



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Bowes Parish Council held at Bowes Hutchinson's School on 13 May 2025 7.00 p.m.

Present

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

1. Election of Chair for 2025/26

Cllr Carlisle said that he did not wish to continue as Chair and requested nominations. Cllr Hughes thanked Cllr Carlisle for his service as Chair and said that he would be willing to take on this role. It was **resolved to appoint Councillor Hughes as Chair**. *Proposed by Cllr Carlisle seconded by Cllr Tipping.*

2. Acceptance of Office for all councillors

The Clerk witnessed Cllr Hughes sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chair and all other councillors sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form. The Clerk signed the forms as witness and retained them for filing. Cllr Hughes then took over chairing the meeting.

3. Election of Vice Chair for 2025/26

Cllr Carlisle said that he would be willing to serve as Vice-Chair. There were no other nominations. It was **resolved to appoint Councillor Carlisle as Vice-Chair**. *Proposed by Cllr Hughes seconded by Cllr Tipping.*

4. Apologies and declarations of interest

There were no apologies. Cllr Hughes declared an interest in items 15 and 16(c). The Clerk explained that CDALC had issued a new register of interests' form, which each councillor had to complete and sign and return to him so he could submit by the 3 June 2025 deadline. Cllr White agreed to print the forms and liaise with other councillors to ensure that they were all completed, signed, scanned, and returned to the Clerk in advance of the deadline.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the ordinary meeting held Wednesday 16 April 2025 (circulated as Appendix A of the agenda) were discussed. The Clerk explained that both these minutes and the previously approved minutes for the March meeting referred to the Annual General Meeting starting at 7.30 when in fact it was arranged for 7.00. Subject to this slight amendment it was **resolved to accept the circulated minutes as a true record**. *Proposed by Cllr Carlisle seconded by Cllr Tipping.*



6 Actions arising from the previous meeting (unless dealt with later in agenda)

Cllr Hughes fed back on his review of Durham Community Action's affordable housing profile for Bowes. Councillors agreed that DCA had undertaken sufficient work to understand the lack of affordable housing in Bowes and its root causes and no further action was proposed at this stage. The Clerk confirmed that an internal audit plan has been agreed with Butler and Gee and terms of engagement signed. The work would be completed in the next few weeks.

7 Consideration of co-option.

The Chair and Vice Chair provided feedback on their conversations with residents interested in being co-opted on to the Council. Two residents had been invited to attend the June meeting to witness a council meeting, discuss the roles and decide if they wished to apply for the vacant roles. Other residents would be given the same opportunity if they expressed an interest and met the qualifying criteria. At the July meeting, if the number of formal applications exceeded the number of vacancies the existing councillors would vote on who to co-opt.

8 Consideration of committees, councillor roles and outside appointments.

The Clerk explained that currently, the Council has no committees, one councillor has a designated role (Cllr Hughes – playground inspections) and Cllr Carlisle, Cllr Hughes, Cllr White and Cllr Tipping serve as four of the seven trustees of two charities (Kipling and John Bousfield). Cllr White clarified that the Council also had a minority interest in the Bowes and Ronaldkirk Charity and had appointed Cllr Hughes and Cllr Tipping to represent it on this body. All agreed that these arrangements were adequate and no changes were required. It was **resolved to continue to operate the Council without committees, appoint Councillor Hughes as Playgrounds Inspector and for the Council's representatives on outside bodies to be Cllr Hughes and Cllr Tipping on the Bowes and Ronaldkirk Charity and all four councillors on the Kipling and John Bousfield charities.** Proposed by Cllr Carlisle seconded by Cllr White.

9 Review and adoption of standing orders and financial regulations on the Council's website.

The Clerk explained that standing orders were due a full review in May 2026 and the NALC Model Standing Orders had not significantly changed since the last full review in May 2023. The Council had completed a full review of financial regulations as recently as November 2024 and the only change in the NALC Model Financial Regulations since then related to contracts over £30,000, which was unlikely to be relevant to the Council. However, as the change resulted from statutory requirements on procurement, he advised the Council to incorporate the standard wording on such contracts in the model and approve updated financial regulations. It was **resolved to approve the existing standing orders and for the Clerk to update financial regulations to comply with the latest procurement rules.** Proposed by Cllr Carlisle seconded by Cllr Tipping.



