



**DRAFT Minutes of the Parish
Council Meeting Held on
Thursday 8th January 2026 at
7.00pm. At Humshaugh Village
Hall**



PRESENT	Cllr Herbie Newell - Chair, Cllr Ian Birleson - Vice-Chair, Cllr Nicolle Croft, Cllr Kim Hilton, Cllr Francis Nohl, Cllr Claire Robson. Clerk: Alix Pearson 4 Parishioners of Humshaugh
NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and expressed huge sadness at the very recent announcement that the Crown Inn had closed with immediate effect on 6th January 2026. It was noted that there has been a Public House in Humshaugh since 1730. All present were very keen to offer any support that might be acceptable to the publican, either as Parish Councillors, or as members of the public. It was noted that a similar circumstance had arisen 15 years ago when the Brewery - Punch Taverns - closed the Crown. At that time HCVL had stepped in to temporarily run the pub. The Director of HCVL is currently away and an early meeting will be sought on his return. The Chair and Vice-Chair expressed their willingness to speak to the publican as soon as this was desired and practicable.
170	1. Apologies for Absence; Disclosure of Interests Apologies were received from Cllr Kev Dodd, Cllr Antonia Azocar-Nevin (County Councillor) No councillor declared an additional interest in any item on the agenda.
171	2. Approval of Minutes The minutes were approved as a true record of the previous meeting and signed by the Chair.
172	3. Clerk's Reports Matters Arising The clerk reported that all actions had been completed. Financial Report The clerk presented the expenditure for Q3, which was approved by all Cllrs and signed by the Chair & Vice-Chair. Balances at 8th January 2026 are: CA: £3924.86 DA: £14325.34
173	4. Planning 25/00052/FUL 25/00053/LBC George Hotel - demolition and replacement of pool house building. Appeal lodged - ongoing. 25/03271/LBC Westfield, Humshaugh. Replacement of single glazing with double glazed timber windows to side and rear first floor, and replacement of single glazed front door. 25/04175/LBC War Memorial, Humshaugh. Revised cleaning proposal. Ongoing. 25/04354/FUL The Cottage, Humshaugh - replacement of flat roofed extension.

5. Business

a) Update on Parish Council Projects

Cleaning and Repair of War Memorial.

Cllr Birleson continues with his efforts to bring this project to fruition. A revised LBC application has been lodged to gain approval for the new method of cleaning. See minute 173 above. After an initial misdirection, a Section 211 notice for the trimming of the overhanging trees has been lodged and a response is expected by 15th February.

Improvements to area around old phone box.

This project is led by Cllr Newell, supported by representative from HCVL (Chris Robinson) and Village Hall (Peter Woodward). Work may now proceed and quotations obtained.

Neighbourhood Plan Community Actions

The following action is brought forward with a meeting to take place with Planning Consultant Jo-Anne Garrick.

Inclusive and sustainable community

Community Action 8: Community-led housing – Herbie Newell (addressed under the Policy 5 - Small scale rural exception sites, in the Neighbourhood Plan)

All other Community Actions are ongoing.

Emergency Plan

The table top exercise which forms part of the testing process for the Emergency Plan is still awaited. Cllrs Birleson and Croft are pursuing this.

b) Consideration of Precept Request 26/27

Having approved the 26/27 budget (minute 164 13/11/25) Cllrs considered that a small increase in the precept would be appropriate to reflect the rate of inflation.

All Cllrs present unanimously approved an increase of 3% which will raise the precept to £16,068 and have a very small impact on Council Tax bills. **Clerk to submit Precept Request Form.**

c) Consideration of Groundsman Contract

The groundsman contract expires on 31st March 2026.

Cllr Birleson has undertaken an extensive consultation exercise amongst service users regarding the requirement and extent of groundsman work and has drawn up a new contract. This contract contains a price increase from £15 to £16 per hour and also includes additional days which can be drawn down if conditions require it. The contractor will be managed by Cllr Birleson who will help them make best use of the time available.

Cllrs noted that the contractor has provided a consistently high standard of work, has demonstrated reliability and good value for money, and that the annual contract value of £4,480 represents reasonable market cost for the services provided.

Having regard to continuity of service, local knowledge of the site, and satisfactory performance under the existing contract, it was **RESOLVED to award a new three-year contract to the current contractor at an annual basic cost of £4,480**, in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

The Council further resolved that the contract be reviewed again at the end of this term.

d) County Councillor's Report

Antonia offered apologies and her report appears at Appendix 1.

