



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Bowes Parish Council held at Bowes Hutchinson's School on 12 May 2026 7.30 p.m.

Present

Cllr Hughes, Cllr White, Cllr Thompson, Mr Ross Woodley (Clerk and RFO)
Apologies: See item 3.

1. Election of Chair for 2026/27

Cllr Hughes said that that he would like to continue as Chair and no other nominations were submitted. It was **resolved to appoint Councillor Hughes as Chair. Proposed by Cllr White seconded by Cllr Thompson.**

2. Election of Vice Chair for 2026/27

Cllr Carlisle was still unwell but had not indicated any intention to resign as Vice Chair and there were no other nominations. The Clerk confirmed that the role of Vice Chair was non-statutory so it would be acceptable to appoint Cllr Carlisle in his absence and leave the position vacant if he resigned during the year. It was **resolved to appoint Councillor Carlisle as Vice-Chair. Proposed by Cllr Thompson seconded by Cllr Hughes.**

3. Apologies and declarations of interest

Cllr Carlisle and Cllr Tipping had given their apologies. Cllr Hughes confirmed that there were no declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda and there were no changes to register of interest forms completed following acceptance of office in 2025. These were published on Durham County Council's website with a link from Bowes Parish Council's website. Cllr Hughes and the Clerk signed a new declaration of acceptance of office as Chair form.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the ordinary meeting held Tuesday 17 March 2026 (circulated as Appendix A of the agenda) were discussed. The Chair requested an amendment to minute 12 to reflect the fact that when discussing the risk arising from Cllr Carlisle and Cllr Tipping's long-term sickness absence the Council had approved their absence for a further six months. Subject to this slight amendment it was **resolved to accept the circulated minutes as a true record. Proposed by Cllr Thompson seconded by Cllr White.**



5. Actions arising from the previous meeting (unless dealt with later in agenda)

Cllr Hughes said that he had held discussions with the headteacher about potential interest from parent governors in co-option without success and he would now advertise the opportunity on the Village Facebook site. The Clerk confirmed there had been no interest generated by the advert on the Council's website. Cllr Hughes stated that on a more positive note the electrified fence at Low Field Farm had been taken down.

6 Review and adoption of policies and regulations on the Council's website and councillor roles and outside appointments.

The Council has reviewed and adopted new policies and regulations since the Clerk's appointment in October 2024. These include the risk management strategy (February 2025), financial regulations (May 2025), fraud and corruption policy (June 2025), complaints policy (June 2025), IT Policy (September 2025), Allotment Policy (October 2025), Data Retention Policy (December 2025), Data Protection Policy (March 2026) and Freedom of Information Policy (see agenda item 16). The Clerk is satisfied that these remain current and invites the Council to formally re-adopt them without revision. The Clerk has reviewed standing orders, which appear as a separate agenda item for consideration (see agenda item 17).

Currently, the Council has no committees, one councillor with a designated role (Cllr Hughes – playgrounds) and Cllr Carlisle, Cllr Hughes, Cllr White, Cllr Tipping and Cllr Thompson serve as five of the seven trustees of two charities (Kipling and John Bousfield). The Clerk invited the Council to re-confirm these arrangements or approve any changes. The Chair noted that in March Cllr Thompson was appointed as the Council's representative on the Hope Moor Community Liaison Group (HMCLG). It was **resolved to accept the above policies, strategies, and financial regulations without revision, to re-appoint Councillor Hughes as Playgrounds Inspector and for the Council's representatives on outside bodies to be all five councillors on the Kipling and John Bousfield charities and Cllr Thompson on HMCLG. Proposed by Cllr Hughes seconded by Cllr White.**

7 Finance & Accounts – See summary below.

- (a) Receipts since last meeting
- £7,000.00 Precept 2026/27 – DCC
 - £1,085.13 VAT Refund – HMRC
 - £225.00 Burial Fee – Stuart Wright
 - £220.00 Clint Gardens Grazing – L Brown
 - £112.01 Investment Interest (March)
 - £108.39 Investment Interest (April)
 - £43.65 Bank interest (Q4)
- (b) Expenses since last meeting
- £673.91 Swing repairs deposit – Playdale
 - £560.24 Clerk salary Q4 – R Woodley
 - £336.79 Two Filing cabinets – Viking Direct



