

BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting 13 May 2025

Held at Bishop Auckland Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

In Attendance: Cllr Harker (retiring Mayor), Cllr Sam Zair, Mayor (Chair) Councillors, R Elliott, J Fox, S Gray, K Lawson, M Siddle, D Wilson, and L Zair

Also Present: Sarah Harris (Town Clerk) Vicki Booth (Assistant Town Clerk) and 8 members of the public.

TC 001/25 Election of Mayor for 2025 -26 - Mayor Mike Harker opened the meeting and asked for nominations for the Mayor for the 2025-26 Municipal Year. Cllr Sam Zair nominated by Cllr Siddle and seconded by Cllr L Zair.

Resolved: that members supported the nomination and all agreed and supported the proposed election. Cllr Zair agreed to be the 2025-26 Mayor and took the chair of the meeting.

TC 002/25 Declaration of Acceptance of Office - The Mayor was asked to sign the declaration of acceptance of office.

Resolved: that the Mayor Councillor Sam Zair signed the declaration of office

TC 003/25 Presentation to Retiring Mayor - A vote of thanks was taken for the retiring Mayor, who was then be presented with a medal and photobook to commemorate his term of office.

Resolved: that members thanked retiring mayor for the commitment and efforts he made to the role over the past 12 months.

TC 004/25 Apologies for absence – none were received.

Resolved: no apologies recorded all members present.

TC 005/25 Declarations of Interest - To invite members to declare any interest they may have.

Resolved: that no declarations of interest were made.

TC 006/25 Election of Deputy Mayor - To elect a Deputy Mayor for the 2025-26 Municipal Year. Cllr Siddle was nominated by Cllr L Zair and seconded by Cllr Lawson.

Resolved: that the members agreed that the appointment of Deputy Mayor.

TC 007/25 Declaration of the Acceptance of Office for the Deputy Mayor - The Deputy Mayor was then asked to sing a declaration of acceptance of office.

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Resolved: that the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Siddle signed the acceptance of office.

TC 008/25 Diversity Pledge Statement – The Clerk read the diversity pledge, which had been adopted in 2016 and asked if members are happy to resign, this local statement.

Resolved: That members would sign the pledge, however upon suggestion that it could highlight disability more and tasked the Clerk to take an amended pledge to the Community Committee to address this, and then upon co-option of to the vacancies bring back to a Town council Meeting the amended pledge for all 11 members to sign, once the co-option vacancies had been filled.

TC009/25 Minutes of the Town Council 15 April 2025

Resolved: that members agreed and approved the minutes, and the Mayor signed them.

TC010/25 Matters Arising – a brief update on the timescale for the Asset of Community Value regarding the Town Hall was given to members, it was reported that the submission had been made and no response had yet to be received. The 8-week deadline for response was 28th May 2025.

Resolved: that members noted the update.

TC011/25 To re-confirm the Articles and, Responsibilities Rules of Procedure, Codes and Protocols of, Members Allowances of Bishop Auckland Town Council Constitution and General Power of Competence. The Constitution were considered including:

- part 3, committee structure and TOR for Committees
- Part 4 – section 3 to be reworded to include a future pandemic situation rather than current, and to add the wording from the Model Standing Orders from NALC for the standing orders.
- Part 6 members allowances
- Part 7 Organisational Chart
- IT policy
- General Power of Competence.

The changes to standardise the terms of reference for the committees reporting, accountability and terms and conditions. It also included the adoption of the Members Code of Conduct, to include the Declaration of Pecuniary Interests.

Terms of reference and amendments all agreed.

Part 4.1 section 3 – still talks about pandemic and this needs to be reworded to state that if there is a pandemic again then we will follow the national legislation and guidelines.

Resolved: that members agreed the report (see file copy) and the reconfirmation of the above articles, including:

- Part 3, committee structure and TOR for Committees be changed as per the Report
- Part 4 – section 3 to be reworded to include a future pandemic situation rather than current, and to add the wording from the Model Standing Orders from NALC for the standing orders be adopted .
- Part 6 members allowances – to be re-adopted and remain the same at £440 per year for elected members, and £440 special allowance for the Mayor.
- Part 7 Organisational Chart – be adopted to show the part time allotment officer and line management through the Deputy Clerk for the Admin Assistant and Allotment Officer

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IT policy be adopted, but it needs to reference other documents such as GDPR and FOI.
General Power of Competence be adopted, as all qualification criteria is met.

TC 012/25 Appointments to Committees, Panels, Outside Bodies and Working Parties -

Members considered membership of Committees, Panels, Outside Bodies and Working Groups. Members voted on committee members and agreed Chairs for each.