10 Review and adoption of other policies on the Council's website.

The Clerk proposed that the Council confirms its adoption of Durham County Council's Code of Conduct as recommended by NALC, confirms the risk management policy and strategy approved in February 2025 remains appropriate and commits to review the suite of policies related to GDPR and IT Security in Autumn 2025 following an audit of personal data held by the Clerk. These were last reviewed in 2018. It is also proposed that the Council develops a Complaints Policy and updates the 2014 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy before the next meeting. Cllr Hughes agreed to take away the Code of Conduct to read, share with other councillors and sign upon approval at the next meeting, but all agreed to follow the DCC Code of Conduct in principle. All also agreed to the Clerk's suggested timetable for preparing and approving other policies. **It was resolved to consider the Code of Conduct, Complaints Policy and Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy at the June meeting and the GDPR and IT Securing policies in the Autumn. Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Tipping seconded.**

11 Review and adoption of the asset register at 31 March 2025.

The Clerk explained that the Council's financial regulations approved in November 2025 included a new asset valuation policy. He had reviewed fixed assets owned by the Council at 31 March 2024, restated fixed assets to comply with the policy, and confirmed that the only acquisitions or disposals in 2024/2025 were two donated sheds. The Council were asked to review and approve the asset register at Appendix B to ensure it was complete. Councillors stated that it was complete apart from a few benches that were either donated or very old and likely to be below the £250 de-minimus level when purchased. It was resolved **to approve the asset register subject to adding two donated benches at £1 each omitted from the draft register. Cllr Carlisle proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded.**

12. Finance & Accounts – See summary below.

- (a) Receipts since last meeting £499.91 VAT Return 24/25 – HMRC
£220.00 West Clint Field Rent 25/26 – Brown
£61.50 Headstone Fee – Teesdale Memorials
£44.50 Bank Interest
£6.00 Allotment Rent (see item 16b) - Hall

- (b) Expenses since last meeting £ 81.69 CDALC Membership 25/26

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

- £700.00 Clint Gardens Rent 24/25 & 25/26 – Youngs
- £411.00 Allotment wall and bench repairs – RB Watson
- £270.00 April and May Grass-Cutting – R Toward
- £66.72 Playground inspections 24/25 – D.C.C.



- £5.14 Postage reimbursement to clerk (4 stamps)
 - £4.49 Bolts reimbursement to Cllr Hughes (playground repairs)
- (d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – all the expenses at (b) above were approved at the April 2025 meeting, so there is no need for any retrospective approval this month.

(e) Budget Monitoring to 30 April 2025 (month 1)

The Clerk presented Appendix C showing receipts and payments in April 2025 compared with the profiled budget. At the end of April 2025 reserves were 2% (£1,085) more favourable than forecast. However, the underlying position is unchanged with £38,000 of reserves anticipated after allowing for deferred expenditure. It was **resolved to accept the budget monitoring report – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Tipping seconded.**

(f) Bank reconciliation at 30 April 2025

The Clerk presented Appendix D, which showed that the bank statements at 30 April 2025 agreed with the cash book balance without any reconciling items. A balance of **£45,839.52** was held. It was **resolved to accept the bank reconciliation – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Tipping seconded.**

13 Planning

Cllr Hughes commented that there has been one planning application within the parish council boundaries since the April 2025 meeting. It relates to a revised application to improve access to a former transport depot. Councillors had no comments on the application.

14 Correspondence

- a) The Clerk explained that NALC have provided an induction pack for new councillors and an invite to free Zoom training in completing register of interest forms on 14 May 2025 at 6pm. Councillors did not wish to attend.
- b) The Clerk added that he had been sent new guidance on responding to planning applications. Cllr Hughes requested a copy to review and the Clerk agreed to send, copying other councillors in for information.

15 Cemetery and village maintenance

- a) The Clerk explained that he had received a quote from one contractor for the further repairs to the cemetery wall discussed at the last meeting. This involved knocking down and rebuilding a 5m section with concrete foundations and repairing another section. Cllr White stated that another contractor had agreed to provide a quote in the next week with two alternative specifications. It was **resolved that the clerk would ensure that there were two like for like quotes available for consideration at the next meeting – Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.**
- b) The Clerk updated the Council on his discussion with the funeral director regarding the disputed snow clearance invoice. Cllr Carlisle stated that the Council had no



contract with the contractor who had submitted the invoice for £438, the only contract being a verbal one with the funeral director to contribute £100 plus VAT so in his view the Council should only pay an invoice if one was received for £120. Cllr Tipping thought that the legal position was more nebulous as the Council were the burial authority with a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of people using its land. The Clerk said that he would need to request legal advice from CDALC to establish the liability and advised the Council to seek a compromise and only consult CDALC if that proved unachievable. It was **resolved that the clerk would e-mail the funeral director proposing to share the costs of the snow clearance 50:50 and consult CDALC if this proposal were rejected** – Cllr Tipping proposed, and Cllr White seconded.