175	<p>6. Reports and Updates</p> <p>a) Evans Trust Cllr Newell reported that the last meeting of the Evans Trust was on the 19th November 2025. Actions from previous meetings, finances and grants were reviewed. A request from Humshaugh Net Zero to invite tenants in Evans Trust properties to take part in the Humshaugh Energy local Management Trial was discussed and approved. The date of the next meeting is the 20th May 2026.</p> <p>b) Humshaugh Children’s Playing Field Trust Cllr Birleson reported that the next meeting was not until Sunday 11th January..</p> <p>c) Humshaugh Community Ventures Ltd. (Village Shop) Cllr Robson reported that little had changed since the last Parish Council meeting and that the new volunteers had enjoyed the work and stayed.</p> <p>d) Humshaugh Net Zero Cllr Nohl reported the following: Humshaugh Community Solar Ltd and the 1MW solar farm at Lincoln Hill. It is anticipated that final terms will be agreed with the primary lender in the near future to enable construction of the project (including battery storage) to commence in spring 2026. Northern Powergrid Rural Stage 2 Community DSO Network Innovation Project. HNZ is the community partner with companies Ricardo and Entrust Microgrid. The project aims to investigate giving local communities more control over how they produce, use, and share electricity. Work is underway to enable communication with Low Carbon Technologies, such as heat pumps, before further roll-out. Borderlands Energy Investment Programme. Unfortunately the HNZ expression of interest to the Borderlands Energy Investment Programme was unsuccessful. Tree planting. Replacement trees have been planted south of the B6320-Lincoln Hill lane junction.</p> <p>e) Humshaugh Village Hall Committee Cllr Croft reported that work to change the status of the Charity to a Community Interest Organisation is ongoing and it is hoped that it will be completed soon. An architect has been approved to work on the plans for the proposed Centenary project and it is hoped that there will be plans for consultation by the summer.</p> <p>f) Fix My Street Report Parishioner Mr Woodward once again sent a comprehensive report. Cllr Birleson managed to speak to an officer who is involved in the maintenance of Fix My Street records, who was able to confirm that there is not yet an agreed set of terminologies to describe the status of projects. It was noted that the walk around with a council officer was still outstanding. It was noted that there was a note of a damaged grit bin at East Farm. It was also noted that an additional grit bin near the Methodist Chapel would be welcome and useful. Clerk to investigate the procedure for purchase, installation and filling of grit bins.</p>
176	<p>7. Correspondence Invitation to Town & Parish Councils Conference, County Hall 5th March 2026</p>

177	<p>8. Public Forum</p> <p>Members of the public expressed continuing concern that the new traffic calming measures were not as effective as might have been expected. It was pointed out that the delineation of the road edge through white lines was no longer clear at New Houses. County Councillor to be informed.</p> <p>One Member of the public expressed an interest in attending Community Road Watch Training. This to be arranged via County Councillor.</p>
178	<p>9. Items for Discussion at next Parish Council Meeting</p> <p>Future of Crown Inn Progress of B4RN installation. The meeting closed at 8.10pm</p>
179	<p>12. Date of next Parish Council Meeting</p> <p>Thursday 12th March 2026, Humshaugh Parish Hall. 7.00pm.</p>

APPENDIX 1

HUMSHAUGH PC REPORT 08.01.26

- 1) Walk around (fix my street)** I wrote to Andy Fisher from neighbourhood services about the walk around the village with special regards to 'Fix my street' issues. He responded saying:

I think from my point of view a walk around Humshaugh would be a good idea so issues can be highlighted to me, then i can go back and see what is in the programme for them, and have some answers at the parish council meeting.

Would also be helpful if they had noted the fix my street reference number so I can check what was done .

- 2) Wark/Humshaugh practice.** Last year when I was first elected I found out that the Wark partner practice to Humshaugh was going to close but thankfully I received a message from James Martin (strategic head of primary care) that this was no longer going to be the case. I ask why there was a sudden change and he said:
I managed to find a small amount of one off resilience funding which was to help the practice to stabilise their practice manager situation but also to free up some time for the Partners from patient facing duties to look at their model of providing services. I'm hopeful that's gone someway to helping them to look at how things are working and how to keep that going in the future but I can't say for sure.

Moving forwards for now it means that both branches of the practice remain open and the practice aren't looking to change that. It's still a relatively small practice and like most businesses that comes with less flexibility to managing unexpected issues (workforce/funding etc) than those with more critical mass. So it's always something that may come up again in the future but for now it's good news.

- 3) Borderlands funding for solar farms.** I spoke to Peter Moller the senior programme officer in the town generation team for NCC.

- 4) Kerry Shaw from the world heritage team.** I went and met Kerry in her home town Heddon on the Wall. They put up some lovely signage that redirected people walking the wall to explore more of the village. I thought this might be something Humshaugh might be interested in to visit the village shop or the pub, or anything else within the village that might be of interest. If you are at all interested, I could put you in touch with Kerry and she could maybe attend a PC meeting to discuss how to approach the project. I seem to remember John Scott, who's the management plan coordinator within the team, saying that there are pots of money for investing in villages that sit close to these heritage sites.
- 5) Borderlands funding.** Unfortunately, the short answer to being able to use this funding for such projects like the solar farm for Humshaugh is, no. The reason for this is that the funding has been locked in for 7 specific sites. The towns were chosen based on need and opportunity. Hexham is was covered by the high street heritage action zone so was not included in the borderlands funding. Areas with deprivation that had potential for areas to put money into were prime candidates. The person I spoke to from Borderlands suggested looking into 'Great British energy community fund' and to also come along to the Tynevalley community partnership meeting to learn more about Borderlands as they will be presenting there on the 27th of January.