Resolved: that the following would form the Committees, Panels and Outside Bodies, as per the table below. The vacancies would be considered once the co-option vacancies had been filled. The members agreed that for the smaller groups such as Green Matters and Gaunless Gateway and other bodies that may need to be represented by BATC, Clerk to bring list to future meeting to formalise.

Policy and Resources Committee 6 Members (Quorum 3)	Cllr Harker (Chair), Cllr Siddle (Vice Chair) Cllr Gray, Cllr Wilson, Cllr S Zair & (vacancy)
Allotments and Environment Committee 5 Members (Quorum 3)	M Siddle (Chair), Cllr Fox (Vice Chair), Cllr L Zair, Cllr Harker, Cllr R Elliott, & (vacancy)
Community Committee 5 Members (Quorum 3)	Cllr Lawson (Chair), Cllr Zair (Vice Chair), Cllr Fox, Cllr Elliott, & (vacancy)
Disciplinary and Grievance Appeals Panel 3 Members (Quorum 3) N.B. Cannot sit on both Policy and Resources and Disciplinary and Grievance Appeals Panel.	Cllr Lawson (Chair), Cllr Fox (Vice Chair), Cllr S Zair,
Human Resource Panel 3 Members (Quorum 3)	Cllr Wilson (Chair), Cllr Gray (Vice Chair), Cllr Harker
General Appeals Panel	Not usually set yet as it is dependent upon the issue to be addressed
Outside Bodies Representation	CDALC & AAP now called Local Networks– Current member (MH & MS) remain in place until Sept 2025 – members agreed for this to continue. CDALC Larger Council Forum – MH & MS as well as Clerk South West Durham Travelling Residents Forum – Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Cllr Lawson Stronger Towns Board – continue with Mayor and Clerk to attend these

TC013/25 Appointment of Bank Signatories – 2 vacancies for signatories due to two former councillors not standing (J Blackburn and A Zair) in the May 2025 election. Members were asked to consider whom they wished to become signatories.

Resolved: It was agreed that Cllr M Siddle & Cllr K Lawson be added to signatories and the Clerk to action the necessary paperwork.

TC014/25 Bishop Auckland Town Council end of year financial report – including AGAR and Internal Audit Report (see file copy) The Clerk presented the AGAR, and its documentation, including the completed Internal Audit Report, Section 1 the Governance Statement, Section 2 the Accounting Statement, plus the year end explanation of Variances, the reconciliation between box 7&8, the balance sheet, the adjustments for the year ending 31.03.2025, and summary of income
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and expenditure, along with the additional external audit information needed to show the evidence for the three assertions for 2024-25. The Clerk proposed that the notice for the Notice of appointment of date for the exercise of public rights Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025, that the notice would be issued on 2nd June 2025, with the period starting on 3rd June and ending on 14th July 2025.

Resolved:

- that members thanked the staff and Cllr Wilson as outgoing Chair of Policy and Resources for a comprehensive report and agreed the recommendations.
- The Council have also noted the remarks from the External Auditor due to the incorrect transcription of figures for box 6, in preparation of the 23-24 AGAR. The figures have been triple checked before completion for 2024-25
- Members agreed that as there were no outstanding legal claims, and that the council held comprehensive insurance in place, and risks are mitigated with inspections of likes of lighting columns, plus ear marked reserves for likes of staffing, allotments, skate park and allotments, they were satisfied that the assertion 8 was met.
- That members welcomed and accepted the internal auditors report and whilst no recommendations they wished to continue to improve systems and processes.
- That the Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR) was agreed and that the Clerk Mayor (Chairman) signed section 1, and the Mayor (Chairman) section 2.
- That the RFO is now to submit the return to the External Auditor on behalf of the Council and ensure that the excise of public rights is appropriately met, with the Notice of appointment of date for the exercise of public rights Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025, that the notice would be issued on 2nd June 2025, with the period starting on 3rd June and ending on 14th July 2025.

TC015/25 Diary of Meetings 2025-26 – Members were asked to consider the proposed diary of meetings for 2025-26-25 (see file Copy). Meetings had been condensed to save members and staff being out on evenings

Resolved: that members Community and Allotment to be swapped in Sept/Oct to lessen the gap between meetings. Would prefer community meetings monthly. Members agreed on the changes. The Chair advised of the importance of attendance so the meetings are quorate and can go ahead. New schedule to be revised and recirculated to members.

TC 016/25 Finance – Payments for Authorisation – The Clerk gave an overview of the payments issued.

Resolved: that members approve the payment report. Cllr Zair, and Cllr Harker signed the report. See Appendix 1.

