

# Minutes of the Meeting of Bowes Parish Council

held at Bowes Hutchinson's School on 16 September 2025 7.30 p.m.

## Present

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

### 1. Apologies and declarations of interest

Cllr White sent his apologies. Cllr Hughes declared and interest in item 8(b).

### 2. Minutes of the Meeting

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held Tuesday 15 July 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 Thompson.

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

The Clerk confirmed that he had submitted Cllr Thompson's declaration of interest form to Durham County Council. He had also obtained three insurance quotations and selected the cheapest, which was a new policy from Zurich Municipal designed specifically for small parish councils. The premium of £448 represented a saving of £140 on the 2024/25 premium and an underspend of £162 against budget. The Chair welcomed this saving.

The Clerk added that he had obtained an update on the planning application to change the status of a by-way near Sleightholme. DCC indicated that no decision had been reached yet. He had also reported the issue with the A66 traffic flow camera to National Highways, but they required more information on the location before investigating. The Vice Chair suggested that the Council maintained a watching brief on these issues.

### 4. Finance & Accounts – See summary below.

(a) Receipts since last meeting £143.86 Refund of duplicate direct debit (see below)  
£112.01 Investment Interest (August)  
£112.01 Investment Interest (September)  
£9.87 Bank Interest

(b) Expenses since last meeting £448.00 2025/26 Insurance - Zurich  
£270.00 Grass-cutting (2 cuts) – R Toward  
£144.00 ILCA clerk training - SLCC  
£143.86 Duplicate direct debit refunded - Hugo Fox  
£76.13 Shredder – Viking Direct  
£0.77 Bank Charges

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

- £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
- £20.00 Cllr Thompson new member training – CDALC

(d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – all the expenses at (b) above were approved at the June 2025 meeting except the insurance for which it was agreed that retrospective approval would be given at this meeting to ensure continuity of cover.

(e) Budget Monitoring to 31 August 2025 (month 5)

The Clerk presented Appendix B for receipts and payments to the end of month 5 in 2025/26 compared with the profiled budget. The Council is within 1.7% of the profiled budget, with the underspend fully accounted for by unbilled cemetery wall repairs. The underlying position is unchanged with £38,000 of reserves anticipated at year-end.

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

(f) Bank reconciliation at 31 August 2025 (month 5)

The Clerk presented Appendix C, which showed that the bank statements at 31 August 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. It was **resolved to accept the bank reconciliation** – Cllr Carlisle proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

## 5 Planning

There have been no planning applications within the parish council boundaries since the July 2025 meeting. Cllr Carlisle noted that some building work was in progress in a conservation area that he would have expected planning approval to be required for. The work involved removing a front garden and retaining wall to provide additional parking space. Cllr Hughes asked the Clerk to report to Durham County Council in case the work was unauthorised.

## 6 Correspondence

(a) CDALC and SLCC have informed parish councils that after further negotiation Unison accepted the Government's pay proposal of 3.2% backdated to 1 April 2025. There was no appetite for industrial action given the challenging financial position of local authorities and the Government's commitment to negotiate the 2026/27 earlier with compensation for the below inflation 2025/26 award. The payments at item 4c include the backdated pay award.

(b) CDALC have provided a link to a parish profile that Durham County Council have compiled. You can find them at InstantAtlas Durham – Parishes and if you select your parish, it will create you an infographic of your parish including population data (totals, age distribution, ethnicity, health), economic activity, household data and mode of travel to work. The Council noted this information.

## 7 Cemetery & Village maintenance

The Clerk remarked that he had received a new application for a headstone for a Bowes resident (design and inscription shared at the meeting) noting that approval for a separate headstone application was granted through e-mail exchange in August 2025 because the original application in April 2025 had been lost in the post. It was **resolved to accept the new headstone application** – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

The Clerk added that since the agenda was published the applicant had raised concern about the condition of the cemetery at the site of the proposed memorial with a rabbit hole close to where his mother was buried. He had responded that the Council had already let a contract to repair walls and fill in holes. Cllr Hughes added that he had just visited the cemetery and the contractor had commenced the work. The rabbit hole referred to by the applicant had already been filled in, the grass cut and the site was now looking in acceptable condition. The wall repairs were ongoing.

## 8 Allotments

- (a) The Clerk declared that he had received an application from two allotment holders to swap their plots from 1 November 2025. It was **resolved to accept the application to swap allotments** – Cllr Carlisle proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.
- (b) The Clerk explained that he intends to attend allotment policy training and update the allotment rules following this training. He will then seek new allotment agreements from each allotment holder when sending out the 2025/26 invoices in October. He asked the Council to consider and approve this proposal together with the allotment rents to apply, noting that there was no increase in 2024/25 and inflation is currently running at about 4%. Cllr Carlisle said that simplifying the rules was desirable providing the requirements of the Council's head lease with the allotment freeholder were met as well as statutory requirements. He also thought a small increase in rents was appropriate, given they had been frozen in 2024/25. Cllr Tipping agreed but thought a higher rent increase that compensated for two years inflation should be considered. The Clerk cautioned against a significant increase in rent that could deter allotment holders from renewing, because of the absence of a waiting list. It was **resolved to accept the Clerk's proposal to update the allotment rules after training and to increase the rent for a standard allotment from £24 to £25 (pro-rata) for the year commencing 1 November 2025** – Cllr Carlisle proposed, and Cllr Thompson 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 Hughes stated that the proposed update on the grant-funded footpath works from Cllr White would be deferred until the next meeting.

## 11 IT Policy

The Clerk explained that the 2025 Practitioner's Guide requires smaller authorities to develop and approve an IT Policy. The draft policy at Appendix D was discussed. Cllr Hughes asserted that it was clear and appropriate. It was **resolved to approve the IT Policy and publish it on the Council's website**. Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Thompson seconded.

## 12 Data Protection and Retention

The Clerk confirmed that he intends to develop a new GDPR and data retention policy for approval at the October meeting. He will then undertake an audit of manual and electronic records held to ensure personal data is only retained where strictly necessary and identify paper documents for secure destruction. The actual process of shredding what is likely to be several hundred documents would be lengthy and require the approval of overtime. Cllr Carlisle suggested that the shredding could be reduced or eliminated by bagging confidential waste and bringing it for a councillor to burn. Cllr Hughes said he would be willing to undertake the incineration. It was **resolved that the Clerk presents the new GDPR and Data Retention Policy to the October meeting and the results of the personal data audit with options for secure destruction to the November meeting**. Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.

## 13 Training

The Clerk remarked that he had booked Cllr Thompson a place on the CDALC training for new councillors later this month. He also intends to book a place on the SLCC Allotment Training as referred to in item 8(b). The 2025/26 Budget does not make provision for either event. The Clerk advises the Council to include a general training budget in 2026/27 with delegated authority for the

clerk to book places on appropriate training courses and order appropriate training materials as and when the need arises. Cllr Hughes said that this sounded sensible and proposed a budget of £250. It was **resolved to approve a Training Budget for 2026/27 of £250. Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.**

#### **14 AOB**

All agreed that there was no other business.

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

The next Ordinary Meeting would take place on Tuesday 14 October 2025 at Bowes Hutchinson's School at 7.30 in accordance with the timetable published on the Council's website.

Meeting closed at 8.10 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.