



Hetton Town Council



Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Hetton Town Council held on Monday 23 March 2026 at The Hetton Centre, Welfare Road, DH5 9NE

Present

Cllr K Angus, Cllr D Brennan, Cllr J Defty, Cllr P Dowell (Town Mayor), Cllr R Elvin, Cllr L Gibson, Cllr P Hall, Cllr W Little, Cllr H Morton and Cllr K Rowham.

In attendance

L Hall (Town Clerk) & 10 MoP

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies or absence were received from Cllr R Meadows (holiday), Cllr S Waterston (unwell), Cllr D Geddis (unwell), Cllr C Willis (prior commitment) and Cllr J Bonsall (car trouble).

Resolved: That the apologies be accepted.

There were no apologies from Cllr J Green, Cllr D Thomas, Cllr S Woods-Brass, Cllr S Holt or Cllr M Pigdon.

Resolved: That their absence be noted as unapproved.

2) Councillor Resignation

It was noted that Kathleen Pearson had resigned from the Council after many years of service. The Council expressed its sincere thanks for her long-standing contribution and wished her well for the future. It was agreed that flowers would be sent as a token of appreciation.

3) Declarations of Interest

Cllr Brennan and Cllr Angus declared an interest in item 9c. ELCAP grant application.

4) Public participation

Members of the public addressed the Council regarding their concerns about the planning application for 3 Alexander Drive, listed as Item 8 on the agenda. As the application was to be discussed later in the meeting, these objections were noted under Item 8.

A member of the public requested feedback regarding previously raised issues, including:

- The requested zebra crossing between Hollowdene and the Social Club – the Town Clerk had received no response; however, Cllr Angus noted that the petition had been accepted but there had been no further progress.
- Additional barrier fencing outside the Turkish Barbers and the Post Office – the Town Clerk had received no response from Sunderland City Council.
- Flooding outside Herons – Cllr Gibson had been following this up. It was noted that the Chief Executive had visited the store, but no feedback had been received.
- Delays at the traffic lights outside Tesco – the Town Clerk had requested that a traffic survey be conducted but had received no response.

It was **agreed** that the Town Council would follow up on these matters.

5) Minutes

The following minutes were **agreed** by the council:

- Meeting of Hetton Town Council held on 19 January 2026 & 16th February 2026, 16th March 2026.
- P&D Committee meeting held on 10th February 2026 & 2nd March 2026.
- E&SA Committee meeting held on 5th February 2026, 3rd March 2026 & 12th March 2026.
- MP&F Committee meeting held on 29th January 2026.



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6) Sunderland City Councillors

There were no Sunderland City Councillors in attendance.

7) Reports from Members

Cllr P Hall

- Requested an update on the junction at Moorsley Road following recent accidents. It was noted that Sunderland City Council had advised that mirrors are not usual practice. The Town Council had requested alternative solutions; however, the Town Clerk had not received an update.
- It was noted that the property at 1 Kirkdale Street had been reported to Sunderland City Council Environmental Health; however, there remained rubbish on the Gentoo land adjacent to the property. It was **agreed** that Gentoo would be contacted to request that this be cleaned up.

Cllr Gibson

- Cllr Gibson provided an update from Gentoo noting that the building works at Eskdene Rise had been delayed and were now expected to be completed at the end of March.
- It was noted that a consultation would take place on Thursday 26 March from 4–6 pm at the Nidderdale Centre regarding the proposed new play park on the site. Cllr Gibson also noted that a Freedom of Information request had been submitted regarding the play park and Section 106 monies, asking why the funds were being allocated elsewhere when residents had been assured that the money would be spent in the area.
- Cllr Gibson had also asked Sunderland City Council how much the land proposed for future development behind Eppleton Cricket Club was being offered for sale at.

