

DRAFT

# Whessoe Parish Council

---

## MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of Whessoe Parish held at Whessoe Parish Hall on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026, at 6.30 pm.

**Present:** Councillor D Woodley (Chair) Councillor C Stewart Councillor F Minay  
Councillor S Goldfinch Councillor T Musson Councillor S Patterson  
Councillor M S Baines  
Parish Clerk – B Goldfinch

**Apologies:** Apologies were received from Borough Councillors R Lawley and G Lee

### Welcome

Councillor D Woodley welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.

He said

“Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us at this year’s Annual Parish Meeting.

It is both an honour and a privilege to serve as Chair of our Parish Council. I would like to begin by offering my sincere thanks to my fellow Councillors and to our Clerk for their continued commitment and hard work throughout the year. I would also like to give special thanks to my Vice Chair, Sue Goldfinch, whose tireless work has been invaluable. Her support, guidance, and good sense have helped ensure that the council has had a productive and well-managed year.

I would also like to thank the Hall Committee, and the Social Committee. The Hall Committee continues to keep our beautiful hall in excellent condition and ensures that it is available for parishioners to use. The Social Committee has once again worked hard to organise community events, including the children’s Christmas party and nine quiz nights throughout the year. I am especially pleased to say that those quiz nights raised £1,586.38 for the Darlington Samaritans.

Over the past year, we have focused strongly on managing our finances carefully by reducing costs and increasing income where possible. Activity at the hall has grown significantly, with the frequency of meetings and parties more than doubling compared with last year, generating income of £4,300. At the same time, our expenditure has been lower than expected, largely due to reduced utility and website costs.

During the year, we were pleased to welcome Councillor Mandip Singh Baines, who has enthusiastically joined in the practical work of running the hall and generously provided the chocolate for the children who attended the Christmas party.

As in previous years, our work has focused on a number of important priorities for the parish and on continuing the progress we have already made.

The Parish Council has two main sources of income: the precept, which is included within the Council Tax paid by each household in the parish, and income from hall hire. This year, we

## DRAFT

increased the precept to make sure we could meet our most basic running costs, while our Clerk has continued to look for savings across all areas of expenditure. Even so, resources remain tight, and we remain committed to keeping costs as low as possible.

Throughout the year, our Clerk has taken every opportunity to secure savings and keep the Council's finances on a sound footing. As always, our financial information remains fully transparent and is published on our website for everyone to see, along with the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

There were also changes in government requirements during the year, which meant that the Parish Council had to move to a generic email account hosted on an authority-owned domain. We used this as an opportunity to change our website provider, saving several hundred pounds, and, with the help of Parish Online, we secured a gov.uk website and a free generic email account.

We have also continued to strengthen the way we communicate with our growing community. We now have a new, more flexible, and more affordable website, a Facebook page that all Councillors can help update, two external notice boards, and another notice board inside the parish hall. These are all important ways of keeping parishioners informed and involved.

Throughout the year, the full council has also remained closely focused on **planning matters**, making sure that development respects the character of our parish while also responding to the changing needs of residents. This includes everything from large-scale proposals such as garden villages to local concerns such as speeding traffic and smaller planning applications. This remains one of the Parish Council's most important responsibilities, and it is a role we approach with care, diligence, and integrity.

Alongside this, the committees within the Parish Council continue to provide vital day-to-day support to the full council. The Hall Management Committee, Social Committee, and Staffing Committee all meet regularly and report back on their work.

Looking ahead, I would like to close by setting out our priorities for the year to come.

I do so by repeating the values and ambitions expressed in last year's report, because they remain the right guide for the year ahead:

- Continue to encourage the community to come together for social events at the hall.
- Continue to maintain the hall and encourage new users, particularly those who can enhance and enrich the lives of local residents.
- Seek grant funding to undertake the works identified in the hall's condition survey.
- Continue to look for opportunities to improve and expand the facilities we can offer.

Thank you all for your time, your support, and your continued interest in our parish.

### **Open Forum**

There were no public present.

### **Close of Meeting**

Councillor D Woodley closed the meeting at 7pm