TC017/25 – Contracts and Ongoing Obligations – regular payments such as photocopier lease, cleaning, HR SLA, bins (see file copy).

Resolved: that member agreed the ongoing contract list.

TC018/25 Payments for Authorisation – duplicate item

Resolved: that item had already been considered under TC016/25.

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TC019/25 Co-option – consideration of advertisement for the co-option vacancies at Henknowle and Woodhouse Close – The Clerk advised of current vacancies and we are now in a position to move forward to fill the vacancies by way of co-option, in line with the agreed and adopted co-option policy. It recommends to publicise the vacancies through local channels such as social media. The same eligibility criteria applies as those of if they were to stand for election, however no remuneration allowance would be available.

Resolved: that members agreed for the advert to be published locally with candidates requested to submit submissions of interest by 13th June 2025 to the Town Clerk, eligible candidates would then be invited to the 24th June 2025 Town council meeting to present and Members to select two co-optees.

TC020/25 Correspondence - DCC strategy and delivery team – neighbourhood planning regulations 2012. Designated Coundon & Leeholme. Based on unparished areas and want to develop a collective group in that area.

Resolved: that member agreed to support the group in having a collective group, and the Clerk to respond to the consultation on behalf of the council.

TC021/25 Public Participation - To hear from any members of the public subject to [Public Participation Policy](#) One member of the public had commented and had a couple of questions relating to regeneration of the Town. They congratulated the work and success of Kingsway carpark, bus station is progressing well.

- The bus station when complete should increase the footfall in Newgate Centre, however there remains issues, as Job Centre is under developed and in wrong place, and noting seems to be changing or improving in the centre.
- Also what is happening with Vinovium House – what is happening with it?
- Victoria Avenue – what is happening there? As the redevelopment seems to have stalled.
- Canny Hill roundabout – stood empty for a long time? there had been reports of a sculpture or statue.

Resolved: The Mayor and Clerk reported that they would raise the questions with DCC, and they may have answers or updates when the Stronger Towns Board Meets in June. Information will be sought for a report back.

Appendix 1 TC018/TC Payments Authorised 13 May 2025

537	13.09.2024	-£10.00	Seaham Town Council	Refund - Seaham Mayor Fashion Show
536	18.03.2025	£116.26	EDF Energy (54 Kingsway)	Electricity 01/02/2025-28/02/2025
535	18.03.2025	£9.76	Lloyds Bank Plc.	Lloyds Banking Fees 10/01/2025-09/02/2025
534	31.03.2025	£1,000.00	Bishop Auckland RUFC	equipment through grant for BARUFC
533	28.03.2025	£114.00	Rachel Johnson (Diamond Dazzle)	Kingsway Cleaning
532	27.03.2025	£22.50	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Allot Officer travel expenses
531	27.03.2025	£644.00	Thomas Wales (Baccanalia)	VAT for Heritage Festival Production, 28th September 2024
530	27.03.2025	£50.00	Thomas Wales (Baccanalia)	VAT for Durham Amateur Football Trust (DAFT) Promotion 2024
529	27.03.2025	£71.00	Thomas Wales (Baccanalia)	VAT for Youth Awards Event Management, 24th June 2024
528	27.03.2025	£125.00	Post Office Ltd.	Postage Stamps
527	27.03.2025	£201.50	Twinkle Cleaning Services	Kingsway Cleaning
526	24.03.2025	£486.32	Mr. & Mrs. Lumsden	Half Yearly Lease of Edge Hill Allotments 08/03/2025-07/09/2025
525	24.03.2025	£199.99	Screwfix Direct Ltd.	pole saw
524	25.03.2025	£670.00	A. Longstaff (AK Garden Maintenance & Waste Removal)	plot clearance Tin & WH, incl tractor tyre, glass windows and doors
523	25.03.2025	£10.00	Eurovista2010 Ltd	consumables
522	25.03.2025	£8.39	Universal Product Solutions Ltd	consumables
521	25.03.2025	£8.54	MA Tradex Ltd. (Amazon Business)	Kitchen Tea Towels (9 Pack)
520	25.03.2025	£136.13	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	consumables
519	25.03.2025	£469.80	Corona Energy Retail 2 Limited	gas Feb - Mar 2025
518	25.03.2025	£200.00	2nd Bishop Auckland Cub Scouts (Cub Scouts)	donation - scouts
517	30.03.2025	£1,565.29	Public Works Loan Board	interest charge
516	20.03.2025	£2,498.52	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	staff pensions - March 2025
515	25.03.2025	£2,775.20	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	HMRC, tax & NI for staff and members - March 2025
514	25.03.2025	£8,503.45	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Staff salaries - march 2025
513	25.03.2025	£271.43	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Members Allowance - Mar 2025
512	20.03.2025	£4,320.00	Durham County Council	hanging baskets for 2024-2026 (all included in this payment)
511	20.03.2025	£189.00	Swift Engraving Services Ltd	numbering for plots
510	20.03.2025	£50.00	Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)	VB CiLCA extension
509	19.03.2025	£26.00	Morrisons (WM Morrison Supermarkets Ltd.)	Bouquet of Flowers and Greeting Card

