

Minutes of the Meeting of Bowes Parish Council

held at Bowes Hutchinson's School on 14 October 2025 7.30 p.m.

Present

Cllr Hughes (Chair), Cllr Carlisle (Vice Chair), Cllr Tipping, Cllr White, Cllr Thompson, Mr Ross Woodley (Clerk and RFO)

1. Apologies and declarations of interest

Cllr Hughes declared an interest in item 8 and did not participate in the relevant discussion.

2. Minutes of the Meeting

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held Tuesday 16 September 2025 (circulated as Appendix A of the agenda) were discussed. The Clerk noted the date of the next meeting in the minutes was incorrect and agreed to rectify.

It was **resolved to accept the circulated minutes subject to the date correction. Proposed by Cllr Thompson seconded by Cllr Carlisle.**

3. Matters arising (unless dealt with later in the agenda)

The Clerk declared that as requested at the September meeting he had raised the conversion of a front garden to parking at a property in a conservation area without first obtaining planning approval with Durham County Council. The planning officer had visited the site and agreed that planning permission was required owing to the depth of the excavation and requirement for new access to a public highway. A planning application had been requested.

4. Finance & Accounts – See summary below.

(a) Receipts since last meeting £125.00 Headstone Fee – Teesdale Memorials
£125.00 Headstone Fee - Allison
£108.39 Investment Interest (October)
£35.42 Bank Interest

(b) Expenses since last meeting £577.63 Clerk Q2 salary plus backdated pay award
£270.00 Grass-cutting (2 cuts) – R Toward
£144.40 PAYE Q2 including back-pay – HMRC.
£54.00 Clerk training in Allotment Policy – SLCC
£6.00 Bank Charges

(c) There were no payments to approve.

(d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – all the expenses at (b) above were approved at the September 2025 meeting, except for the bank charges, which were approved as part of the Banking and Investment Strategy in May 2025.

(e) Budget Monitoring to 30 September 2025 (mid-year)

The Clerk presented Appendix B for receipts and payments at the midway point of 2025/26 compared with the profiled budget. Although the Council are 4.7% (£1,908) below the profiled budget the underspend is almost fully accounted for by unbilled cemetery wall repairs and training costs plus quarter two staff costs not being paid until early October. The underlying position is unchanged with £38,000 of reserves anticipated at year-end.

It was **resolved to accept the budget monitoring report – Cllr Tipping proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.**

(f) Bank reconciliation at 30 September 2025 (mid-year)

The Clerk presented Appendix C, which showed that the bank statements at 30 September 2025 agreed with the cash book balance without any reconciling items. This shows the balances on the new Unity Trust bank accounts with the long-term investment with Redwood Bank as a memorandum item. In accordance with financial regulations the bank statements and cash book supporting the reconciliation were provided for the Chair's quarterly check at the meeting. The Chair signed each page to evidence this control. It was **resolved to accept the bank reconciliation** – Cllr Tipping proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.

5 Planning

There has been one planning application within the parish council boundaries since the September 2025 meeting. This relates to a heating upgrade including the installation of a heat pump at a listed building (Dotheboys Hall). This was discussed and no objection to the application was raised.

6 Correspondence

- (a) The Clerk remarked that Durham County Council sent the Clerk a briefing note on changes to advice services that they run in conjunction with partners such as Groundworks North East and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The changes were noted.
- (b) Durham County Council have also started their consultation on their 2026/27 Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan, and changes in council tax. Parish councils are asked to submit any response by 14 November. The new administration has indicated a preference for a council tax freeze, which would increase the 2026/27 deficit to £20M and the four-year deficit to £71M. The consultation proposals do not provide any detail about how such a gap could be bridged as only £4M of savings have been identified but list a wide range of services being reviewed for further savings. The Council did not wish to submit a consultation response.
- (c) CDALC have invited councillors to attend its Annual General Meeting in Shildon on Saturday 25 October at 10 a.m. The Clerk explained that if any councillors wished to attend there were two places available and bookings were required by 20 October. No councillors were able to attend.

