

Minutes of the Meeting of Bowes Parish Council

held at Bowes Hutchinson's School on 11 November 2025 7.30 p.m.

Present

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

1. Apologies and declarations of interest

Cllr Tipping and Cllr Thompson sent their apologies. 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 14 October 2025 (circulated as Appendix A of the agenda) were discussed.

It was **resolved to accept the circulated minutes. Proposed by Cllr Carlisle seconded by Cllr White.**

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

The Clerk declared that as requested at the September meeting he had raised the fact that a '*no road markings sign*' had been left behind upon completion of works with Durham County Council. However, Cllr Hughes revealed that the sign had still not been collected.

4. Finance & Accounts – See summary below.

(a) Receipts since last meeting £237.50 Allotment Rents (25/26)

£112.01 Investment Interest (November)

(b) Expenses since last meeting £11.99 Email accounts (monthly) – Hugo Fox

£6.00 Bank charges

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

- £936.00 Cemetery wall repairs – R Watson
- £86.34 Clerk GDPR Overtime
- £21.40 PAYE on clerk GDPR overtime – HMRC
- £270.00 Grass-cutting (2 cuts) – R Toward

See agenda item 10 below for discussion and approval of payment to the contractor for the grant-funded footpath works.

(d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – the grant for obtaining gov.uk e-mail addresses has now been fully applied so the website supplier has started to collect the agreed monthly charge by direct debit. The bank charges were approved as part of the Banking and Investment Strategy in May 2025. No payments were approved at the October 2025 meeting.

(e) Budget Monitoring to 31 October 2025 (month 7)

The Clerk presented Appendix B for receipts and payments at month 7 of 2025/26 compared with the profiled budget. Although the Council are 3.9% (£1,583) below the profiled budget the underspend is mostly accounted for by the £936 cemetery wall repair invoice approved above. The underlying position is unchanged with £38,000 of reserves anticipated at year-end.

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

(f) Bank reconciliation at 31 October 2025 (month 7)
The Clerk presented Appendix C, for the bank reconciliation at 31 October 2025 (month 7). This shows the balances on the new Unity Trust bank accounts with the long-term investment with Redwood Bank as a memorandum item. The cash in transit shown as a reconciling item is a cheque received from an allotment holder in October that cleared in the bank account in November. It was **resolved to accept the bank reconciliation – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.**

5 Planning

There have been no planning applications within the parish council boundaries since the October 2025 meeting.

6 Correspondence

- (a) A resident has written to the Council expressing concern about a proposed wind farm in North Yorkshire on moorland near the Stang Forest. He indicated that the turbines will be visible from Bowes. The developer is holding a consultation event at Bowes and Gilmonby Village Hall on 19 November at 4pm and has created a website (www.hopemoor.co.uk) for further information. Cllr Carlisle explained that the Council's long-established policy is not to comment on planning applications for works outside the parish or immediately neighbouring parish boundaries. Cllr Hughes agreed and noted that from high land within Bowes it was possible on clear days to see the chemical works on Teesside, but it was unrealistic to consider these grounds for objection to any proposed development. However, both Cllr Carlisle and Cllr Hughes stated that they intended to attend the consultation meeting to learn about the proposed wind farm and register any concerns that they have in a private capacity.
- (b) Durham County Council sent the Clerk a service level agreement for quarterly playground inspections, which he has signed and returned.

7 Cemetery & Village maintenance

- (a) The Clerk noted that during the audit of paper records for GDPR (see item 11) the Clerk expected to find deeds or correspondence evidencing a transfer of the cemetery from the Bowes and Gilmonby Burial Board to Bowes Parish Council but none were located. Other records indicated that the joint burial board ceased to operate in the 1980s or 1990s but the Clerk suggested that the Council considered taking steps to confirm that the joint burial board was officially dissolved and rights and obligations transferred to Bowes Parish Council. Cllr Hughes said that he first became a parish councillor in the 1980s and he did not recall any discussion of a transfer. Throughout his time as a councillor the cemetery has been treated as a Bowes Parish Council asset and Gilmonby Parish Meeting had not been involved in the cemetery management or transactions. Cllr Carlisle asked what the implications would be if it transpired that a joint burial board were still the legal owners of the cemetery but the joint burial board had not met for decades and Gilmonby Parish Meeting did not want any rights or obligations pertaining to the cemetery. The Clerk said that he would need to seek legal advice from NALC if that proved to be the case. It was **resolved that before the next meeting the Clerk would read the final year's minutes of the Joint Burial Board and subsequent year's minutes of Bowes Parish Council to ascertain if a transfer was agreed and Cllr Carlisle would discuss with Gilmonby Parish Meeting to confirm their position – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.**
- (b) The Chair provided an update regarding the planting of spring bulbs in the flower tubs. He stated that he had decided to purchase and plant the bulbs at his own expense in memory of his late wife. The Clerk thanked the Chair for this generous gesture.

