DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY PARISH MEETING OF
OUSTON PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 22ND OCTOBER 2026 IN OUSTON COMMUNITY CENTRE
THE MEETING OPENED AT 7.00PM.

1. COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Chair Mr A Wake, Mrs A Bell, Mrs M Duncan, and Mr D Wood
County Councillors – None
Other Attendees – Parish Clerk - Lisa Blondrage, OCA - Mrs A Batey and Mrs J Watson. Residents – Mr A Lister, Mr L Moore, Mr P Smith and Mr J Tate

2. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Cllr G Batey, Cllr T Fenwick, Cllr P Pringle and CC Quirey

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 24TH SEPTEMBER 2026

Previous minutes agreed and accepted by the PC.

5. REPRESENTATION OF RESIDENTS AND ALLOTMENT TENANTS

Mr Tate said he was continuing to litter pick in our Parish voluntarily. He said there is an ongoing issue of takeaway litter in St Benet's car park. He asked if OPC could write to Dillons to ask if they could provide a public litter bin for their customers waste. LB to write to Dillons.

Mr Smith said he lives on the main road and the noise from Heavy Goods Vehicles hitting the speed cushions at speed is loud. He said the speed bumps are effective for smaller vehicles, but larger, wider vehicles just drive over them at speed which creates a loud bang. He went on to say it is mostly the Titan Concrete and Redmondis vehicles and asked the PC to contact them to ask if they could find an alternative route or reduce their speed. Mr Smith said if Birtley can reduce their speed to 20mph, why can't Ouston. The PC said Birtley is Gateshead Council and Ouston is Durham and its up to DCC. The PC explained that the previous CCs planned to use their Neighbourhood Budget, Towns & Villages money, along with contributions from Pelton Divisions PCs to put in place a traffic calming scheme. It was all agreed and signed off by AAP, previous CCs and PCs, and the new CCs cancelled it when they took over. The PC's contributions were refunded and £187,000 was lost to make internal budget savings. Cllr Wood encouraged residents to contact CCs regarding a 20mph speed limit through Ouston. Mr Smith said he will contact the Police with his evidence. LB will write to Redmondis and Titan.

Mr Moore said he was attending the meeting to learn more about the ACV item. Residents are concerned about recent activity behind Bellerby. DCC said they need to meet housing targets and need to review the County Durham plan.

6. COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

The CC's did not attend and there was no written report submitted from them.

Cllr Wood rang CC Quirey as LB had emailed the CCs regarding Milbanke Close and they had not responded before the meeting. CC Quirey said he was waiting for a response as traffic calming measures could affect the movement of livestock as it is a farm access.

Cllr Wood said CC Quirey submitted his apologies and regarding the planned housing behind Bellerby said, National Regulations had changed and there had been an influx of Building Control applications as going forward, house builders must pay a £5k per property fee.

7. OUSTON COMMUNITY CENTRE – INFORMATION FROM THE BOARD

7.1 Information from the OCA Board

Mrs Batey said OCA are holding a Christmas event for adults on 28th November 2-5pm which includes an afternoon tea with entertainment by Craghead Brass Band (tbc).

Mrs Batey said OCA are holding their annual wreath decorating sessions to raise funds for OCA. There are two to be held on 29th November and one on 30th November.

Their Christmas Coffee morning will be held on 22nd December.

OCA's Remembrance Service will be held on Friday 6th November at 10.30am with Y6 classes from St Benet's and Ouston Primary Schools attending.

Bookings for all events can be made via a QR code displayed in the OCA noticeboard or in person in the OCA office. Office opening hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday all day plus some evenings and weekends. She added that the centre will be closed between Christmas and New Year, and the first two weeks in January 2027 for electric works.

Mrs Batey said improvements were being made to OCA's Facebook page.

Mrs Batey said the electrician is PAT testing OCA items including OCA tree lights and said she will ask them to do the OPC speaker as well.

Mrs Batey said the OPC post is date stamped when she puts it in our locker. She will also find our silhouettes.

