

**AG E N D A**  
**Ordinary Meeting of Bowes Parish Council on**  
**Tuesday 9 December at 7.30pm at Bowes Hutchinson's School**

1. **Apologies and declarations of interest** – if any.
2. **Minutes** of the Meeting held Tuesday 11 November 2025 for approval. See [Appendix A](#).
3. **Actions arising from the previous meeting** (unless dealt with later in agenda)  
All actions arising from the previous meeting are discussed in the relevant section of the agenda.
4. **Finance & Accounts – See summary below**
  - (a) Receipts since last meeting      £2,027.30 P3 Footpath Grant – Durham County Council  
   £12.50 Allotment Rents (25/26)  
   £108.39 Investment Interest (December)
  - (b) Expenses since last meeting      £2,432.76 Footpath repairs – Gibson  
   £936.00 Cemetery wall repairs – Watson  
   £270.00 Grass-cutting – Toward  
   £83.34 Clerk GDPR overtime  
   £21.40 PAYE on clerk overtime - HMRC  
   £11.99 Email accounts (monthly) – Hugo Fox  
   £6.00 Bank charges
  - (c) Payments to approve at the meeting – £560.24 Clerk Q3 salary (payable 31/12/2025)  
   £140.20 PAYE Q3 (payable 31/12/2025) – HMRC
  - (d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – all the expenses at (b) above were approved at the November 2025 meeting, or in the case of bank and email charges are monthly contractual payments, so no retrospective approval was required at this meeting.
  - (e) Budget Monitoring to 30 November 2025 (month 8)  
See [Appendix B](#) for receipts and payments at month 8 of 2025/26 compared with the profiled budget. The Council are 1% (£418) below the profiled budget due to the playground budget underspending by a similar amount and other underspends and overspends netting off. The report indicates that the underlying position is unchanged with £38,000 of reserves anticipated at year-end because a quotation for playground repairs is outstanding. However, agenda item 11 refers to the 2026/2027 budget setting process and estimates that even after making a prudent provision for playground repairs the 2025/26 budget is now likely to underspend by about 1% because the highest expenditure items in the budget have already been spent.
  - (f) See [Appendix C](#) for the bank reconciliation at 30 November 2025 (month 8). This shows the balances on the Unity Trust bank accounts reconcile to the cash book without any reconciling items. It also shows the long-term investment with Redwood Bank as a memorandum item.
5. **Planning**  
There have been no planning applications within the parish council boundaries since the November 2025 meeting. However, there were two decisions on planning matters discussed at previous meetings, a heat-pump being accepted and a vehicular access being refused.

6. **Correspondence**

(a) Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments Limited (SAAA) have written to the Council to inform them that they have appointed BDO Limited as the 2025/26 external auditor. The Council will need to submit an Annual Governance and Accountability Return for BDO to complete a limited assurance review because the £32,000 investment that the Council made in the year means that payments exceed the £25,000 threshold for exemption.

(b) The Council's grass-cutting contractor has confirmed that the invoice approved at the last meeting was the final one of the 2025/26 financial year, so the total number of cuts was within the range permitted by the contract.

7. **Cemetery & Village maintenance**

(a) As agreed at the last meeting the Clerk has carried out research to identify if the Bowes and Gilmonby Burial Board was formally dissolved. The Burial Board last met in January 1983 and the minutes of this meeting confirmed that Teesdale District Council had indicated that the Burial Board should have been reconstituted to a joint committee of the burial authorities (Bowes Parish Council and Gilmonby Parish Meeting) when Section 214 of the Local Government Act (1972) came into effect. Schedule 26 of the Act required the burial authorities to act jointly unless the principal authority (Teesdale District Council) authorised the transfer of rights and obligations to one burial authority. The minutes indicated that the Burial Board (which included a Gilmonby Parish Meeting representative) had received this authorisation and going forward Bowes Parish Council would have sole responsibility for managing the cemetery. Representatives of Gilmonby Parish Meeting would be invited to attend parish council meetings in a non-voting capacity.

8. **Allotments**

(a) The Council have now received full payment of the allotment rents due for 2025/26 and written agreement to the terms of the new tenancy agreement from each allotment holder. The allotments are now fully allocated and an allotment holder who complained about the condition of one allotment has since confirmed that work to remove rubbish from the plot has commenced.

(b) At the last meeting the Council resolved to review the contract to rent land adjacent to the allotments for grazing, which expires in 2026. The Clerk has since checked the existing contract and it does not expire until 31 December 2026, with no grazing permitted in the subsequent three months. Accordingly, the resolution to review the agreement and seek alternative bids in February 2026 is premature. The Clerk advises the Council to offer an extension to the existing tenant to 31 March 2027 and conduct the review and negotiation in February 2027 instead of February 2026.

9. **Play Park**

To consider the latest inspection sheet for the playground, noting that Durham County Council have confirmed that they will provide a quotation for repairing the swing frame, but have not done so at the time of drafting this agenda.

10. **Footpaths**

Durham County Council promptly reimbursed the Council for the 2025/26 footpath repair invoice approved at the last meeting. Councillor White will provide an update on his meeting with the contractor to discuss repairs for 2026/27.

11 **2026/27 Budget and Precept**

See [Appendix D](#) for a detailed report setting out the draft 2026/27 budget and the precept to be requested from Durham County Council and implications for council tax bills. The report includes the 2025/26 forecast outturn and closing reserves and proposes a balanced budget to maintain reserves at £38,500 throughout 2025/26. It also shows the impact of two alternative precepts. The Council are asked to approve the budget and precept or suggest amendments before the budget is submitted to Durham County Council in January 2025.

12     **Data Protection and Retention**

In October 2025, the Council agreed a new plan for ensuring GDPR Compliance and in November 2025 the Council discussed an audit of paper records held by the Council in a filing cabinet and two large crates. The Clerk has reflected on this discussion and updated the Data Retention Policy at [Appendix E](#). The Council are asked to approve this policy, which allows for the separation of paper records between those for retention and destruction by the next meeting.

13     **Internal Audit**

Butler and Gee have undertaken the Council's internal audit for at least ten years. Although the Clerk considers it unlikely that another experienced and competent internal auditor would deliver the work cheaper than Butler and Gee it is good practice to test the market every few years and rotate auditors if an alternative provider is able to provide similar value for money. This helps mitigate the familiarity threat to independence referred to in auditing standards.

Accordingly, the Clerk advises the Council to seek three quotations from a shortlist of internal auditors recommended by CDALC to provide internal audit for the next five years (2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28, 2028/29 and 2029/20). Internal auditors will be asked to provide fixed price quotations for the period based on a common work plan, which the Clerk agreed with Butler and Gee in 2024/25.

14     **AOB**

15     **Date, time, and venue of the next meeting**