

## BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting 9<sup>th</sup> December 2025

**Bishop Auckland Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland**

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

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

**TC 076/25 Apologies for Absence** – Apologies for Absence were received from T Redmond

**Resolved:** That the apologies were noted and received.

**TC 077/25 – Declarations of Interest**

**Resolved:** Cllr Wilkinson declared an interest in Bishops Press. Cllr Siddle declared an interest in LNRS.

**TC 078/25 – Approve the minutes of**

- a) Town Council 28 October 2025
- b) Policy and Resources Committee 4 November 2025
- c) General Appeals Panel 24 November 2025
- d) General Appeals Panel 26 November 2025
- e) Community Committee 25 November 2025
- f) Policy and Resources Committee 2 December 2025
- g) Allotment and Environment Committee 2 December 2025 –

**Resolved:** Cllr L Zair requested a motion for next AEC to discuss the minutes regarding the cockerels being allowed on one site only. That all other minutes were agreed and all actions within approved.

**TC079/25 - Matters arising: no matters discussed**

**Resolved:** that members noted no matters required discussion

**TC080/25 Reports**

**a) Durham County Council**

That no items were discussed

**b) Outside Bodies**

- i) CDALC – change to exec committee & code of conduct is being reviewed. A discussion took place regarding the LGTRS contributions. The standards committee for CDALC is also being reviewed. The budget proposal was discussed and DCC looking to save £10m and 56% will come from the back office, 30% from an increase in 3<sup>rd</sup> party contributions and 14% on service delivery such as wardens, clean and green etc (£72m gap over 4 year MTFP). The consultation discusses changes in the fundamental structure of the council.

CDALC Exce – means all seats are up for election and we can make a nomination and for one of our councillors to represent the council on the committee. There are 13 seats but 18 larger councils. Recommendation that a representative be put forward to the exec.

**Resolved:** that members agreed the council should represent the council and Cllr Siddle & Cllr Harker would both like to be considered.

### **Civility and Respect Pledge**

**Resolved:** that members agreed for these to be individually resigned

- ii) Stronger Towns Board meeting next convene Thur 11<sup>th</sup> Dec 2025 and the Chair Shaun Hope is coming to the January Town Council Meeting.

**Resolved:** that members noted the update.

**TC081/25 Report of the Mayor** – the Mayor gave an update on the recent meetings and events he has attended.

**Resolved:** that members noted the update.

### **TC082/25 Allocation to Committees following the by-election in Henknowle Ward –**

- I. **Allotment & Environment Committee (AEC) – To remain as is**
- II. **Community Committee (CC) - Two vacancies on committees and a shift in the political balance (see appendix 1).**
- III. **Disciplinary & Grievance (DG) – Currently there is one vacancy**

**Resolved:** that members agreed for Cllr Redmond to be added to the AEC and for the number to be increased to 6 members. For Cllr L Zair to be Chair and Cllr Elliott to be Deputy Chair of Community Committee, and the persons on the committee to remain the same with the addition of Cllr David Wilson. That Cllr Elliott to be added the DG committee and a vote took place putting Cllr Elliott as Chair of this committee.

### **TC083/25 – Finance -**

- a) **Payments for authorisation** – no outstanding payments requiring approval

**Resolved:** that members noted no payments were outstanding for approval at this time.

- b) **Budget 2025-26 and precept 2025-26** – that the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee and the Clerk gave an overview of the budget proposal and gave a detailed report of the precept proposal from the Policy & Resources Committee. Following which members discussed efficiencies, the passing down of some community services such as floral arrangements from the principle authority to local town and parish councils. That paying the PWLB in full isn't ideal and the option to pay it off in instalments over 3-5 years would be a more suitable option. That procurement exercises and value for money is vital.

**Resolved:**

- That Members agree the proposed Budget, shown in appendix 1, and which included the Ear Marked Reserves, as set out, including the removal of the EMR for Christmas Lights.
- That members consider the precept options for 2025-26 agreed the precept for 2026-27 and agreed that that proposed option 1 (36.64% increase) making a Band D property be £149.08 per year, which would generate a total precept of £671,734.79, with that they agreed that the PWLB should be considered to be repaid over three years, with proposals being brought to the Policy and Resources Committee. That member agreed that a comms strategy and message needs to be developed prior to the council tax bills being issued, this should be brought to the next meeting and that council strategy should be further developed in the new year.
- That members agreed to explore greater opportunities for income generation via:
  - Boundary Review to maximise the opportunity for the council to cover all residents of Bishop Auckland incorporate the boundary to match the DCC boundaries, as well as covering unparished areas which identify as being part of Bishop Auckland. To do this member agree to seek a meeting with the three DCC Councillors, Chair of Policy and Resources Committee, and the Town Clerk, along with the DCC cabinet member whom is also a BATC Town Councillor to discuss the prospect of a review.
  - That members work in collaboration with the Allotment and Environment Committee to develop
    - A strategy for the allotment sites which helps to maximise provision to meet demand, and look at locations to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
    - a pricing model for the allotment service which appropriately funds the service and enables development.
  - Undertake a rent review of BATC office space, and room hire pricing, and actively market room hire provision where possible, with regular clients preferred to avoid unnecessary impact upon staffing.

#### **TC084/25 – Consultation DCC –**

- I. **Bus Station** - that members discussed the drawing and proposal for the bus station

**Resolved:** that members noted the consultation and concerns were raised regarding the height of the kerbs and that some paths from Bob Hardesty Drive has access limitations and there are limitations on the cycle access. That members agreed to respond regarding these issues and the request details regarding dropped kerbs.

- II. **Durham LNRS Priorities** - (This is an advisory consultation and not statutory).

**Resolved:** that members agreed to omit the Wear Rivers Trust reference and agreed the remainder of the proposed response.

**TC085/25 – Public Participation** – that no members of the public were present.