

AG E N D A
Ordinary Meeting of Bowes Parish Council on
Tuesday 20 October 2026 at 7.30pm at Bowes Hutchinson's School

1. **Apologies and declarations of interest** – if any.
2. **Minutes** of the Annual General Meeting held Tuesday 15 September for approval. See [Appendix A](#).
3. **Actions arising from the previous meeting** (unless dealt with later in agenda)
The Chair will provide an update on his discussion with a resident potentially interested in being co-opted on to the Council and his discussion with the school regarding the location of the defibrillator discussed at the last meeting. The Clerk will provide an update on the Council's application to amend the bank mandate.
4. **Finance & Accounts – See summary below**
 - (a) Receipts since last meeting £ 108.39 Investment Interest (September)
 £ 60.92 Bank Interest (Q2 2026 2027)
 - (b) Expenses since last meeting £601.20 Clerk salary Q2 26/27 – R Woodley
 £252.00 25/26 external audit – BDO
 £150.20 PAYE Q2 26/27 – HMRC
 £135.00 Grass-cutting (1 cut) – R Toward
 £11.99 Email accounts DD (September) – Hugo Fox
 £7.00 Bank Charges (September)
 - (c) Payments to approve at the meeting – £135.00 Grass-cutting (1 cut, 1 more anticipated) – R Toward
 £70.00 Allotment rent increase (following triennial review) – Youngs RPS
 £57.60 Cemetery training course (from training budget) – SLCC
 - (d) Retrospective approval of urgent payments – all the expenses at (b) above were approved at the September 2026 meeting, or in the case of bank and email charges are monthly contractual payments.
 - (e) Budget Monitoring to 30 September 2026 (month 6)
See [Appendix B](#) for receipts and payments at the mid-point of 2026/27 compared with the profiled budget. This indicates a 5% (£2,023) underspend against the profiled budget.
This is primarily due to the unpredictable timing of cemetery and village repairs and maintenance, with all now expected in the second half of the year. However, once the Council has received quotes for the cemetery tree work the Clerk will assess if a small underspend is likely.
Accordingly, at the mid-point of 2026/27, the Clerk still forecasts a break-even outturn leaving reserves at £38,500 in line with the approved 2026/27 budget.
 - (f) See [Appendix C](#) for the bank reconciliation at 30 September (month 6). This shows the balances on the Unity Trust bank accounts (£11,606) 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. In accordance with financial regulations the bank statements and cash book supporting the reconciliation will be provided for the Chair's quarterly check at the meeting.

5. **Planning**

(a) Cllr Thompson attended the Hope Moor Community Liaison Group meeting on 23 September 2026 and will report back to this meeting to keep the Council informed of the developer's response to the initial consultation and plans for further consultation.

(b) There have been no planning applications within the Bowes Parish Council boundaries since the previous meeting. However, Durham County Council have informed the Council of a permitted development at North Side Farm, Boldron. An 18m telecommunication tower is to be replaced with a 25m tower to preserve local services.

6. **Correspondence**

(a) A Bowes resident has kindly informed the Clerk of her intension to leave the Council a bequest in the will that she and her husband are preparing. The Clerk explained that the Council would vote on the use of the income at the time of receipt unless the bequest placed a restriction on that use.

(b) The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) have issued an invitation to comment on proposed changes to proper practices for smaller authority accounts and governance set out in the Practitioner's Guide and a new Code of Practice for internal audit. The proposals represent the most significant proposed changes in requirements for smaller authority accounts and audit in over a decade and are designed to take effect from 1 April 2027 (the 2027/28 financial year). The consultation runs until 31 October 2026. The Clerk has reviewed the proposals and whilst generally supportive has some concerns. The Council may wish to ask the Clerk to submit a formal response to the consultation.

(c) Durham County Council are consulting on their 2027/28 Budget and 4-year Medium Term Financial Plan. Last year, the County Council elected not to increase council tax by the amount assumed by the Government in funding settlements and together with national pressures created by rising demand for social services and special educational needs this has created a significant deficit, which the Council aims to bridge through a four-year savings programme. Providing that in future the Government's assumed council tax increase of 4.99% per annum is approved, savings of £21.5M would balance the budget. £9M savings largely from reducing discretionary welfare support and the extent of grounds and winter maintenance are proposed. It is assumed that the residual £12M savings will be delivered through AI-driven efficiency improvements, although these schemes are still being developed. Bowes Parish Council usually declines to comment on the County Council's budget proposals but if it does wish to comment this year the consultation period runs until 15 November, with online consultation events available for booking over the next few weeks.

(d) Durham Community Action has organised a '*Future of Aging Well*' conference with local charities on Thursday 22 October from 9.30 to 4.30 at Durham County Cricket Club in Chester-Le-Street. It will discuss support for the elderly in County Durham and limited places were available for interested parish councillors at the time of drafting this agenda. The Clerk will reply to this invitation if any councillors wish to attend.

7. **Cemetery & Village maintenance**

(a) The Clerk advises the Council to consider an increase to cemetery fees for 2027/28 in accordance with a previous resolution to update the fees for inflation every two years. The last increase (for 2025/26) reflected the fact that they had remained fixed since 2008 and it is best to avoid such an enormous increase in a particular year by regularly updating them for inflation. The 2025/26 review involved benchmarking against other cemeteries as well as an inflation update and then rounded each fee up to the next £25. If a similar approach is taken for 2027/28 most of the fees will not change as the rounding provides a buffer against modest inflation. The exceptions are:

- Interments in unreserved cremation plots (residents) increasing from £300 to £325;
- Reservations of burial plots (non-residents) increasing from £275 to £300;
- Reservations of cremation plots (non-residents) increasing from £200 to £225;
- Interment of child (non-resident) increasing from £200 to £225;
- Interment in reserved burial plot (non-residents) increasing from £725 to £775;
- Interment in unreserved burial plot (non-residents) increasing from £2,250 to £2,375; and
- Interment in unreserved cremation plot (non-residents) increasing from £725 to £750.

(b) At the September 2026 meeting the Council discussed the need for cemetery tree work as it is two years since the last such work and the yew trees have grown considerably. The 2026/27 Budget includes provision for the work. The Clerk has written to three potential contractors to seek expressions of interest. The Chair has visited the cemetery and assessed the extent of work required. Updates will be provided at the meeting and agreement sought to send a common specification to interested contractors for contract award at the meeting on 8 December 2026, with the work to be delivered within two months of appointment.

8. **Allotments**

The Council approved a fee increase which took effect on 1 November 2025 and the clerk is in the process of preparing bills for the year starting 1 November 2026. The Council may wish to adopt a similar fee setting strategy as with the cemetery, which would mean freezing allotment rents this year and uprating at least in line with two-year inflation next year rounding up to avoid fees involving pence.

9. **Play Park**

To consider the latest inspection sheet for the playground.

10. **Footpaths**

Cllr White to update the Council on the contractor's timetable for undertaking the approved P3 footpath works for 2026/27.

11. **Charities**

The Council are not sole trustees of any charities but councillors do make up most of the trustees on the John Bousfield and Kipling charities. The last meeting of these charities was in November 2025 and the trustees are required to meet at least annually as approved at this meeting. The Clerk (as Treasurer and Secretary of the two charities) intends to arrange the 2026 charities meeting to take place immediately before the November 2026 Bowes Parish Council meeting and for the main agenda item to be agreeing this year's payments from the fund to support charitable objectives.

12. **AOB (for discussion only)**

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

The Council agreed a 2026/27 meeting timetable at the Annual General Meeting in May 2026. The next meeting is scheduled for 10 November 2026.