Mrs Batey thanked the Milbanke resident for donating daffodil bulbs and they were planted by volunteers in the OCA grounds.

Mrs Batey said she placed a floral tribute at OPC War Memorial as former PC Alan Purdy has recently passed away. As a former serviceman, it was Cllr Purdy's idea to site a War Memorial in Ouston and was part of the design and installation process.

8. ALLOTMENTS

Pest Controller

The PC needed to source a new Pest Controller as the previous one had given up due to poor health. Walker's Pest Control was £2330.00 to visit site every two weeks on a Saturday morning, treatment where required.

DCC quoted £1905.05 for a monthly visit Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 4pm with no set date or time. This is not an option due to site access.

Robert Dixon quoted £2400.00 for the provision of professional rodent control and management services for Ouston Allotment Association site. Full inspection of the allotment perimeter and high-risk areas, nesting areas and activity levels. Traps and bait stations, if necessary, in compliance with safety regulations. Routine inspections of stations and traps and clear any dead rodents. Brief written or verbal updates to the committee regarding activity and overgrown areas to deter pests.
All cameras poison traps and any additional materials will be supplied by Robert Dixon
Pricing annual contract £2,400

The PC agreed to use Robert Dixon due to accessibility and level of service involved.

Livestock Welfare

Due to reports of welfare of livestock concerns, LB sent all tenants an email detailing - Tenants who keep livestock on their plot must provide them with fresh food and water daily and ensure they are cared for correctly. LB referred to the OPC rules and NSALG regulations in the email.

9. ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Cllr Wood asked PPC to share Pelton's application with LB. When LB receives it, Cllr Wood agreed for LB to share it with Mr Moore. Cllr Wood said the issue with an ACV for the Green Belt land behind Turnberry and Ross, is that it may be difficult to prove it is used to improve social benefits as it is farmland. It does include Public Rights of Way, but its primary use is farmland. Cllr Wood asked LB to send the House of Commons response to Mr Moore. Cllr Wood added that our MP Luke Akehurst had responded to the Call for Sites consultation and said he was concerned about the potential development of the Green Belt between Gateshead and County Durham. Cllr Wood added that Luke Akehurst wants to protect the Green Belt.

10. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

OPC thanked the Cherrytree Handyman for refurbishing the Memorial Garden free of charge. LB awaiting material costs. Cllr Batey has arranged Craig Marron to clean the stone. Craig has kindly offered to clean it free of charge.

The OPC Remembrance Service will be held on Sunday 8th November LB said the Bugler is booked and confirmed. LB said Poppy permission has been granted by DCC. Installation weekend 24th & 25th October.

10.1 Service Arrangements

LB has been corresponding with the Chair of Ouston Football Club. He said there is an FA cup game at home on the day of our service. He asked if we wanted to cone the car park off, but the PC said no. LB said the PCs main concern is pitch noise during our service. LB asked if the kick off time could be 9am, 10.05 or 11.30 so it does not affect our service. OFC's chair has emailed the opposition and referee with the suggestions and will let LB know what has been agreed.

10.2 Wreath Removal Policy

At the last meeting, Cllr Batey suggested the PC adopting a wreath removal policy as the wreaths deteriorate overtime. Cllr Batey sent the PC a proposed policy, the PC reviewed and discussed it. Cllr Wood expressed his concerns regarding the short period of time (31st March). Cllr Bell and Cllr Wake said the wreaths blow around and have to be returned to the memorial during the winter and agreed with the 31st March date. Cllrs Bell, Duncan and Wake voted to adopt the policy.

11. EVENTS AUTUMN / WINTER 2026

The OPC Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at OCA is on Saturday 28th November. LB said OPC have permission for two temporary trees from Karbon Homes and DCC, trees have been ordered and DTE booked for installation and removal. LB to buy new lights. LB is waiting on the DCC quote for the mains box at Cooks Corner.

11.1 Christmas Lights Competition

Cllr Duncan said she will present the Christmas Lights Competition entries in December's meeting.

