



WALDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

1 Poplar Street, Waldridge Village
Co Durham, DH2 3SE

clerk@waldridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

25th September 2026

To: The Chairman and members of the **WALDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL**
(Parish Councillors Barker, Hall, Jones, Lewcock, Moist, Moffat, Sexton, Smith & Summerson)

In attendance Parish Councillors Sexton (Chair), Barker, Hall, Lewcock, Moffat, Smith & Summerson

Co-ordinator – Jackie Smart

Below are the minutes of the meeting of the **WALDRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL** held at the Whitehills Conservatory on Tuesday 15th September 2026.

BUSINESS

1. Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies for absence from Cllrs Moist & Jones
3. Public Questions –
 - Linda – asked if there was a possibility of a defib in the village, following the removal of the old one (which wasn't working). She's made enquiries with British Heart Foundation & parish would be eligible to apply as more than 200m from a defib site – Cllr Sexton agreed to put on next agenda for consideration.
4. Minutes for August agreed by all councillors in attendance. (All councillors received a copy of the minutes & no discrepancies raised)
5. No Pecuniary Interests declared
6. **Agenda-Motions:**
 - Action Log - Action Log reviewed
 - Signage for dogs on Millenium Green – Cllr Sexton is working with wardens to progress this, but in light of agenda item relating to electric scooters, a combined notice may be required (if agreed)
 - Allotment Lease – Cllr Moist is making progress with this, has key for emergency access & working with allotment association.
 - Correspondence/RFO update –
 - Audit Feedback – awaiting formal notification – aware of a slight error - a small amount of precept payment was grant & should have been recorded separately
 - Hire of Parish Rooms – due to safety issues all further booking have been cancelled & website updated to reflect that
 - Parish Team – break in the extreme heat has allowed them to concentrate on jobs other than watering, so tidying up beds & John has done some maintenance work on bridge on Millennium Green & remove diseased tree. Trial of self-watering planters going really well, they're beautiful & we've had great feedback. Winter planting due to commence next month
 - County Cllr Report – Nothing at this point
 - Placeholder - The future of the Parish Rooms –
 - Linda provided feedback of village community suggestions.
 - Agrees with what Council have said about rooms & usage, wants to work with council to resolve current situation, though felt more regular maintenance should have been done over the years.
 - Village group has identified 7 potential sources of funding, which they're happy to share – ***Council would be happy to receive these as we don't meet criteria on all options we have explored.***
 - Re-iterated we need to work as a team - ***WPC are fully committed to doing, hence the engagement***

- Ideas to increase usage & make a community asset for whole parish– sing for the brain, pie & pea, fish & chip Friday, Bingo, monthly entertainer, Elvis impersonator
- Promote more throughout the Parish to try & increase usage, though acknowledged they haven't been used post Covid
- Visited Lumley, Edmondsley & Grange Villa to get a feel of what was happening elsewhere – doesn't have specifics on where the money has come from, but they said happy to share – Felt should be down to the parish to find out, not her
- Only way rooms can be saved is if councillors work with the community – **WPC Councillors are totally committed to this**
- Mentioned we'd told a resident, who has been working with them to find funding options, to stop contacting us – **WPC advised they're happy to get constructive information to help secure the future of the Parish Rooms, but we have been inundated with requests, often repeated, for unrelated information to try & undermine the council – that's what we're not happy with.**
- Kath – wanted to know why meeting at Whitehills not Parish Rooms, but thought we weren't going to say – **WPC advise they couldn't share full report due to legal/commercial restrictions, but a summary would be provided**
- Tommy – they've discussed setting up some sort of committee (formally or informally) to work with parish to increase usage – **WPC are keen to work with residents, however Councillors have the added complication, a legal requirement to spend the public purse wisely.**

Building Survey – the full survey can't be publicly shared due to a confidentiality clause & the commercial nature of the contents - we are however happy to share a summary of the findings

The survey found **several important issues that need fixing** to keep it safe, dry and fit for community use.

- Roof Needs Major Work – many slates have slipped/cracked - Why it matters: Leaks will continue to worsen, damage ceilings and walls, and make parts of the building unsafe.
- Damp Is Getting Into the Walls - Why it matters: Damp causes long-term damage, unpleasant smells, mould, and higher heating costs.
- Masonry and Stonework Are Deteriorating - Why it matters: If not repaired, parts of the external walls could become unsafe or require more expensive structural work later.
- Gutters and Drainage Aren't Working Properly - Why it matters: Poor drainage makes damp problems worse and accelerates damage to the building.

