

Gainford & Langton

MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 8 JANUARY 2025

COUNCILLORS: Wilkinson, Jackson, Hannan, & Van Mourik.

Officer: M. Clark (Clerk)

Visitors: 6 residents

Public Participation

A resident asked if the Parish Council would be supporting Gainford in Bloom in 2025.

The Clerk referred to this being placed in the draft budget.

Further reference was made to compliment the tree lights on the 'island' and would the council consider lighting the metal statue with uplighters in the future.

A resident referred to the recent article in the Teesdale Mercury about the refusal of further grant to Focus magazine. It was felt that the words recorded and used by the members in an open meeting were unhelpful.

The Chair explained that the council were fully supportive of the magazine and apologise if during the discussion regarding the grant application that unhelpful language may have been used.

The Chair thanked residents for their attendance and opened the meeting.

1. Acceptance, or otherwise of apologies

Cllr Jerom was recorded as running late for the meeting but was unable to attend by the close.

Resolved – That the submitted apologies be approved.

2. Declarations of Interest:

Members are asked to consider whether they might have a personal or a pecuniary interest in any matter included on the agenda for this meeting. If so, it is requested that any such interest be declared now. If subsequently during the consideration of any matter, it becomes apparent to any member that he/she does, indeed, have an interest, it should then be declared immediately.

Resolved – No personal or pecuniary declarations were made.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 4 December 2024.

Resolved - That the minutes of the Council meeting on 4 December 2024 be approved.

4. Clerks Report

Received – Clerks report (Appendix A)

The Clerk referred to hearing from Ruttle Plant who informed him that they will shortly be putting in a revised planning application for their area of land at St Peter's.

Resolved – That the information was received and noted.

5. Finance

5.1 January meeting reconciliation and payments.

Additional invoice - Focus Magazine £50 (December)

Mazars £426 (External Audit fee)

Resolved – That the January payments and reconciliation be approved.

5.2 Warm & Welcome financial support

Pursuant of Minute 7.2/May/24 refers – That the request for support following the award of £750 be reviewed following attendance figures submitted and details of additional funding avenues explored.

Representatives of the Warm & Welcome group referred to their report on attendance and alternative grant applications.

Members were fully in support of the work the group/volunteers were doing to support residents, and thanked them for the information requested.

Resolved – That the Warm & Welcome group be awarded £750.00

5.3 2025/26 Budget & Precept Report Request (Appendix B)

Received – Draft 2025/26 Budget and precept report.

Resolved – (a) That the Ear Marked Reserve for Christmas lights improvements be amended from £2,000 to £10,000, with General Reserves therefore being £9,700; and (b) That the Gainford & Langton budget be approved at £37,031, and the precept request from DCC of £36,548.

Exclusion of press & public (in respect of item 5.4 below)

Recommendation – That, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 s1 (2), the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to at item 5.4 below, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

5.4 Outstanding invoice – contractor

The above item was deferred until the February meeting.

6. Village Issues/Maintenance

None reported.

7. Correspondence

Submitted – Details of correspondence received.

Email from residents	Complementing the council on the tree light installation.
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Resolved – That the information be noted.

8. Planning

None.

Applications can be viewed online via Durham County Council's Planning Application System: <http://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applications/>

Meeting closed.

Next meeting – Wednesday 5 February 2025 @ 6.30pm

Appendix A

08 January 2025 meeting - Clerks Report

- Final Budget report completed
- Discussions with solicitors on Balmer Hill Gas Governor
- Requested Raby Estates (twice) to assist in removal of fallen branches on village green
- Grant to Santa Sleigh fund paid
- Assisting in sorting electric supply to 'Island' tree
- Responding to complementary correspondence on tree lights

Appendix B

Introduction

This report considers the 2025/26 budget as a whole to enable recommendations to be formulated at this meeting, including the recommended precept figure.

Clerk/Broadband/Mobile

2.72% increase on 2024/25

Recommendation - £9,823

Insurance

The insurance cover for the council is recommended to increase by 5% following conversations with the current provider. Actual figure for 2024 was £1,314.84 which £108 above the budget set. Therefore the increase for 2025/26 is against the actual figure.

Recommendation is £1,380 (increase of 5% on actual).

Audit Fees

Audit fees in 2024 were £360 and the recommendation is for this to remain unchanged.

Recommendation - £375 (5% increase of £15)

Bank Charges

The charges placed on the council account are averaged at £14 per month but can vary depending on banking activity.

Recommendation £168 (increase of £36).

General Admin/Sundries

This represents consumables such as printer ink, paper, postage, poppy wreath etc.

Recommendation - £100 (no change).

Subscriptions – CDALC/ICO/Microsoft 365/Focus Magazine

Generally a 5% increase in costs associated with CDALC/ICO/Microsoft 365. The monthly £50 to pay for articles in the Focus magazine is now included within this budget.

Recommended - £915 (increase of £615)

Rents – Spa & Recreation field

The council pays Raby Estates an annual rent for both the Spa and Recreation field.

Recommended - £850 (no change)

Website

This is the annual hosting fee for the revised website at £20 per month. An additional £100 placed in this budget to cover costs required for small improvements to the council website.

Recommendation - £340 (Increase of £100).