£180.00 Clerk Reference Manual – LexisNexis
£140.20 PAYE Q4 – HMRC
£104.00 Membership fees – SLCC
£88.32 Playground inspections 26/27 – DCC
£11.99 Hugo Fox email accounts (March DD)
£11.99 Hugo Fox email accounts (April DD)
£7.00 Bank charges (March)
£7.00 Bank charges (April)

(c) It was **resolved to approve the following payments – Cllr Thompson proposed, and Cllr White seconded:**

- £350.00 Allotment site rent 26/27 – Youngs RPS
- £270.00 April and May Grass-Cutting – R Toward
- £83.87 Subscription 26/27– CDALC

(d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – all the expenses at (b) above were approved at the March 2026 meeting, or in the case of bank and email charges are monthly contractual payments, except the 50% deposit on the swing repairs, for which the contract was awarded at the March 2026 meeting. Retrospective approval is requested for this payment as the contractor required 50% within seven days of placing the order. It was **resolved to retrospectively approve the payment of £673.91 to Playdale – Cllr Thompson proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded:**

(e) Budget Monitoring to 31 March 2026 (final outturn)

The Clerk presented Appendix B for receipts and payments at the end of 2025/26 compared with the annual budget. The Council finished 2025/26 just 2% (£902) below the original budget, primarily due to outstanding playground repairs, for which a further payment of £674 is due on completion. Therefore, the Council's closing reserves are £38,902, compared to the original budget of £38,000 and a revised budget of £38,500 agreed when the 2026/27 Budget was set.

The underlying financial position is virtually unchanged as the £38,500 estimate assumed that the playground repairs would be completed by 31 March 2026 (£674 outstanding), but conversely the £340 expenditure on cabinets (see b above) would take place in 2026/27. After adjusting for these two rephased transactions the reserves are **£38,568**.

Budget monitoring for month 1 of the new financial year indicates no changes to this underlying position or significant variances requiring explanation.

However, it is too early to merit a formal report, especially as the inquorate April meeting resulted in very few transactions in the month. A formal budget monitoring report showing the position at 31 May 2026 will be reported to the



next meeting. It was **resolved to accept the budget monitoring report** – **Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.**

(f) Bank reconciliation at 31 March 2026 (year-end)

The Clerk presented Appendix C for the bank reconciliation at 31 March 2026 (year-end). This shows the balances on the Unity Trust bank accounts (£6,902) reconcile to the cash book without any reconciling items. It also shows the £32,000 long-term investment with Redwood Bank as a memorandum item. The Chair checked and signed the reconciliation at the meeting. It was **resolved to accept the bank reconciliation** – **Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.**

(g) Bank Reconciliation at 30 April 2026 (month 1)

The Clerk presented Appendix D for the bank reconciliation at 30 April 2026 (month 1 2026/27). This shows the balances on the Unity Trust bank accounts (£14,220) reconcile to the cash book without any reconciling items. It also shows the £32,000 long-term investment with Redwood Bank as a memorandum item. It was **resolved to accept the bank reconciliation** – **Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.**

(h) Asset Register at 31 March 2026 (year-end)

The Clerk presented Appendix E for the asset register at 31 March 2026 (year-end). This is unchanged from the previous year because the only fixed asset acquisitions and disposals were below the de-minimus limit of £250. The Clerk now has a surplus asset in the old filing cabinet with a broken lock. He estimates the resale value at £15 - £20, which is similar to the cost of a password-protected memory stick and is therefore willing to donate his memory stick for council use in exchange for the Council donating the surplus cabinet to him for his personal use. It was **resolved to accept the asset register and the proposed swap of de-minimus assets of similar value** – **Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.**

8 Planning

Cllr Hughes commented that there has been one planning application within the parish council boundaries since the March 2026 meeting. The application relates to establishing a campsite at Gallows Hill just north of the A66 and close to the border with Boldron Parish Meeting. He was concerned about the implications on road safety. Councillor Thompson agreed and said that he had registered a personal objection. The Clerk informed members that the consultation period had ended so the Council were unable to respond as a statutory consultee.