16 Allotments

- a) The Clerk confirmed that since the agenda had been published an invoice had been received for repairs to the allotment wall (see 12c above). Cllr Carlisle had confirmed satisfactory completion.
- b) The Clerk confirmed that the vacant allotment with two sheds had been let for 6 months starting 1 May 2025, following the applicant's confirmation that they intended to re-let for a year in November and their acceptance and signing of allotment rules.
- c) Cllr White had raised the issue of planting too close to the allotment wall with the relevant allotment holder and Cllr Tipping agreed to review to ensure that the issue had been resolved. All agreed that since the only other allotment of concern had been recently worked on no enforcement action was required at this time but Cllr Tipping agreed to undertake a full inspection closer to the time when allotments were due to be re-let. It was **resolved that Cllr Tipping inspected the allotments closer to the time they were due to be re-let and to inform the Clerk of any issues** – Cllr Tipping proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.

17 Play Park

- a) Cllr Hughes stated that he would furnish the inspection sheet to the Clerk, but there were no issues now that he had repaired the bolts and washers raised by a previous inspection. He had claimed re-imbursement at item 12c.
- b) The Clerk confirmed that he had written to the resident who had kindly planted flowers in the herbaceous border expressing the Council's gratitude and seeking interest in future work but had not received a reply. Cllr Hughes added that he had weeded the flower tubs and would buy flowers to replant them as agreed at the last meeting. Cllr Carlisle said that the play park was looking much better following the work.

18 Footpaths

Cllr White confirmed that he had received a quote covering most of the specified work and was anticipating a full quote this week. Cllr Hughes said that whilst he was expecting the quote to exceed the budget following the Council's decision to use more durable wood the cost seemed excessive. Cllr Tipping said that as the work was above £500 excluding VAT a second quote was required, even though



the work would only go ahead if DCC grant was obtained. Cllr White said that DCC had indicated that the grant funding was budget limited and any further delay seeking a second quote was likely to result in the application being rejected as the grant pot would have been fully allocated. The Clerk stated that Financial Regulation 5.13 allowed the requirement to seek two quotes to be waived in exceptional circumstances such as this one but the Council needed to take steps to avoid having to waive the regulations in future. It was **resolved that owing to the likelihood of DCC rejecting a grant application that was delayed to obtain a second quote Cllr White should submit the application as soon as the first quote was ready but in future years he should ensure that two contractors have provided quotes for consideration at the Annual General Meeting or earlier** – Cllr Tipping proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded.

19 Bank and Investment Strategy

The Clerk presented the Banking and Investment Strategy at Appendix E, which sets out the need for change and the advantages and disadvantages of alternative options. He updated the Council on changes since the report was drafted resulting from the Bank of England cutting the base rate from 4.5% to 4.25%. The interest on the investment options in the report had fallen slightly but not by as much as the base rate cut so both now indicated a higher return than the base rate.

Cllr Hughes thanked the Clerk for his research and thought the options 1A and 2A were preferable locking £32,000 away for two years with Redland Bank's 2-year bond (now 4.36% fixed) immediately and investing the remaining reserves in the Unity Trust Instant Access Deposit Account (2.25% variable) once the current account was transferred to Unity Trust.

Cllr Tipping agreed and said that the risk of emergency call on the £32,000 earmarked reserve was very low as this was money that the Council had not had before the 2023 land sale and the cemetery extension it was reserved for was a long-term project.

It was **resolved that the Clerk should:**

- (a) **place £32,000 in Redland Bank's Fixed 2-year Bond (monthly interest) by the end of this week;**
- (b) **initiate the transfer of the current account from Nat West to Unity Trust by the next meeting; and**
- (c) **Once the current account has been transferred open an Instant Access Deposit Account with Unity Trust to hold the remaining balances above £200–** Cllr Tipping proposed, and Cllr Hughes seconded.

20 AOB

There was no other business.

21 Meeting Timetable for 2025/26

The Clerk proposed the meeting timetable stated in the agenda. Cllr Carlisle asked if all dates were Tuesdays and the clerk confirmed that to be the case.

It was **resolved to approve the meeting timetable outlined in the agenda–** Cllr Hughes proposed, and Cllr Carlisle seconded.



22 Exclusion of Press and Public (none present). To approve the clerk's post probation employment contract

The Clerk gave Cllr Hughes a copy of the draft contract with the changes highlighted and explained that they were required to mark the end of the probation period, clarify that payment should be on the last day of each quarter and refer to the relevant pay point rather than the starting pay, which had been superseded by the 2024/25 local government pay award. **It was resolved that the Clerk and Chair should sign the contract.**

Proposed by Cllr Carlisle and seconded by Cllr Hughes.

Meeting closed at 8.35 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.