SM - The Monday Club
7. **Approval of Minutes from 10/03/2026** (already circulated in advance of meeting) – EJ signed.
8. **Report from County Councillor Antonia Azocar-Neven:** AAN read out her report. This is below
also below the missing report for previous meeting.
- 9.

Wark PC REPORT 06.03.26

- 1) **Parking issues at the first school.** I contacted members enquiries on this and they got back to me saying:

There are currently no parking restrictions in place for Wark C of E School, and any restrictions will take time to introduce. We will discuss with colleagues in school transport, and additionally, we can also contact the school to gain an understanding of the issues.

I also spoke to the headmaster and he said he would be more than happy to discuss this further with officers. I have not followed this up to find out if conversations have happened. Can anyone confirm if they have? If not or if non one is sure then I will find out.

- 2) **I was asked to look into what plans are in place if Kielder dam were to fail.** I contacted members enquiries, they referred me to Engagement_northeast@environment-agency.gov.uk And also said that I could find more information on NCC resilience on [Northumbria Local Resilience Forum | Northumberland County Council](#)

I am still waiting to hear from Engagement NE and so I have given them a nudge.

- 3) **Buses.** Before I was councillor Nick Morphet had submitted a spreadsheet to NCC with peoples suggestions from the whole ward. I was elected to represent NCC on the local bus board which is a requirement in order to for NCC to receive it's share of £163.5m in funding through Bus Service Improvement Plan. I found out that they don't meet very often which is why I called for a meeting with two members of the Bus team at NCC. They are still working on how they can implement these suggestions made from the spreadsheet. I suggested that some more engagement work with communities might be really beneficial so the team can really know what is working and what isn't so that more money can be invested in what would really benefit communities. I would like to organise some dates and possibly host something at the mart. I am open to any suggestions. What do you think?

- 4) **At the last meeting Wark PC gave me some more information on the speeding Wagons near Stonehaugh around the Forestry sites.** I contacted NCC to see how they could assist with the concerns the parish had, NCC responded:

If the issues raised are due to construction traffic it is likely to be a temporary problem. However, we can liaise with the Timber Transport Forum to make them aware of the concerns and pass this on to the relevant contractors/owners.

If you wish to contact them direct, the contact is James England: James.England@dumgal.gov.uk

While the concerns are being passed on, would you like me to get in touch with James or someone from the Parish can, just let me know.

WARK PC Report 14.05.26

1. **The library consultation.** The library consultation received 5801 responses. The staff consultation will begin in June and in July it will go to the oversight and scrutiny committee that I sit on. It will then be received by cabinet early September to hopefully have a new model by early 2027.

In my oversight and scrutiny committee meetings I have made sure to make a point of our mobile library service as this went from being a 3 weekly operation to a 6 weekly. The fully operational mobile library has only been operating in the north of the county while the west in rural areas have had a transit van to operate this service. I don't believe this is fair so hopefully by being involved in these conversations, I can keep pushing for a better outcome.

2. **Bus drop in event.** Since becoming a representative for NCC on the local bus board I have been organising a bus drop in event at Hexham Library on the 27th of June 1:30-4:30. NCC representatives from the bus team will be attending and I have also invited bus companies to join us, some of which have already confirmed they will be attending. I will also be inviting Tynedale County Councillors. The day will start with a Q&A to a panel of transport representatives, followed by a breakout discussion in smaller groups facilitated by those from bus companies, NCC and Councillors. This will be a great opportunity to communicate concerns and suggestions to contribute to the improvement of bus services in the ward, especially in rural areas.

3. **I have been contacted regarding a rat infestation in West acres.** I have contacted NCC and I am awaiting a response on how to tackle this.

4. **I have been contacted regarding the issue of cars parking on pavements.** Unfortunately, this is something that has been an on going issue everywhere. I have awaiting some more information on how to tackle this but I have heard talks about adopting Scotland's approach to fining those who park on pavements. I will find out more on this for the next meeting.

10. Adoption of standing orders and policies: circulated prior to meeting

Standing Orders England **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

Equality and Diversity policy **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

Expenses policy **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

Financial Regulations England 2025 **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

GDPR policy **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

IT policy **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

Lone working policy **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

Safeguarding policy **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

Volunteer policy **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

Task risk assessment **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

Complaints **Proposed SM Seconded JW**

10. Insurance 2 quotes – councillors have been sent relevant information on both

One from current insurance company £1371.56

One from Zurich £570 going with Zurich **Proposed SM Seconded JR**

11. Closed meeting 14th April, finance and contracts needs proposed and second in full meeting.

Move to BACS payments for monthly wages and other payments where possible – reducing costs

Proposed SM Seconded JR

Contracts for Wark toilet, Stonehaugh toilet, new contracts monthly pay

Proposed JR Seconded SM

Contract Clerk

Proposed JR Seconded JW

Contract for Stonehaugh grass cutting – 2 councillors meet with contractor and map out exactly what they agree to cut, use map to record areas.

Proposed JR Seconded JW

Wark grass cutting, look at paying expenses to The Monday Club as volunteers

Proposed JR Seconded LL

12. Financial Matters

12.1 Accounts have been taken to accountants

contacting the PC. JR suggested emailing the school with a response, the response could then be shared with families/children. LL would talk to the Head of the school to see if this would be possible. Unfortunately PC don't own any land that is suitable for a play area, land is owned by Karbon Homes. LL will contact Karbon homes and explain that PC have been contacted by the children and see if there is anything that could be done. PC happy to help in any way possible once land/area has been secured for a play area.

14. Items for Discussion at Future Meetings

Royal British Legion, to discuss everyone coming together and talking about dates for events not clashing.

- 15. Dates for Next Meeting:** 4th June 2026, 7pm at Wark Town Hall Approve the AGAR,
9th July 2026, 7pm at Wark Town Hall

Meeting closed 20.40 hrs

Chris Reid

Clerk to Wark Parish Council