Cllr Thompson provided an update on the consultation process for the Hope Moor Wind Farm following his attendance at the Hope Moor Community Liaison Group meeting on 5 May. The meeting had primarily discussed the initial consultation now under way, which was designed to identify potential issues and scope the project. A public meeting had been arranged in Bowes and Gilmonby Village Hall on 19 May 2026. This would provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions to the Project Team. Cllr Hughes thanked Cllr Thompson for the feedback and said that he planned to attend the public meeting. As the proposed wind farm was outside the Council's boundaries the Council were not a statutory consultee and the Council did not usually comment on planning proposals in these circumstances. However, given the level of interest in the village and at least two residents planning to attend the next council meeting it seemed appropriate for the Council to maintain a watching brief and discuss this position further at the June meeting. The Clerk confirmed this agenda would be less crowded and would still fall within the initial consultation period.

9 Correspondence

- a) The Clerk of Boldron Parish Meeting has written to the Council explaining his objection to the proposed campsite (see above) on several grounds. See above.
- b) A resident who is a keen gardener has offered to plant some flowers in the village at his own expense. The Clerk passed on the Chair's contact details so this generous offer could be explored further. The Chair confirmed that the resident was attending to all three flower tubs and would inspect the flower bed at the Play Park before deciding if they could help with this more challenging project.
- c) The Council's new internal auditor (Jenny Linsley) has signed the engagement letter and agreed an internal audit plan for 2025/26. The plan is similar to the plan completed by Butler and Gee in 2024/25 but additional testing will be performed to give assurance for the new assertion 10 of the Annual Governance Statement. This change was agreed after the Clerk received the 2025/26 Annual Governance and Accountability (AGAR) form from BDO and found a new objective in the internal audit report.

10 Cemetery and village maintenance

The Clerk declared that he had held several discussions with a funeral director and gravedigger regarding a burial that took place in April. Initially, the gravedigger intended to use small plant to dig the grave, but following a site visit confirmed this was not feasible due to the steps. He then had difficulty locating the grave using the Clerk's cemetery plan. Whilst the location has now been confirmed, a discrepancy was identified between the plan and burial records and the Clerk was considering undertaking a reconciliation to confirm this was an isolated issue. Finally, there was a query regarding the burial fee as the person being buried only moved out of the parish for end-of-life medical reasons. After consulting the Chair, the Clerk charged the residents rather than non-residents fee.

Cllr Hughes added that he had attended the funeral and burial and the family were grateful for the Council's flexibility regarding the burial fee. He had informed the gravedigger of a way in future to avoid the steps to access the lower cemetery with machinery, as manual digging had been complicated by stone wall remains. Cllr White said that he would seek to remove the stones, which are now piled up in the cemetery.



It was **resolved that the Clerk should reconcile the cemetery plan and burial records and report back to the next meeting.** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

11 Allotments

The Clerk confirmed there are no matters for consideration at this month's meeting regarding the allotments, other than the approval of the invoice for the Clint Gardens site (see 4c above).

12 Play Park

Cllr Hughes stated that the latest inspection sheet for the playground showed no issues apart from the ordered repair. Playdale have set a provisional date of 18 May 2026 for this repair.

13 Footpaths

The Clerk confirmed that he had received two quotations for the 2026/27 P3 footpath repairs. The choice of contractor to include in the grant claim to Durham County Council will be considered under item 16.

14 Data Protection and Retention

The Clerk confirmed that he had transferred the retained paper records to the new lockable cabinets and deleted or retained electronic files in accordance with the data retention policy by 31 March 2026. The Clerk sent each councillor the GDPR training slides that he had prepared in March 2026 and held in person training on 14 April 2026.

