

BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting 29 July 2025, 6pm

Held at Bishop Auckland Town Council Office, 54 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland

In Attendance: Cllr Sam Zair, Mayor (Chair), Councillors, R Elliott, J Fox, S Gray, M Harker, A Legge, M Siddle, D Wilkinson, and L Zair

Also Present: Sarah Harris (Town Clerk) Vicki Booth (Assistant Town Clerk)

TC 033/25 Apologies for Absence

Resolved: Apologies were received from Cllr Lawson, and Cllr Wilson, both were unwell and their apologies were accepted.

TC034/25 Declaration of Interest

Resolved: No declarations were made.

TC 035/25 To approve minutes of

- a) Town Council 24th June 2025
- b) Allotment Committee 1st July 2025
- c) Community Committee 8th July 2025
- d) Policy and Resources Committee 8th July 2025

Resolved: that changes to be made to Town Council 24th June Cllr Siddle confirmed that he said he wasn't abstaining from voting, Agreed that minutes be changed. Community Committee 8th July minutes to be amended as listed Clerk as present. Policy Committee 8th July Minutes listed MH as deputy Chair, agreed this to be changed. All members approved the minutes of the above meetings with the changes listed above.

TC 036/25 Matters Arising -

Community Committee – support Family Festival 16th & 17th Aug 2025 – Community Committee has expressed a desire to have a stall, this will need 3 persons at all times to cover 10-30am to 3.30pm both days as a minimum. Members will need to volunteer to do this as no staff are available. As Chair of the committee - KL – has volunteered 3 hrs on Saturday, but more volunteers were needed.

Resolved: that members will check their availability the event and will confirm to the Clerk by noon on Friday 1st August. If not enough volunteers, then the council will need to decline to have a stall this year. The council will still be promoted as a key event sponsor regardless of if they have an activity stand or not.

TC037/25 – Presentation from Edward Pickering CO of Citizens Advice Co Durham

Edward gave an informal presentation regarding the Citizens Advice Service in Co Durham. He has been Co for 3.5 years, and has presented to the council previously. They offer a range of advice services. Their funding is mainly from DCC, and this has not increased since 2017, they received a reduced amount from 2023-24. This has made them have to re-think service provision and now utilise community spaces such as the provision the Town Council helps to facilitate at Kingsway. Bishop Auckland has the Town Council supported session and one at woodhouse close. Rather than the full drop in and appointment base service in Bishop Auckland as delivered before covid.

There has been an increase in 30-25 years demographic over the last couple of years. hard to measure the demand. Have projects in place with Living and Benicia housing to look at getting people support before evictions take place, to stop the eviction from happening. They have 40-50 FTE staff and 80 volunteers. Volunteers are hard to keep as lots are students. He acknowledged that there are major issues with contact via the telephone system, and that online isn't suitable for all.

The council asked what they needed from likes of Town Councils, and elected members? He confirmed that they find the benefit in kind use of the room at Kingsway is very helpful. Having grant aid helps, the service needs to look at phone system and access. They welcome feedback from members on service issues and usage, and need to be aware of local trends of where there are gaps. They want to reassure that they are there to support everyone.

Resolved: that members noted the presentation, and thanked him for attending.

TC 038/25 Reports

a) Durham County Council – An update was given by Cllr Lyndsey Fox

- Press release NECA re STACK is positive but not yet had paperwork formally from NECA have agreed funds verbally.
- Conservation Management Plan – not had many responses from phase 2 & urge for representation on this. Meeting at Town Hall on Thursday this week with businesses regarding this all are welcome to attend. .
- Local Networks – are paused, monies are being held at the moment.
- Stronger Towns Board has appointed its new Chair.

b) Outside Bodies -

- Mayor went to Stronger Towns Board in June – been working on the new governance and the new chair and from media side they are trying to counteract the recent bad press regarding the projects that haven't started or in slow progress. Concerns re new road having a detrimental effect on the town centre.
- Cllr Harker advised he attended the CDALC and he was nominated as the new Chair. Saw presentations on the current consultations, concerns were raised for the mechanisms for people to feed into these and not just digital responses to make it as inclusive as possible.
- Discussion re Local Networks and a difficulty in their absence that things are backing up. Some of the Town Councils are not comfortable with the new geography proposals.

Resolved: that members noted the updates.

TC 039/25 Report of the Mayor

- The Mayor advised of the events he has attended since the last meeting including Daisy Arts Exhibition, Kynren Preview, Langholme Care Home, Sandringham 30th Anniversary Celebrations and long service awards.

Resolved: that members noted the update.

TC040/25 – Diversity Pledge – Pledge was presented in May but discussion took place re better wording for people with disabilities. It was taken to Community Committee for revision and this was presented to members.