8 Allotments

The Clerk provided an update on progress collecting the 2025/26 rent and signed new tenancy agreements and asked the Council to agree an approach to the one outstanding agreement and one outstanding rent at the time of the meeting. He noted that the new agreement allows eviction without notice or refund if allotments are not kept tidy and the Council had also received three complaints about the condition of one of the allotments. It was **resolved to send reminders regarding the overdue rent and tenancy agreement initially by e-mail and if unsuccessful through hand-delivery by the Chair with the reminders explaining the three complaints and potential breach (where relevant). If any issues remained at the date of the next meeting the Council would discuss termination in accordance with the tenancy agreement** – Cllr Carlisle proposed, and Cllr White seconded.

9 Play Park

Cllr Hughes provided the latest playground inspection sheet for the playground, noting that Durham County Council's mid-year inspection identified that one of the posts to the timber frame for the main swings was rotten and posed a medium health and safety risk. The Clerk advised the Council to consider options for repairing or replacing the post. Cllr Carlisle said that he had inspected the post and the frame was stable with no immediate risk of collapse. He suggested that the Clerk contacted Durham County Council to obtain a price for repair under the SLA referred to above. It was **resolved that the Clerk would obtain a price for repairing the swing frame from Durham County Council and the Parish Council would consider options at the December meeting**– Cllr Carlisle proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded.

10 Footpaths

Cllr White stated that the grant-funded work on the footpaths had been completed and he had taken photos of the work (distributed at the meeting). The work had been completed using oak wood and should last much longer than previous work. All were satisfied that the work had been completed at per the order and grant application. Cllr White added that he had also arranged to show the contractor potential works for the 2026/2027 grant claim and once he had a price for this with a precise specification, he would provide the specification to a second contractor for a quotation. It was **resolved to approve payment of the invoice for £2,432.76 to C Gibson and for the Clerk to submit the grant claim and invoice to Durham County Council for re-imbursement (the VAT exclusive price paid)**– Cllr Carlisle proposed, and Cllr White seconded.

11 Data Protection and Retention

In October 2025, the Council agreed a new plan for ensuring GDPR Compliance. The first stage of the plan was for the Clerk to complete an audit of paper records held by the Council in a filing cabinet and two large crates. The Clerk explained that he has completed this audit and produced a report at Appendix D. The Council were asked to note the report and endorse the Clerk's intended approach to updating the Data Retention Policy by the next meeting, which is to propose only retaining documents where there is a known reason for retention. Other documents will either be bagged for secure disposal or transferred to the Bowes Historical Society. Cllr Hughes and Cllr Carlisle thanked the Clerk for an interesting and thorough record and proposed going through each record for which the reason for retention was unknown. Cllr Carlisle commented that some of the old records marked 'yes' for personal data would not contain any because all the individuals named in the records would be dead. Accordingly, if the Council wished to retain them, they could do so even if there was no obvious need. The Clerk agreed to reflect on the comments arising from the document-by-document review in drafting the data retention policy for the next

meeting including a schedule of documents for destruction, donation, and retention. It was **resolved to endorse the above approach to destruction, donation and retention taking account of comments by councillors on old records for which there was an extremely low risk of personal data – Cllr Carlisle proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded.**

12 AOB

Cllr Carlisle stated that as the three-year tenancy agreement for the letting of grazing land at Clint Gardens was due to expire in 2026 the Council should consider advertising the land so it could be let to the highest bidder and including a rent review clause in the new lease. The Chair said that this could be achieved through advertising amongst the farming social media groups he belonged to, which all agreed would be preferable to paying for a newspaper advert as happened previously. Cllr Carlisle suggested the Council decided on a minimum new rent and rent review clause in February 2026 to allow time for advertising and re-letting before the start of the new financial year.

It was **resolved that the Clerk would put the Clint Gardens tenancy agreement on the agenda for the February 2026 meeting– Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.**

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

The next Ordinary Meeting would take place on Tuesday 9 December 2025 at Bowes Hutchinson's School at 7.30 in accordance with the timetable published on the Council's website.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair moved and Cllr Carlisle seconded that there was one item to consider and resolve that required the exclusion of the Press and Public in accordance with the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960 for matters appertaining to confidential information. However, there were no members of the Press or Public present.

14 To approve the 2026/27 Salary Budget

The Chair stated that in accordance with financial regulations the salary budget should be agreed in advance of the full budget and precept scheduled for consideration at the December 2025 meeting. This needed to reflect the expected pay award for 2026/27, which correspondence from NALC suggested was likely to be higher than the below-inflation award in 2025/26. Cllr Carlisle noted the latest national data showed average salary growth was falling very slowly and currently stood at over 4%. Considering these factors, it was **resolved that the 2026/27 salary budget would be increased by 5%– Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.**

Meeting closed at 8.30 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.