Bishop Auckland Town Council

Kingsway Court, 54 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham DL14 7JF
Tel: 01388 207110 Email: council@bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk
Website: www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk

Mayor: Michael Siddle **Town Clerk:** Sarah Harris

21 October

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of **Bishop Auckland Town Council** on **27th October 2026 at 6.00pm**. The Meeting will take place at **54 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7JF.**

Members of the Public and Press are welcome to attend. However, it is recommended that attendance is registered with the Town Clerk prior to attending to ensure that the meeting space is large enough to accommodate everyone safely. To register attendance please call 01388 207110 or email council@bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk by noon on Monday 26th October 2026

The Chairman advises members of the Council and the public that the meeting or part of the meeting may be recorded by audio and may be by video.

Yours sincerely

Harris

Sarah Harris
Clerk to the Council

1. **Welcome** 6.00pm - Mayor Michael Siddle

2. **Apologies for absence -** To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence.

3. **Declarations of interest -**To record declarations of interest from members on any item on the agenda, including. any interest prejudicially or personal as recorded on the Members register of interests.

4. **Minutes -** To approve the Minutes of:

    a) Town Council Meeting 29 September 2026

    b) Policy and Resources Committee Meeting 6th October 2026

    c) Community Committee Meeting 13th October 2026

5. **Dashboard, Matters Arising & Action Log update** - To from the above Minutes which are not included elsewhere on the agenda (for information only)

6. **Guest speaker – Ben Tinkler, Director Bridge Creative CIC**

7. **Reports -**
    a) Durham County Council
    b) Outside bodies representation feedback

8. **Report of Mayor -** To receive a report from the Mayor detailing activities attended to represent the Council since the last meeting.

9. **Finance –**
    i. Payments for Authorisation
    ii. Budget & Precept setting 2027-28 – progress update

10. **Feedback from the SLCC National Conference**

11. **Committees and outside body representation**

    a) Community Committee Membership
    b) Town and Parish Council representation on Durham County Council's (DCC) Local Networks (LN)

12. **Correspondence** – items correspondence including:
    a) Approach from DCC to add CCTV to the Lighting Columns at the Skate Park, Town Recreation Ground

13. **Public Participation** - To hear from any members of the public, subject to the Public Participation Policy[1]

14. **Consultations**

    a) Ward 7 Closure Bishop Auckland Hospital
    b) 9iDurham County Council MTFP
    c) Durham County Council – Changes to School Oversubscription Criteria from September 2028

15. **Town Council Strategy update**

16. **Exclusion of Press and Public** - Exclusion of Press and Public In accordance with the provisions of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council do now exclude the press and public for the remaining item on the agenda by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted since publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest.

17. **HR update** – recruitment to Administrative Support Officer

[1] The policy is available on the website at www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk/council/constitution-and-policies

DO I HAVE AN INTEREST?

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS
Does the matter to be discussed affect:-

1. You, or your spouse's/partner's, business, employment or profession
2. Anyone that employs or has appointed you or your spouse/partner
3. Anyone that you or your spouse/partner has received sponsorship from.
4. A contract with the Council, land or licence in the Councils area, corporate tenancy or securities in which you or your spouse/ partner has an interest.

YES →

YOU SHOULD DECLARE THAT YOU HAVE A DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

You should take no part in the discussion or vote

If your Standing Orders dictate you should withdraw from the meeting by leaving the room.
Do not try to influence the decision.

NO ↓

OTHER REGISTERABLE INTERESTS
Does the matter to be discussed affect:-

1. A body where you are in a position of general control or management and to which you have been appointed or nominated by your Council.
2. Any body which
   (a) exercises functions of a public nature
   (b) is directed to charitable purposes or
   (c) whose principal purpose include the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member in a position of general control or management
3. Any gifts or hospitality with more than an estimated value of £50

YES →

SHOULD DECLARE THAT YOU HAVE AN OTHER REGISTERABLE INTEREST

You should not vote on the matter but you may make representations or answer questions about the matter if members of the public can do so.

