

AG E N D A
Ordinary Meeting of Bowes Parish Council on
Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 7.30pm at Bowes Hutchinson’s School

1. **Apologies and declarations of interest** – if any.
2. **Minutes** of the Meeting held Tuesday 20 January 2026 for approval. See **Appendix A**.
3. **Actions arising from the previous meeting** (unless dealt with later in agenda)
The Clerk will confirm that the 2026/27 precept was notified to Durham County Council on time and the budget is now on the website. Cllr Carlisle will update the Council on the issue regarding an electrified perimeter fence at Low Field farm.
4. **Finance & Accounts – See summary below**
 - (a) Receipts since last meeting
 - £200.00 Memorial Fee – Raine
 - £108.39 Investment Interest (January)
 - £101.17 Investment Interest (February)
 - (b) Expenses since last meeting
 - £143.86 Annual website fee – Hugo Fox
 - £43.27 Clerk GDPR overtime – R Woodley
 - £20.00 New councillor training - CDALC
 - £11.99 Email accounts (January) – Hugo Fox
 - £11.99 Email accounts (February) – Hugo Fox
 - £10.60 PAYE on GDPR Overtime – HMRC
 - £6.00 Bank charges (January)
 - £6.00 Bank charges (February)
 - (c) Payments to approve at the meeting –
 - £560.24 Clerk salary Q4 – R Woodley
 - £336.79 Two lockable filing cabinets – Viking Direct
 - £180.00 Clerk Reference Manual (*‘Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration’*) – SLCC
 - £140.20 PAYE Q4 – HMRC
 - £104.00 Membership fees – SLCC
 - £88.32 Playground inspections 26/27 – DCC
 - (d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – all the expenses at (b) above were approved at the December 2025 meeting, or in the case of bank and email charges are monthly contractual payments, except the new councillor training approved at the September 2025 meeting (late bill) and the annual website fee, for which there is a direct debit instruction (invoices no longer issued). Retrospective approval is requested for this annual fee, which is unchanged from the prior year.
 - (e) Budget Monitoring to 28 February 2026 (month 11)
See **Appendix B** for receipts and payments at month 11 of 2025/26 compared with the profiled budget. The Council are 5% (£1,916) below the profiled budget, primarily due to outstanding playground repairs, for which a contract is to be awarded at item 15 of this agenda, in addition to payments postponed because the February meeting was inquorate.
As last month, a net underspend of £500 is forecast meaning that £38,500 of reserves are anticipated at year-end, which is in line with the 2026/27 Budget. However, if the playground repairs are not completed and paid for by 31 March the year-end underspend will be higher without any change to the underlying financial position. As last year, significant expenditure will be

deferred from the year it is budgeted to be incurred to the next year, with no effect on reserves at the end of that year.

(f) See **Appendix C** for the bank reconciliation at 28 February 2026 (month 11). This shows the balances on the Unity Trust bank accounts (£8,862) 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.

5. **Planning**

There have been no planning applications within the parish council boundaries since the January 2026 meeting.

6. **Correspondence**

(a) The Project Manager of the proposed wind farm near the Stang Forest has written to the Council requesting the nomination of a councillor representative (and substitute) to sit on the Hope Moor Community Liaison Group ensuring that local communities are consulted and the project team are able to address local concerns. Cllr Thompson attended the inaugural meeting of the Group and will report back to the Council. The Council are asked to consider this request.

(b) CDALC have asked for more parish councils to participate in the pilot digitalisation of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) project being run by Smaller Authorities Auditor Appointments Limited (SAAA) in 2025/26. SAAA are seeking a sample of smaller authorities in each county area to complete their AGARs using their new on-line tool this year ahead of a proposed mandatory roll-out by 2027/28. The Council are asked to consider this invitation.

(c) Unity Trust have informed the Council of an increase in bank charges from £6 to £7 per month with immediate effect.

(d) The Chair has responded to concerns raised about abandoned cars in the village. The correspondent has been referred to the Village Hall Committee.

7. **Cemetery & Village maintenance**

There are no matters to discuss in respect of cemetery and village maintenance this month.

8. **Allotments**

On 8 March 2026, Cllr White and Cllr Thompson completed an unannounced inspection of the allotments to ensure that terms and conditions are being complied with. They will update the Council on the results of the inspection.

9. **Play Park**

(a) To consider the latest inspection sheet for the playground, and the quarterly inspection report from Durham County Council, noting that the procurement of a contractor to repair the swing frame is considered under exempt business at item 15.

10. **Footpaths**

Councillor White will report progress obtaining quotations for repairs due in 2026/27. As previously agreed, two quotations were requested based on a common specification. The Clerk advises the Council to ensure that these quotations are received in the next three weeks so a decision can be taken at the April meeting and a grant claim submitted to Durham County Council by the end of April. There is no deadline but DCC issued grant claim forms on 10 March 2026 and indicated that the budget is limited and the quicker a bid is submitted the more likely it is to succeed.

11 **Data Protection and Retention**

In October 2025, the Council agreed a new plan for ensuring GDPR Compliance and in November 2025 the Council discussed an audit of paper records held by the Council in a filing cabinet and two large crates. The Clerk reflected on this discussion and updated the Data Retention Policy, which was approved at the December meeting. In accordance with the GDPR Plan, the Clerk has now drafted a data protection policy for consideration and approval – see **Appendix D**. This plan includes a draft data breach reporting form, privacy notice and data consent form and once approved will be published on the Council’s website. The Clerk will transfer those records earmarked for destruction or donation to the historical society to the Chair at the meeting. The October 2025 Plan indicated that the final stage (training of councillors) would take place at this meeting, but following the cancellation of the February meeting, this agenda is quite full, and a postponement to the April meeting is recommended.

12 **Risk Register**

See Appendix E for the draft risk register. The Council is asked to consider if there are any additional risks requiring consideration, confirm the scores attached to each residual risk seem reasonable and consider remedial action for the one risk classified as ‘red’ and thus above the Council’s risk appetite. The changes from the March 2025 risk register are summarised at the end of the document. There are three new risks and one risk where the risk level has changed. No risks have been deleted.

13 **AOB**

14 **Date, time, and venue of the next meeting and annual parish meeting of electors**

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.

15 Appointment of the internal auditor for 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28

The Clerk requested fixed price quotes from three internal auditors selected from a list of suppliers issued by CDALC. One internal auditor immediately replied stating that they did not have the capacity for any extra clients, so an alternative internal auditor was invited to bid. Only one quotation was received by the relevant deadline. The Clerk will provide details of this quotation at the meeting and advises the Council to approve the appointment, noting that the procurement has identified a shortage of suitable internal auditors and a delay would risk leaving the Council without an internal auditor in place for 2025/26 year-end.

16 Appointment of the contractor for play equipment repairs

The Clerk identified six firms that specialised in playground equipment repairs following advice from Cllr White and Durham County Council that the replacement of one of the legs to the swing frame was a complex job that needed to be done in accordance with rigorous health and safety standards. At the time of drafting this agenda the Clerk had received five quotes, the cheapest of which was £1,123 plus VAT. This is significantly more than the estimate of £600 plus VAT used in estimating 2025/26 outturn in the 2026/27 Budget Report. However, the fact that the other four quotes were £1,201, £1,423, 1,689 and £1,695 provides assurance that this price is competitive. The Council are asked to approve a contractor to complete the work as soon as possible, noting the swings remain a medium health and safety risk first identified in July 2025.