7 Cemetery & Village maintenance

- (a) The Chair reminded members that cemetery fees were subject to benchmarking and a comprehensive review in 2024 leading to significant increases that took effect from 1 April 2025. The increase was primarily due to 15 years of inflation without a change in the fee scale. The Council were asked to consider if due to the scale of the increase in 2025/26 they wished to freeze fees for 2026/27 or to prevent the income being eroded by inflation they wished to commit to an annual increase. Cllr Carlisle suggested a freeze this year but a commitment to increase every two years to keep pace with inflation and avoid a very significant increase in a single year. The Chair thought this sounded sensible and confirmed a consensus. It was **resolved to freeze cemetery fees for 2026/27 but commit to a review every two years starting in setting the 2027/28 budget** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.
- (b) Cllr Carlisle stated that he had observed the completion of works on the cemetery wall and the Clerk added that he had just received an invoice for the work. Cllr Carlisle agreed to send the Clerk a note confirming that the work was completed in accordance with the official order so he could submit the payment for approval at the November meeting.
- (c) The Council have previously discussed planting bulbs in the village flower tubs '*during the Autumn.*' The Clerk invited members to consider facilitating this by the next meeting and the Chair agreed to complete the planting personally and to send the Clerk a receipt for the bulbs so the cost could be reimbursed.

8 Allotments

The Clerk confirmed that all members had read the draft tenancy agreement including the allotment rules and policy at Appendix D, which he intends to send to allotment holders with their 2025/26 invoice. This reflects the increase in allotment rents approved at the September meeting and good practice identified by the Clerk attending SLCC allotment policy training. The Council discussed the agreement and agreed that the prohibition of subletting did not preclude swapping or sharing allotments as had been previously approved. This prohibition was a condition of the headlease designed to stop allotment holders operating the allotments as businesses by renting them to third parties. The Chair asked the Clerk to circulate a copy of the headlease and the Clerk agreed to do so. It was **resolved to approve the allotment agreement and policy and for the Clerk to send the agreements out with 2025/26 invoices for signing** – Cllr Tipping proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.

9 Play Park

Cllr Hughes provided the latest playground inspection sheet and confirmed that there were no issues that needed attention.

10 Footpaths

Cllr White stated that the grant-funded work on the footpaths had not yet been undertaken. He agreed to speak to the contractor and update the Council on the timescale at the next meeting.

11 Data Protection and Retention

The Clerk reminded the Council that in September 2025, they resolved to update the GDPR and Data Protection Policy including its data retention policy, undertake a data audit and arrange the secure destruction of paper records with the new policy due to be approved at this meeting. However, the Clerk attended two free training sessions on GDPR in early October and concluded that a new approach to ensuring GDPR compliance was required. He asked the Council to consider and approve a new plan for ensuring GDPR Compliance at Appendix E. The Chair ensured that all councillors were comfortable with the proposed plan and noted it allowed for a small payment of overtime, which he thought was reasonable. It was **resolved to approve the GDPR Compliance Plan and the related overtime** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Tipping seconded.

12 Charities

The Chair reminded councillors that the Council are not sole trustees of any charities but councillors do make up most of the trustees on the John Bousfield and Kipling charities. The last meeting of these charities was in November 2024 and the trustees are required to meet at least annually as approved at this meeting. The Clerk (as Treasurer and Secretary of the two charities) intends to arrange the 2025 charities meeting to take place immediately before the November 2025 Bowes Parish Council meeting and to clarify if Chris Redfern wishes to remain as a trustee after resigning from the Council.

The trustees resolved at the 2024 meeting to work with Teesdale Community Resources to identify how they could best use donations from the charities to relieve poverty in Bowes and report back to the next meeting. Barclays Bank have contacted the Clerk several times in the past year asking for evidence that the charities are active (either fundraising or spending funds already received) as a condition of free banking. The Clerk provided the minutes of the last meeting as evidence the charities were committed to expenditure during 2025. The Chair suggested an alternative to a TRC donation would be a donation to Bowes Hutchinsons School to buy books. He was satisfied that a measure to improve literacy would meet the charitable aim of '*relieving poverty in Bowes.*'

It was resolved that the Clerk would convene the annual meeting of the charities after establishing if Chris Redfern wished to remain as a trustee and to ensure that options for utilising funds were included on the agenda – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.

13 AOB

Cllr Tipping raised one item of other business. Durham County Council had left a '*no road markings*' sign on the road from the village to the Clint several months after the highways work had been completed and road markings reinstated. The Clerk agreed to report the issue to DCC.

14 Date, time, and venue of the next meeting.

The next Ordinary Meeting would take place on Tuesday 11 November 2025 at Bowes Hutchinson's School at 7.30 in accordance with the timetable published on the Council's website.

Meeting closed at 8.05 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.