

BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting 13th January 2026

Bishop Auckland Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

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

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

TC 086/25 Apologies for Absence – Apologies for Absence were received from M Harker, T Redmond & D Wilson

Resolved: That the apologies were noted and accepted.

TC 087/25 – Declarations of Interest D Wilkinson gave an interest in Bishops Press.

Resolved: that the declarations of interest were noted.

TC 088/25 – Approve the minutes of

- a) Community Committee 4 November 2025
- b) Town Council 9 December 2025
- c) Policy and Resources Committee 6 January 2026
- d) Community Committee 6 January 2026

Resolved: that members approved the minutes of the above meetings, and approved all actions within them.

TC089/25 - Matters Arising and Action Log Update – the Clerk gave an update of the actions on the log

Resolved: that members noted the updates.

TC090/25 Reports

- a) **Durham County Council** – Imminent second consultation on Medium Term Financial Plan as the budget has now been set and the impact that will have upon the MTFP. Cllr Gray has further information regarding Council Tax discounts and percentages of properties in each banding and more precise information within the town boundaries.

Resolved: members asked about the 106 funds; that the 106 funds should remain within the area it was derived from but rumours are that DCC are looking to amalgamate the funds into one pot will not be used specifically where it was developed for can you clarify. County Council members will seek an update.

- b) **Outside Bodies** – STB in December but guest speaker gave a detailed update of the last meeting.

Resolved: that members noted the update.

TC091/25 Guest Speaker – Shaun Hope, Stronger Towns Board - Chair Shaun gave an overview of his time at the STB and how things are progressing and answered members questions such as public perceptions and how to overcome the negativity. The increased requirements for transparency and communication mechanisms and there is now a communication pathway. The current Bishop Gateway (formerly Eastern Corridor) progress and when it will be developed and how the project has evolved since its initial undertaking and scaled back. High Street Fundis linked to DCC & NE Combined Authority and isn't linked to his role as Chair of the STB. Underspend of £1.7m was around the South Church development and this have removed their contribution to that project, third party investment is being explored for this project. Public Realm works to be left to the latter stages once other works complete. Cycle pathways and heritage walkways left to latter stages as other funds have been found and this project is being relooked at is becoming in a larger project and will link together across the town. Property reuse fund has been well received with 11 applications. Crossing at Tindale Retail Park isn't part of STB as highways wasn't part of it but it has been taken forward by Highways. Strategic Advisory Panel was left as a void as Elizabeth Scott as lead member lead this, however Shaun is set to bring it back and first meeting is in Feb, and will be a week or so after the Board Meeting.

Resolved: that members requested Shaun to take a motion to board that pre-press releases can be shared with the Town Council prior to any press release or social media. Request for DCC Regeneration team to come to a future meeting regarding the other projects within the town.

TC092/25 Report of the Mayor – the Mayor gave an update on the recent meetings and events he has attended.

Resolved: that members noted the update.

TC093/25 – Finance -

- a) **Floral Displays** – the Clerk gave an update on the options for the 2026 floral options and budget requirements.

Resolved: that members agreed the extra £15,000 to the budget of £25,000. Some test sustainable and rest seasonal. This will also include the community planting in the wards by way of supporting community groups in the local area.

- b) **Donation to Bishop Trains re memorial bench for David Million** - the Clerk advised there is a Go Fund Me out for a bench. That the £200 that wasn't claimed at for the festive donations be reallocated towards the memorial bench.

Resolved: that members agreed to increase the amount to £1000 but it has the same conditions as the community fund grants and the funds are not transferred until the receipt is received.

- c) **Budget 2025-26 and precept 2025-26** – that the Clerk gave an update that the £86,989 of the allocated precept reserve be used to secure a page in the Bishops Press Monthly, £10k be used flora displays/ environmental works, and the remaining £73,521 be put into the EMR for Council Strategy and used appropriately to support the strategy.

Resolved: that members agreed the proposed allocations and agreed the press release, relating to the precept.

TC094/25 – Council Strategy 2026-30 – working update -

Resolved: for strategy meeting to be held Wednesday 28th January 2026.

TC095/25 Consultation DCC –

- a) Changes to DCC Allotment Policy, Tenancies and Transition Rules
- b) North Pennines National Landscape Management Plan (via DCC website)
- c) Retail and Town Centre Study

Resolved: that members noted B isn't a DCC consultation and is the National Landscape and Cllr Siddle agreed to look into this further and suggest a response. That members agreed the response to A & C.

TC096/25 – Public Participation – that no members of the public were present.