Resolved: that members agreed for the Town Council to adopt the pledge. That members agreed to publicise their signing of the pledge. Also, be on the website and notice board.

TC041/25 Appointment to Committees and outside bodies – Current vacancies stand on the Policy & Resources Committee, Allotment & Environment Committee & Community Committees.

Resolved: That members agreed that HR be part of Policy and Resources but consideration needs to be made that Policy has a big portfolio, so may be necessary to split it out as a sub-committee if necessary.

That Allotment and Environment Committees would like a reference to development and delivery of a strategy so they can direct the work they do., this was agreed and Terms of Reference to be updated.

That the following appointments be made:

- Policy & Resources Committee– Mike Harker nominated Dickie Wilkinson & seconded by Jasmine Fox
- Allotments & Environment Committee– Lesley Zair nominated Andrew Legge & seconded by Dickie Wilkinson
- Community Committee - Mike Harker nominated Dickie Wilkinson & seconded by Jasmine Fox

TC 042/25 Report of the Town Clerk

- Youth Awards Feedback summary

Resolved: that members noted the update and gave thanks to the staff for the successful event

- Durham Learn for English as a Second Language room hire cancellation

Resolved: that members requested the Clerk write to DCC on behalf of the Town Council the concerns raised and the level of support required for immigrants and the severity of the shortage of notice for the learners.

- Procurement SLA increase on renewal quote

Resolved: that members agreed the Service Level Agreement to be renewed.

TC043/25 Consultations – a) Clerk gave an overview of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Resolved: that members agreed the Clerk to respond on behalf of the Town Council to raise concerns that the report is complicated and consultations should be face to face through drop in sessions, community centres etc. That timings of consultations need to be more mindful. Follow up comment on the output may also be prevalent and a staged reduction would be better. Promote that the Town Council has responded and encourage individual residents to respond.

b) The Clerk gave an overview of the Co Durham Plan.

Resolved: that members agreed the Clerk writes to the Local Authority to advise the Council is pleased this is being consulted on but the timings are a concern.

c) Conservation Area Consultation.

Resolved: that members agreed this is a welcomed consultation

TC044/25 Finance –

a) Payment Report was presented by the Clerk

Resolved: that members agreed to approve the payment report (see appendix 1)

b) Hinkley & Rugby Building Society information was presented by the Clerk

Resolved: that members recommend the Town Council open a H&R account and look to close the Darlington Building Society and Nationwide Building Society Accounts

c) North East Credit Union

Resolved: that members agreed to invest the funds from the NECU into one of the other accounts and close the NECU Account.

TC045/25 Correspondence –

- **Fifteas Tearoom** – advised members of correspondence re concerns of footfall in the town
Resolved: that members noted the correspondence and that the DCC rep was responding.
- **Business Cards** – that some members had requested card.
Resolved: that members agreed for business cards to be available and the town clerk to arrange.
- **Believe Housing** – following correspondence with a tenant at Henknowle Cllr Harker had been trying to liaise with Believe Housing to support the tenant. There are issues on the estate which Believe need to look at.
 - **Resolved:** that the clerk is to write to portfolio holder at DCC and Believe Housing of the Town Councils concerns (and invite them to a future meeting)

TC 046/25 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.

Resolved: that there were no members of the public wished to raise any issues.

TC047/25 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved: that press and public be excluded. The public and press were not present and the DCC rep left the meeting.

TC048/25 HR Update

Pay Award 2025-26 - The national Joint Council for Local Government Service (NJC) has reached an agreement on pay applicable between 1st April 2025 -31 March 2026. The award is for 3.2%.

Resolved: that members noted the pay award for 2025-26. the pay increase will be backdated to 1st April, and Staff will receive the backpay for award in the August salary payment.

Approach from the Corporate Board of Bishop Auckland College - The Town Clerk was recently approached in a personal capacity with an invitation to consider joining the Corporate Board (Governors) at Bishop Auckland College.

Resolved: that the Clerk be enabled to join the corporate board as the Council were in support.

Completion of CILCA by the Deputy Clerk

Resolved: that the council offered their congratulations to the Deputy Clerk. In line with the national contract arrangements, they Deputy Clerk be given 2 increments and placed on the LC2 substantive scale, from 1st August 2025, however the Policy and Resources Committee are delegated to establish if this increase is enough and authorise changes to staffing pay scales to reflect the changes.