11.2 OCA Christmas Events Selection Boxes and Raffle Donation

OPC offered their annual financial donation to fund selection boxes and raffle prizes for the OCA Christmas events (last year OPC donated £200). Mrs Batey said the CCs had already offered to contribute financially to the events and suggested OPC could contribute to their Easter event instead.

12. CLERKS REPORT

A resident suggested PC's walk round the village looking for areas requiring work or improvements. Cllr Batey walked round the village and reported some issues of concern to LB, and she has reported them with the photo evidence provided via DCC Do It Online.

Refuse Collectors

LB emailed DCC on behalf of the residents on Ross and Milbanke Close in Ouston. They would like the refuse collectors to return the bins correctly, as the current condition they are returned in affects pedestrians walking on footpaths. DCC emailed to say they would speak to the relevant team.

Overgrown Tree Ardrossan

LB emailed DCC again regarding the overgrown trees on Ardrossan causing damage to property. LB said DCC may be waiting until 1st November to cut back due to bird nesting season laws. LB to monitor.

Do It Online

Overgrown trees – Red Lion Bus Stop – now cleared
Abandoned car – St Benet's Car Park – Now removed
Road Markings Arisaig School road – waiting for works
Footpath on Ross – Awaiting response
Caravan issue – Ongoing Neighbourhood Warden is waiting to hear from DCC Highways.
Overgrown footpath behind petrol station and crumbing wall – reported
Crumbling Sewerage drain cover Ouston / Urpeth field – reported

Local Network Action Plan

CDALC asked PCs if they would like to nominate a representative for the Local Network. The PC nominated Cllr Wood and he agreed. LB said residents are invited to drop into one of the Local Network events to engage with the team to assist with the development of their Local Network Action Plan. Our local meeting is on Wednesday 18th November and residents can drop in between 2.30 and 6.30pm. At the events, they will be asking attendees the following questions about their own communities / areas:
What positive things are happening locally and what do you like about your area?
What changes or improvements would you like to see in your area?
Local Network Teams will be asking attendees to think about the above questions in relation to the following six themes in the context of their own community / area including Employment, Jobs, Skills, Education and Training, Health and Wellbeing, Environment and Natural Spaces, Housing and Physical Infrastructure, Culture, Heritage and Events and Community Safety.

PACT Meeting

The next PACT meeting will be held on Thursday 10th December 6.30-7.30pm in Ouston Community Centre. Cllr Duncan will attend on behalf of OPC.

Other points covered in other agenda items.

13. FINANCIAL MATTERS OF THE COUNCIL

13.1 Monthly Accounts for October Invoices

The expenditure for October 2026 was reviewed by the PC.

13.2 2nd Quarterly Bank Reconciliation

The PC reviewed the 2nd Quarterly Bank Reconciliation for 1st June to 30th September.

13.3 Precept Meeting Date – Possible January Date Change

Due to the ongoing works at the community centre, LB emailed DCC regarding the Precept return date. DCC said the precept return deadline is Friday 29th January. OPC set the date earlier as we were not sure of the deadline. LB asked are we changing the date from 14th until 28th January? The PC agreed to set the meeting date as Thursday 28th January.

14. ITEMS TO FOLLOW UP FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The Parish Monthly Meeting will be held on 26th November from 7.00pm. Business to discuss will be as per Agenda.

- Asset of Community Value
- Allotments
- Autumn / Winter events
- Budget / Precept 2027-28 proposals
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The Parish Council meeting closed at 8.18pm hours.

APPENDIX ONE: OCTOBER 2026

Cheque No		Paid to	Description
102394		L Blondrage	Oct pay 5 weeks
102395		L Blondrage	Home working allowance
102396		D Johnston	Oct pay 5 weeks
102397		HMRC	Oct PAYE 5 weeks
102398		Bulger	Remembrance Day
102399		Royal British Legion	Annual Poppy Appeal Donation
102400		Mazars	AGAR Fee 2025-26