Donations under S137

This budget has generally not been used in the previous 3 years and given the council having in place grant aid and community support written into its overall budget I am recommending this budget going forward remains unchanged.

Recommendation - NIL (no change)

Chairs Fund

This figure is recommended to remain as 2025/26

Recommendation - £200 (no change)

Grass Cutting

The budget set for 2024/25 was set at £5,300 and recommended to increase by 10% in 2025/26 with the extra cost included for regular cuts at GAP.

Recommendation - £5,830 (increase of £530)

Recreation Field Maintenance

This budget header is to cover the cost of the annual 2 x fertiliser spreads across the area. Based on the spend over the last three years I am recommending this budget is reduced to a more appropriate level.

Recommendation - £3,000 (decrease of £300)

Floral Displays

This is recommended for a small decrease in 2025/26 at £1,400 as it is anticipated there will be an underspend of around £800 from 2024/25. Any underspend placed in an ear marked reserve.

Recommendation - £1,400 (decrease of £350)

Village Repairs and Maintenance inc litter picking

An increase on 2024/25 of £800.

Recommendation is £3,800 (increase of £800)

GAP

Following the redevelopment of GAP in 2024 and all the associated costs the requirement for a substantial budget is reduced. Regular play area inspections will be required and are costed within the budget recommended. The grass cutting and maintenance are factored into the village repairs and maintenance budget. A portion of the recommended budget is to cover minor repairs.

Recommendation - £800 (decrease of £1,200)

Community Events

This has been broken down into known events the council support or manage annually:

Gainfest - £850 (increase of £100)

November event - £3,200 (increase of £300)

Christmas - £500 (decrease of £700)

As fixed lights are on the island tree, and no future costs associated with purchasing an annual tree, this element sees a significant reduction. The recommended budget includes projected electricity costs over 12 months, plus an amount to replace lights on the tree supplied by Raby estates.

Total - £4,500

Community Support (Grant Aid)

The council wishes to support local groups and projects, through grant applications, under the approved policy. The council need to work within the approved budget, so I am recommending the Community Support budget be left unchanged for 2025/26.

Recommendation - £3,500 (no change)

Budget Header	Recommendation
Council Administration	See below
Clerk/broadband/mobile	£9,823
Insurance	£1,380
Audit Fees	£375
Bank Charges	£168
General Admin/sundries	£100
Subscriptions – CDALC/ICO/Microsoft 365/Focus	£915
Rents – Spa & Recreation field	£850
Website	£340
S137 Donations	£NIL
Chairs Fund	£200
Total	£14,151
Maintenance	See below
Grass Cutting	£5,830
Floral Displays	£1,400
Recreation field maintenance	£3,000
Village Repairs/Maintenance	£3,800
GAP	£800
Total	£14,830
Community Events	See below
Gainfest	£850
November event	£3,200
Christmas inc electric (456)	£500
Total	£4,550

Budget Header	Recommendation
Community Support (Grant aid)	£3,500
Total	£37,031

1. Factors taken into Consideration.

- 1.1 Anticipated carry over as 31 March 2024 will be in the region of £41,000.
- 1.2 The council tax base upon which the precept is calculated is 499.2 for 2025/26, a small increase of 2 on the 2024/25 figures.
- 1.3 The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant payable to the parish council in 2024/25 was £719.00, for the 2025/26 financial year it will be £483.00.
- 1.4 To note that elections take place in May 2025 and the costs of those elections are shared between DCC and town and parish councils. The charges are based on the electorate and for Gainford & Langton the costs before sharing could amount to approximately £3,000. I do not propose the council need to alter its budget setting, but can ear mark a sum from its reserves (see below)

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 For 2025/26 I have continued to make recommendation that better reflect the council's work over the next financial year. Its aspirations with regards supporting community events, and community groups while still maintaining good levels of services for what the council is responsible for.

As can be seen from **Appendix A**, if all the budgetary items recommended are approved, the total 2025/26 demand on Durham County Council would be **£37,031** minus LCTRS Grant of **£483** with the precept demand being **£36,548**. This would result in a small decrease in the parish council element of the council tax.

I recommend the budget to the council, and a precept request of **£36,548 at £73.21 for a Band D property**.

	2024/25 £	2025/26 £
Council Administration	12,717	14,151
Maintenance	16,296	14,830
Community Events	4,850	4,550
Community Support	2,000	3,500
Total	37,363	37,031
LCTRS Grant	719	483
Precept Request	36,644	36,548

24/25 Band D £73.72

25/26 Band D £73.21

Ear Marked Reserves.

Minutes January 2025

Following the dressing of one of tree's on the island I can recommending setting an ear marked reserve to build up a fund to improve Christmas lighting. Additional ear marked reserves for 2025/26 include, Elections 2025, & Floral (underspend 2024/25), and Children/Young People which can be used to support activities or match funding if required.

Parish Environment Improvements - £10,000

Children/Young People - £2,000

Elections 2025 - £3,000

Floral - £800

Allotments - £2,500

Christmas lights long term improvements - £2,000 (amended by resolution to £10,000)

Contingency against budgets - £1,000

General reserves 2025/26 - £19,700 (amended by resolution to £9,700)