If your Standing Orders dictate you should withdraw from the meeting by leaving the room.

NO ↓

OTHER NON-REGISTERABLE PERSONAL INTERESTS
Does the matter to be discussed affect:-

1. A financial interest of a friend, relative or close associate.

YES →

DECLARE THAT YOU HAVE A NON-REGISTERABLE PERSONAL INTEREST

You should not vote on the matter but you may make representations or answer questions about the matter if members of the public can do so. If your Standing Orders dictate you should withdraw from the meeting by leaving the room.

NO →

You can participate in the meeting and vote

This flowchart provides assistance for Councillors to help determine whether you have an interest in a matter being discussed at a Council meeting.

However it is a Councillors own responsibility to comply with the Code of Conduct and declare an interest where appropriate.

Failure to disclose or register a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is a criminal offence under section 34 of the Localism Act 2011.

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Minutes

29 September 2026 at 18:00

Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

Cllr Present: Chair Cllr M Siddle, Cllr's Harker, Redmond, Wilson, L Zair, S Zair

Also, present: Sarah Harris (Clerk), Vicki Booth (Deputy Clerk)

TC049/26 - Apologies for Absence – Cllr's Elliott, Fox, Gray, Legge, Wilkinson

Resolved: that members agreed and accepted apologies from Cllr Fox, Grey and Wilkinson as reason was given. Cllr Legge's absence was noted however no reason was given for his absence.

TC050/26 - Declaration of Interests –
Resolved: that no declarations of interest were made.

TC051/26 – Monthly Dashboard –
That a discussion took place around the PACT walkabout the problems facing the town at present including ASB, homelessness, high street auction powers and the 106 fund application for the Town Recreation ground.

Resolved: that members noted the update, requested the town's police inspector to attend a future meeting and an invite be extended to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

TC052/26 Approval of minutes

a) Town Council 11 Aug 2026
b) Policy and Resources Committee 1 Sept 2026
c) Community Committee 9th Sept 2026
d) Allotment and Environment Committee 15 Sept 2026

Resolved: that the minutes and there actions contained within were approved by members.

TC053/26 – Matters arising, dashboard and action log

a) Insurance

Resolved: that members noted the update and aware a desk top valuation needs to be sourced before next years insurance is due.

b) IT – Internet Connectivity

Signed:

Resolved: that members noted the updated and acknowledged the ongoing challenges and the quotes are to be agreed by Policy and Resources Committee next week and actioned for installation immediately to fix the issue.

c) Bishop Auckland's Christmas Town 2026

Resolved: that members noted the update and the reduced price making the event more affordable. Members commented that they were not in agreement with the marketing strategy taken and were concerned over reputational damage to the council as the principle partner.

d) Floral Planting

Resolved: that members were assured that the necessary preparations are taking place for the project management of the bulb planting, and were happy for staff to prioritise this and agreed on the themed planting for 2027.

e) Support for Bishops Museum

Resolved: that the Clerk contacted DCC economic regeneration but no funds are currently available. That there is limited capacity for the Town Council to support the Bishops Museum. That the museum needs to be sustainable and need to establish their long term plan. That a paper be presented at the next Policy and Resources Committee regarding arrears and how the Town Council can help in the short term.

f) Other matters arising

Cllr Harker advised members to give consideration to the Deputy Clerk attending the upcoming SLCC conference in order for all sessions available are covered s some are scheduled at the same time and the Clerk cannot attend them all.

Resolved: That members agreed that the Deputy Clerk should also attend.

TC054/26 – Reports

a) Durham County Council

Cllr Redmond gave an update regarding the bus shelters been cleaned. That 2 additional CCTV camera are required but is having problems getting a dept at DCC to take ownership for the process to move forward. That a proposal is that section 106 money be used for a fence between the station rec and the private allotments. He agreed to look at getting a road sign fixed which was brought to his attention by Cllr S Zair.