Internal Issues (reason building currently closed) -

- Uneven Floor in Hall – potential trip hazard, kitchen door is not compliant as fire door, water ingress through roof has damaged first floor ceiling above hall (risk of uncontrolled partial collapse, which could come into the hall), boiler issues identified which means system shouldn't be used

The report identified critical & essential repairs required to bring the building up to a suitable 'public building standard' of almost £84,000, excluding VAT, unknowns, décor or internal refurbishment (kitchen/staircase) so realistically to create a safe, modern, usable space we're looking at a commitment of over £120,000 (which the parish do not have)

Discussions afterwards

Kath – Asked about accounts – re-iterated figures quoted at last months meeting (previously minuted) which illustrated potentially £35,000 available to us

Cllr Summerson highlighted that we would need to do all of the works, rather than little bits. Clerks discussions with surveyor suggest exactly that, so realistically we need to have considerable funds at our disposal, including contingency for unknowns. Cllr Barker noted many of the grants she'd looked at, even if we were eligible were £2,000, £5,000-10,000, so considerable work would be required to raise the required monies.

Linda – Need parish to work with us, felt there may be the option of a program of works, rather than all at once.

Cllr Sexton interjected that if we did find the money, would they get used, no definitive plan to improve usage. Also money has been invested in the past, but no notable increase in use. There's also the issue that we may need to hire a bid writer, as councillors don't have the experience of writing bids or the time available to complete paperwork – don't want fingers being pointed if unsuccessful.

Linda – Agree with what's been said, but want the council to work with them

Cllr Sexton commented that he understood the rooms were an emotive subject for many village residents, who had fond memories of the Parish Rooms, however as a councillor he wasn't

prepared to give his vote to open the parish rooms until he was assured of their safety, risking his home or ending up in court should something go wrong

Linda said she wasn't asking for them to be re-opened, she wanted time to explore options. If no-one had time she'd speak to Grange Villa & feedback to us

Cllr Sexton advised that as the rooms had not been used it would potentially make funding applications difficult. Clerk added it's not just the issue of the rooms itself that have prevented people hiring them, there's been parking in the village, lack of public transport, size of the hall for childrens parties/capacity issue & accessibility.

Linda – used in past for successful childrens party for 30 kids. Hasn't seen rooms advertised as a venue. Not promoted sufficiently & agrees it's currently a white elephant but has the potential to be a great public asset, like Edmondsley, Grange Villa & Great Lumley. If we don't use it, we'll lose it. Noted very limited attendance at meeting from a large parish, so reflects the limited interest of residents. (5 from village 1 from wider parish) Potentially need a community engagement office, but **Cllr Sexton advises that would cost additional money. He advises any decision must be made by head over heart, considering the facts available to us & the implication of any decision to the precept payer**

Kath – if can't use parish rooms where will meetings be going forward – **We're writing to legal services at DCC to explain exceptional circumstances for guidance – can meet in licensed premises so long as no alcohol. Looking for options within/close to parish for residents to attend. Village Hall seems to be busy, but we'll ask again.**

Kath – asked if everyone knows about meeting as not everyone is online – **Clerk - agenda is posted on notice boards & website, we don't currently post on Facebook but happy to do that if Councillors want that**

Kath – if the money was raised & the rooms repaired/re-opened what would you be looking for in terms of usage, community events or paid hires? – **A combination of both**

Cllr Sexton advised that now we have the report we must take action & ensure the building is safe & fit for purpose. Councillors need to digest the content to work out next steps. Cllr Summerson noted that it isn't usually considered prudent to spend more on a property development, than the value is likely to increase by

Actions - Council will explore options for funding (await options residents are aware of being shared), consider reports & it will be on next months agenda. Linda will ask & share information on Grange Villa. **Details can be shared directly to clerks email, should they not wish to share directly with Linda**

- Events Update –
 - Halloween – Cllr Barker advised room all booked for Saturday 24th October 4-6pm at the Village Hall. She will sort disco & party bags
- AOB –
 - Prohibit electric scooters & cycles from the Millennium Green – a number of complaints relating to electric scooters/cycles being used & the potential safety risks – views discussed & will be on agenda for a decision next month. To be put on Facebook to gather feedback ahead of next meeting.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 13th October 2026, 7pm

Yours faithfully, **Cllr Paul Sexton (Chair)**

August

Details	Income	Expenditure
British Gas Service Contract		£ 36.12
Community Waves	£ 48.93	
J Hall	£ 20.00	
Sainsbury - Van Fuel		£ 117.08
BP Make My Day Events		£ 222.00
BP J Smart Travel Feb-July		£ 108.00
Eon DDR		£ 128.68
Postage		£ 7.60
BACS DDR Staff		£ 707.42
STO MC Robson		£ 80.00
Ebay (Thinners)		£ 16.79
Postage		£ 1.80
BACS Charge		£ 8.75
BACS DDR Staff		£ 3,262.37
Bank Charge		£ 7.00