Appendix 1 – payment report approved

Payment report – 29 July 2025 Full Council									
ADMIN									
197	30.06.2025	£0.00	£539.00	Fiona Clark (Fiona Clark)		temp cover	28.07.2025	EP	outstanding
190	28.07.2025	£0.00	£2,417.69	Durham County Council	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	Staff Pensions - July 2025	28.07.2025	EP	contract
189	31.07.2025	£0.00	£3,052.31	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	HMRCC, Tax, NI Staff - July 2025	31.07.2025	EP	contract
188	31.07.2025	£0.00	£73.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regs 2003, Part 5, s.26	HMRC, TAX & NI Members - July 2025	31.07.2025	EP	contract
187	31.07.2025	£0.00	£8,112.36	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	Staff Salaries - July 2025	31.07.2025	EP	contract
186	31.07.2025	£0.00	£293.70	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regs 2003, Part 5, s.26	Members Allowance - July 2025	31.07.2025	EP	contract
170	11.07.2025	£0.00	£18.00	Owen Richardson (Boody Spelk)	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	Allotment officer mileage 02.06.25-26.06.25	11.07.2025	EP	outstanding
112	12.06.2025	£0.00	£8.10	Michael Armstrong (Michael Armstrong)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	MA Mileage claim 17.09.24-02.06.25	02.06.2025	EP	outstanding
192	28.07.2025	£8.36	£50.18	Totals Business Computers Ltd.	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	photocopier usage July 2025	23.07.2025	EP	contract
158	30.06.2025	11.09	66.56	Screwfix		4 x fans for office	30.06.2025		paid
196	07.07.2025	£321.93	£1,931.56	Durham County Council	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	YA's room hire, catering, linen, equipment hire	05.08.2025	EP	outstanding
195	19.06.2025	£0.00	£65.00	Boody Spelk	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	isolate leak, replace post and tap	18.07.2025	EP	outstanding
ALLOTMENTS									
194	28.07.2025	£0.00	£580.00	AK Garden Maintenance & Waste Removal	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	plots 29/30 WH	03.08.2025	EP	outstanding
193	28.07.2025	£25.11	£150.64	O2 - Telefónica UK Limited	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	mobile phones July 2025	24.07.2025	DD	contract

184	22.07.2025	£0.00	£548.63	Wave Utilities - Woodhouse Close Allotment	Allotments - Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908, s.23	Water Woodhouse Close, 01/06/2025-30/06/2025	08.07.2025	DD	contract
183	22.07.2025	£0.00	£200.95	Wave Utilities - Tindale Crescent Allotment	Allotments - Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908, s.23	Water Tindale Crescent, 01/06/2025-30/06/2025	08.07.2025	DD	contract
182	22.07.2025	£0.00	£368.80	Wave Utilities - Pollards Allotment	Allotments - Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908, s.23	Water Pollards, 01/06/2025-30/06/2025	08.07.2025	DD	contract
181	22.07.2025	£0.00	£62.43	Wave Utilities - Edge Hill Allotment	Allotments - Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908, s.23	Water Edge Hill, 01/06/2025-30/06/2025	08.07.2025	DD	contract
180	22.07.2025	£0.00	£49.39	Wave Utilities - Broken Banks Allotment	Allotments - Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908, s.23	Water Broken Banks, 01/06/2025-30/06/2025	08.07.2025	DD	contract
172	16.07.2025	£83.33	£499.97	Swift Engraving Services Ltd	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	numbers and signage for SC allot	16.07.2025	EP	outstanding
176	15.07.2025	£0.00	£1,825.63	Wave Utilities - West Mills Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	Water Mill Race/West Mills, 01/06/2025-30/06/2025	15.07.2025	EP	contract
175	15.07.2025	£0.00	£220.00	AK Garden Maintenance & Waste Removal	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	remove 60 bags waste & fridge 29/30Tin	15.07.2025	EP	outstanding
179	22.07.2025	£0.00	£36.28	Wave Utilities - Town Council Office	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	Water Kingsway, 01/06/2025-30/06/2025	08.07.2025	DD	contract
KINGSWAY									
191	28.07.2025	£0.00	£400.00	Blitzed 24/7 Cleaning	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	Kingsway Cleaning	23.07.2025	EP	contract
COMMUNITY SUPPORT									
185	18.07.2025	£290.00	£1,740.00	Ian Liddle (I C Liddle Services)	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	flower displays in town	18.07.2025	EP	contract
177	04.08.2025	£2.10	£44.17	EDF Energy (Skatepark)	Highways - Parish Councils Act 1957 s.3	Skatepark Electricity 01/06/2025-01/06/2025	07.07.2025	DD	contract
174	15.07.2025	£68.00	£408.00	South West Durham News CIC		full page add - summer activities across town	15.07.2025	EP	outstanding
173	14.07.2025	£0.00	£3,000.00	Bishop Auckland Town Hall (DCC)	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	BATH Summer Activity Programme	14.07.2025	EP	outstanding
MAYOR									
171	11.07.2025	£0.00	£30.00	Shildon Town Council		Shildon Mayor at home x 2 tickets	11.07.2025	EP	paid

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