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508	17.03.2025	£619.34	Durham County Council	self seeding tree removal on external wall at South Church
507	17.03.2025	£864.00	Safe Strip UK Ltd.	asbestos removal from Woodhouse and Pollards
506	17.03.2025	£4,500.00	Sam Raper (Curious 12)	50% - Final Instalment of New Website
505	17.03.2025	£161.70	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Phone and Broadband
504	10.03.2025	£140.21	O2 - Telefónica UK Limited	mobile phones
503	11.03.2025	£565.52	Corona Energy Retail 2 Limited	gas Jan - Feb 2025
502	17.03.2025	£44.49	Totals Business Computers Ltd. (Total Business Group)	photocopier usage
501	17.03.2025	£174.45	Phoenix Software Limited	office 365 licence
500	17.03.2025	£100.00	Durham County Council	OCC Health SH apt
	11.04.2025	£6.50	Defty	Chain oil
	14.04.2025	£14.57	Facebook	boost for youth awards nomination promotion
	15.04.2025	£95.00	Rachel Johnson (Diamond Dazzle)	cleaning
	15.04.25	£310.80	Noticeboards Company	Edge Hill notice board
	15.04.25	£61.11	Totals Business Computers Ltd. (Total Business Group)	Copier hire
	15.04.25	£16.94	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	metal bin for pest control
	15.04.25	£14.40	DCC	domain name recharge
	15.04.25	£2,800.10	CDALC	sunscription charge
	15.04.25	£18.00	SLCC training course	advanced prompt writing for AI
	15.04.25	£18.00	SLCC training course	use of AI for council tasks
	16.04.25	£16.40	Grahams logs	timber to cover wells
	16.04.25	£53.06	Wave	woodhouse allotments
	16.04.25	£53.06	Wave	duplicate payment - to be subtracted from next bill
	17.04.25	£57.00	Rachel Johnson (Diamond Dazzle)	cleaning
	17.04.25	£2,527.32	DCC Pensions	pension contributions
	22.04.25	£0.79	Anglian Water	allotment water bill broken banks
	22.04.25	£13.78	Anglian Water	allotment water bill tindale
	22.04.25	£28.06	Anglian Water	allotment water bill Kingsway
	22.04.25	£14.58	Lloyds Bank Plc.	service charge
	23.04.25	£123.87	EDF	utility bill
	23.04.25	£200.00	KJ WI	wool for knitting centre pieces
	23.04.25	£5,000.00	Baccanalia for Culture	TC154/24
	23.04.25	£1,000.00	Wear valley Community Action Group	TC154/24

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24.04.25	£265.43	members allowance	
24.04.25	£8,406.50	salaries	
24.04.25	£3,292.40	HMRC	staff & members controbutions
24.04.25	£2,000.00	Baccanalia for Culture	TC154/24
24.04.25	£5,000.00	Auckland Youth and Community Centre	TC154/24
24.04.25	£10.47	Asda	mayoral gift
25.04.25	£5,000.00	Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre	
28.04.25	£76.00	Rachel Johnson (Diamond Dazzle)	cleaning
30.04.25	£9.00	Timpsons	key cut
07.05.25	£9.99	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	merch for youth awards
07.05.25	£218.40	DCC	energy management SLA
07.05.25	£45.96	Totals Business Computers Ltd. (Total Business Group)	Copier useage
07.05.25	£161.70	Bluecom Services Ltd.	phone and broadband
07.05.25	£328.50	Vinovium security	quarterly keyholder charge
07.05.25	£215.53	Corona Energy Retail 2 Limited	Kingsway gas
07.05.25	£87.97	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	stationary
07.05.25	£19.99	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	bespoke warnign sign for allotment
07.05.25	£16.99	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	merch for youth awards
07.05.25	£4.29	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	merch for youth awards
07.05.25	£96.02	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	stationary & wooden stakes
07.05.25	£56.00	CDALC	copies of good cllr guide
Movement of funds from deposit acc to treasurers account			
15.04.25	£5,000		
17.04.25	£10,000		
23.04.25	£10,000		
24.04.25	£10,000		
25.04.25	£3,000		
01.05.25	£5,000		

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