15 Accessibility Statement

Cllr Hughes introduced the updated Accessibility Statement at Appendix F and asked the Council to approve this document to demonstrate the Council's compliance with the latest regulations. It was **resolved that the updated Accessibility Statement should be approved and published**– Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

16 Publication Scheme and Freedom of Information Policy

Cllr Hughes introduced the updated Publication Scheme and Freedom of Information Policy at Appendix G and asked the Council to approve this document, which is designed to comply with the Freedom of Information Act. It was **resolved that the updated Publication Scheme and Freedom of Information Policy be approved and published**– Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

17 Standing Orders

Cllr Hughes remarked that the Council's current standing orders were written and adopted in May 2023 with a formal review date of May 2026. These standing orders were based on the model developed by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Although NALC published a revised model in March 2025 the



changes sufficient to justify bringing forward the review date. Accordingly, the Clerk has incorporated the March 2025 changes in the standing orders that he has prepared for the Council to review and adopt at Appendix H. Cllr Hughes noted one minor clarification required at paragraph 13(c). It was **resolved that subject to the minor clarification agreed at the meeting the updated Standing Orders be approved and published**– Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

18 AOB (for discussion only)

Cllr Hughes noted that a resident had organised a litter pick, which had been well-attended and tidied up the village. Cllr White agreed and suggested a letter of thanks to the organiser. The Clerk agreed to do this. Cllr Hughes added that he would like the letter to mention the tyre recycling offered by the clean and green team at Durham County Council. He had also reported a pothole to Durham County Council.

18a Meeting Timetable for 2026/27

The Clerk proposed the meeting timetable stated in the agenda.

It was **resolved to approve the meeting timetable outlined in the agenda**– Cllr Thompson proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded.

19 Exclusion of Press and Public (none present). To approve the selection of preferred contractor for 2026/27 footpath repairs (noting the work is conditional on grant funding from Durham County Council)

Cllr Hughes noted that the Clerk had received two quotes for a common specification of footpath repairs prepared by Councillor White and covering four different footpaths within the parish boundaries. The aggregate sum quoted by Contractor A was £3,305 plus VAT, compared to £3,800 plus VAT quoted by Contractor B. However, contractor B was £530 cheaper for one path (West Low Field). Councillors previously discussed splitting the work between contractors based on the lowest bid for each path. Councillor White recommended selecting Contractor A for all works to avoid difficulties obtaining the requisite permission from landowners. Durham County Council informed the Clerk that they had insufficient funds to approve all the proposed works for grant funding but indicated that they would be willing to approve all the works apart from those on the bridleway, which they claimed was less well-used than the other paths. Excluding the bridleway, Contractor A quoted £2,082 plus VAT and contractor B quoted £2,150 plus VAT. These quotes are extremely close to each other and the parish Council's 2026/27 budget of £2,090. **It was resolved that the Council should award the contract for 2026/27 footpath repairs to contractor A excluding the bridleway to ensure the work was fully funded through DCC grant.** Proposed by Cllr Hughes and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

20 Clerk Overtime

Cllr Hughes remarked that the Clerk booked leave for the final two weeks of the financial (and holiday) year but due to time critical work discussed at items 9, 10

Bowes Parish Council
33 Milbank Court
Darlington
DL3 9PF
clerk@bowesparishcouncil.gov.uk



and 14 above ended up working normal weeks. The Clerk requested the Council to retrospectively approve the payment of eight hours overtime for this work. The Clerk also estimates that if the Council resolved to request a reconciliation of burial records to the cemetery plan (see item 10 above) a similar level of overtime will be required over the next month. The Clerk estimates that providing the recently announced 2026/27 local government pay offer of 3.3% is accepted the Council's salary costs can still be kept within the approved budget. However, if the final pay award is higher than the offer, or further overtime is needed later in the year, a small overspend is possible. **It was resolved to approve clerk overtime of eight hours already taken in March 2026 and up to a further eight hours to be taken before the next meeting.** Proposed by Cllr Hughes and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

Meeting closed at 8.40 p.m. In accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) the impact of resolutions on crime and disorder in the parish was considered but no significant impact was identified.