8) Planning Applications

26/00526/FUL

3 Alexander Drive Hetton-le-Hole Houghton-le-Spring DH5 9LD

Change of use from residential dwelling (C3) to short-term serviced accommodation (*Sui Generis*) and erection of front porch

Following concerns raised by neighbouring residents, the Council **agreed to object** to the planning application, noting the following:

- The use of the term *Sui Generis* made the intended use of the property unclear, with concerns that it could become a House of Multiple Occupation. The Council felt the application should be more specific.
- Concerns raised by residents regarding planning application in Alexander Drive also included the erection of a porch as previous applications by residents in Alexander Drive for porches have been refused due to overlooking neighbouring properties and it was felt this application should be considered on the same basis.
- Highway and pedestrian safety concerns were raised, as the property is in an already congested cul-de-sac with a narrow access road and only one route in and out. Concerns were also raised about increased vehicles, including larger vans and potential impacts on emergency access and waste collection.
- The proposal would result in the loss of housing stock, which was considered to conflict with Sunderland City Council's planning policy.
- Concerns were raised regarding overlooking and loss of privacy, particularly if occupants were to change regularly.
- Approval could set a precedent for similar applications in the area.

The Council noted that individuals who had submitted objections online should receive an invitation to attend the relevant Sunderland City Council meeting when the application is discussed and residents were encouraged to attend.



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26/00229/FUL

Land South of Glebeside Church Road Hetton-le-Hole Houghton-le Spring
Erection of 4no bed dormer bungalow with attached garage

The Council made **no objections**.

9) Financial report:

9a: The finance report was **approved** by the council.

Income: NIL

Staffing expenditure:

Town Clerk net salary	£3,198.71
Nest (Pension Contributions)	£207.22
HMRC	£1,515.49

Sub-total: £4,921.92

Other expenditure:

Lebara (Mobile Phone)	£11.85
BT (Broadband)	£83.86
Scribe (Monthly charge)	£117.60
Flag Shop (Flag)	£24.65
Moorsley & District CIC (Room Hire)	£40.00
Leaflet Drop (Newsletter)	£1,320.27
One4All (Gift Vouchers)	£201.99
JG Hare (Bench Installation)	£282.00
Amazon (Paper)	£15.89
Zurich (Insurance)	£1,136.43
Chat GPT	£40.00
Adobe	£51.35
Mazars (External Audit)	£378.00
Tesco (Easter Eggs)	£252.00
Home Bargains (Easter Decorations)	£35.94
JG Hare (Planters)	£444.00
Hetton Town Trust (Meeting Cover)	£22.50
Fantasy Fairytales (Easter Characters)	£270.00
Aldi (Easter)	£100.74
Sunderland CC (License Easter)	£200.00
Eppleton CC (Room Hire)	£60.00
Lidl (Easter)	£30.24
Tesco (Card)	£1.50

Sub-total: £5,120.81

Funds Transferred (Savings Account to Community Account): **£12,000.00**

Barclays Current account balance @ 23 March 26: **£9,294.35**

Barclays Premium account balance @ 23 March 26: **£116,967.03**

Town Mayor Fund

Income: NIL

Expenditure: NIL

Co-op Account balance @ 23 March 26: **£2,000.00**



9b: Banking mandate requirements were discussed

The Town Clerk noted that, following the resignation of K. Pearson, new signatories were required for both the Barclays and Co-op accounts.

It was **agreed** that Cllr Gibson and Cllr Angus be added to the mandates.

9c: The following Community Grants were **awarded** by the Council.

- Hetton & District Art Club £670
- ELCAP £750
- Elemore Colliery Banner Group £700
- East Rainton Cricket Club £750
- North East War Memorials Project £100

10) The Hetton Centre Lease

The Town Clerk provided an update on the lease negotiations with Hetton Town Trust. Two independent valuations had been obtained for the office space: Spire valued the space at £2,390 (on behalf of Hetton Town Council) and Lambert Smith & Hampton at £4,125 (on behalf of Hetton Town Trust), resulting in an average valuation of £3,257.50.

In relation to utilities, the space occupied by the Town Council represents approximately 4.22% of the building's total occupancy. Based on Sunderland City Council's estimated annual utility costs of £20,300, Hetton Town Trust advised that the Council's apportioned share would be approximately £855 per annum. The Council noted, however, that other areas of the building, such as the bar and café, would consume significantly more energy than the office space.

Following consideration of this information, the Council **agreed** that the £4,000 already paid to Hetton Town Trust would represent its final offer.

11) Flagpole Maintenance

Cllr R. Elvin advised that he had originally installed the flagpoles and offered to continue servicing them.

The Council **accepted** this offer.

12) Illuminated Motif

It was noted that the illuminated motif had sustained significant damage during the recent high winds and had been returned to the manufacturer for inspection and reinforcement.

It was **agreed** that, once the motif had been reinstated, enquiries would be made regarding the installation of additional supports.

