

AG E N D A
Annual General Meeting of Bowes Parish Council on
Tuesday 12 May 2026 at 7.30pm at Bowes Hutchinson’s School

1. **Election of Chair for 2026/27**
2. **Election of Vice-Chair for 2026/27**
3. **Apologies and declarations of interest** – if any and confirmation no changes to register of interest forms published on the Durham County Council website.
4. **Minutes** of the Meeting held Tuesday 17 March 2026 for approval. See **Appendix A**. The April 2026 meeting was inquorate so whilst a discussion took place, no resolutions or approvals were possible and agenda items have been repeated below where necessary.
5. **Actions arising from the previous meeting** (unless dealt with later in agenda)
The Chair will provide an update on any interest in being co-opted on to the Council and discussions with the landowner about the electric fence at Low Field Farm.
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 Council are asked to re-confirm these arrangements or approve any changes.
7. **Finance & Accounts – See summary below**
 - (a) Receipts since last meeting
 - £7,000.00 Precept 2026/27 – Durham County Council
 - £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 50% Deposit - Playdale
 - £560.24 Clerk salary Q4 – R Woodley
 - £336.79 Two lockable 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 e-mail accounts direct debit (March)
£11.99 Hugo Fox e-mail accounts direct debit (April)
£7.00 Bank charges (March)
£7.00 Bank charges (April)

(c) Payments to approve at the meeting – £350.00 Allotment site rent 26/27 – Youngs RPS
£270.00 Grass-cutting (2 cuts) – 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.

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

See **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.

(f) See **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 will check and sign the reconciliation at the meeting.

(g) See **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.

(h) See **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.

8. **Planning**

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.

Councillor Thompson will provide 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.

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. One key consideration is the road safety risk associated with caravans turning into and out of the site from / to a fast section of the A66, which has already experienced fatal accidents.

(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.

(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 & Village maintenance**

The Clerk has had 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 will shortly undertake a reconciliation. 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.

11. **Allotments**

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**

To consider the latest inspection sheet for the playground, noting that Playdale have set a provisional installation date of 18 May 2026 for the new swing post.

13. **Footpaths**

The Clerk has 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 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**

See [Appendix F](#) for the updated Accessibility Statement. The Council is asked to approve this document, which demonstrates the Council's compliance with the latest regulations.

16. **Publication Scheme and Freedom of Information Policy**

See [Appendix G](#) for the updated Publication Scheme and Freedom of Information Policy, The Council are asked to approve this document, which is designed to comply with the Freedom of Information Act.

17 **Standing Orders**

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 Clerk did not consider the changes sufficient to justify bringing forward the review date. Accordingly, he has incorporated the March 2025 changes in the standing orders that he has prepared for the Council to review and adopt. Please see [Appendix H](#).

18 **AOB (for discussion only)**

18 **Committee Timetable for 2026/27**

The Council are asked to consider a timetable for all ordinary meetings up to the date of the May 2027 Annual General Meeting. 16 June 2026, 14 July 2026, 15 September 2026, 13 October 2026, 10 November 2026, 8 December 2026, 19 January 2027, 16 February 2027, 16 March 2027, 13 April 2027 are dates that would closely follow those for 2024/25 and avoid known holidays.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

To consider and resolve the agenda items that require the exclusion of the Press and Public in accordance with the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960 for matters appertaining to confidential information.

19 Selection of preferred contractor for 2026/27 footpath repairs (noting the work is conditional on grant funding from Durham County Council)

The Clerk 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 recommends 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.

20 Clerk overtime

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 and 14 above ended up working normal weeks. The Clerk requests the Council to retrospectively approve the payment of eight hours overtime for this work. The Clerk also estimates that if the Council resolves 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.