Balfour Beatty will install a time clock on the motif; however, it is only possible to have one setting for summer and winter. It was therefore agreed that the operating times would be 6.00 am – 11.00 pm in the summer and 5.00 am – 11.00 pm in the winter.

13) Highway Concerns – A182

Following concerns raised by members of the public and Councillors, the Town Clerk had submitted a Freedom of Information request to Northumbria Police regarding the number of incidents and any resulting convictions. The response advised that the information was not readily available and would exceed the 18-hour limit to compile; therefore, the request was considered out of scope. A further Freedom of Information request had been submitted to Sunderland City Council regarding the number of repairs carried out and the associated costs. Sunderland City Council advised that the request would require additional time to process and that a response would be provided, although no timescale was given.

The Council noted that there had been at least 10 incidents in recent history, indicating an ongoing issue on this stretch of road. While it was acknowledged that this was largely due to anti-social driving, the Council **agreed** that the Town Clerk should continue to pursue the matter with both agencies to highlight the concerns and seek potential solutions.



14) Appointment of internal auditor for 2025/26

Annette Simpson was **appointed** as internal auditor 2025/26

15) Litter Picking Equipment

Residents had enquired whether any litter-picking equipment was available for use within the community. It was noted that the Council had several litter pickers available for use. It was **agreed** that the Council would purchase 10 bag hoops.

16) Committee Vacancies

Due to the recent resignation of a Councillor, vacancies had arisen on the MP&F and SE&T Committees.

It was **agreed** that Cllr B. Little join the MP&F Committee and that Cllr R. Elvin join the SE&T Committee.

17) Flower Planters

The Council **agreed** a budget of £65 per planter to provide plants for local schools to plant up the planters. It was also **agreed** that the schools would receive recognition for their work with a plaque installed in each planter.

Members also asked when Sunderland City Council would be updating their planters, as many are often left to fill with weeds.

18) Mayors Charities 2025/26

It was noted that, in the past, the Mayor's Fund had been used to hold a fundraising event, with any remaining funds then being divided between the Mayor's chosen charities; however, this had not taken place in recent years.

It was **agreed** that the Town Mayor would look to host a race night. The Mayor's chosen charities — Smile Train, Daft as a Brush and the Alzheimer's Society — were **approved**.

19) General Correspondence

Allotment Fly tipping

A member of the public had contacted the Council to report that waste had been fly-tipped at the allotment site on Eppleton Pit Road.

It was **agreed** that the Town Clerk would report this to Sunderland City Council.

Rectory Road Unadopted Road

A member of the public had contacted the Council to report the badly eroded road at the rear of Rectory Road. It was noted that this is an unadopted road and therefore Sunderland City Council will not take responsibility for it.

The Council believed that Sunderland City Council may be willing to partially fund repairs, and it was **agreed** that the Town Clerk would make enquiries.

BT Price Increase

BT had contacted the Council to advise of a price increase of £4 per month from 1 April. The Town Clerk noted that the Council remained tied into the current contract.

ELCAP Letter of Support

ELCAP had written to the Council requesting a letter of support for the planned improvements to the building to assist in attracting additional funding.

The Council **agreed** to provide a letter of support.

Website Compliance

Narke had completed their compliance check of the Town Council's website and had installed a free trial of the Image Alt AI plugin, which generates descriptions for images when they are uploaded to the website.

The Council **agreed** to pay the £49 annual fee for this software.



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ASB in Hetton & Houghton

HALO had written to the Council to provide assurances that the recent increase in anti-social behaviour in Hetton and Houghton was being investigated and that additional staff would be patrolling the area. HALO noted that the Town Council is often the first point of contact for residents and asked that any concerns or identified hotspots be shared with them.

20) Town Clerk update

Phone Box Hetton

The Town Clerk reported that BT had advised that, following a 90-day consultation regarding the removal of the box, if no objections are received, the box will be removed.

Dog Fouling Stephenson's Trail

Sunderland City Council advised that the trail is regularly swept and patrolled, and that fines would be issued to those found not cleaning up after their dogs.

The Town Council noted that fines were not being issued, as the area was not patrolled frequently enough.

21) Date and time of next meeting

Monday 20 April 2026 commencing 6.45pm at **The Hetton Centre.**

Meeting closed at 9pm