Resolved: that members noted the update.

b) Outside Bodies feedback

Stronger Towns Board – the Mayor expressed his frustrations at the last meeting which was on 24th September. The attendance from DCC was disappointing along with the papers, that the Chair was extremely frustrated about the process. That the Durham Gateway planning permission has been submitted and is out for consultation with the statutory consultees. Highways have asked for further information, flood plain approval, timelines are going to end up rushed, as all Stronger Towns funding has to be spent by March 2028. Discussion took place re the £1.7m which had been allocated for industrial units at South Church, and as that project is not going ahead, as DCC have pulled their support funding. No

decision has been made on how to re-allocated yet. Meetings are being brought forward to every 6-8 weeks rather than quarterly. The Mayor has raised questions were raised about the Artist Hub and the quick wins that were proposed back at the start of the funding but answers still haven't been received. The master plan for Bishop Auckland (Strategic Place Plan) was raised and DCC have promised to bring it to the next meeting and to the Town Council. Stack are still in conversation with the adjoining building. The Cit has been highlighted via the Multiagency walk about that persons are accessing the Stack Site as it was not secure. The Coms update advised that banners on columns, are being installed and that they have paid for the stress testing. It was highlighted that paying for this shouldn't have had to come from the Board as it is a DCC core responsibility and that the timing of the banners is poor as they will have to be taken down by 8th Nov for the Christmas Lights to be installed.

Cllr Harker attended the Northern Regional NALC meeting. That the infrastructure of councils are fractured and disjointed and is being addressed through Project Keystone. That he also attended a national NALC today online and it covered the 21st Century of Town and Parish Councils and Clerks and the information from that will be shared to members.

Resolved: that members noted the update and the report on the 21st Century Town and Parish Councils be shared to all members.

c) NALC National Conference Feedback

Resolved: the Clerk gave a summary of the NALC conference attended in June, Members noted this update.

TC055/26 – Report of the Mayor

That he attended the Family Festival and the attendance was very well attended and the activities were good. Attended the SSAFA annual luncheon with the Deputy Mayor. He also attended WordFest, PACT meeting and Heritage Fayre as both Mayor and exhibitor.

Resolved: that members noted the update.

TC056/26 – Finance and Audit

a) AGAR External Audit Report for year ending 31 March 2026 and Notice of Completion of Audit

Resolved: that members received and noted the completed Annual Governance Return (AGAR) for the financial year ending 31 March 2026, together with the External Auditors report and certificate an confirms that the required publication requirements have been met. Members also agreed that Mitchel and Grieveson be appointed as internal auditor for 2027. Payments for Authorisation

Resolved: that members noted the report and authorised the payments.

b) Budget and precept setting process and timeline – the Clerk gave an overview of the plan going forward. That each committee review their budget areas and what is required for the remaining year. In October the first round of what each committee require in the financial year 2027/28 in order for the precept to be submitted to DCC in the first week of January 2027.

Resolved: that members agreed the budget setting timeline proposed, agreed to look at the budget requirements within committees and that the Town Council meeting for November to be a one item meeting to focus Soley on the precept and budget for 2027-28.

Signed:

c) Payments for Authorisation – that the report was presented.

Resolved: that members noted and approved the payment report

TC057/26 – Correspondence

a) Letter of thanks from Dame S Snowdon DCVO
b) Letter from 1873 RTM Company Ltd

Resolved: that members noted the letter from Dame Snowdon.

Resolved: That members noted the letter from RTM Company Limited as included in the meeting papers. raised and that they felt the response from Baccanalia CIC responded to the concerns raised but a follow up letter from the Town Council is to be send to state this. That members agreed it would be better to have continued communication with residents in the Market Place when a large event takes place. That a request is to be submitted to the Safety Advisory Group and to Corporate Land and Property at DCC to request that the Town Council become a statutory consultee so Council are aware and considered for upcoming events in the town.

Resolved: that members agreed the Clerk is to write a letter back to the 1873 RTM

Company Limited:

- to expressing that their concerns have been considered, and that the response from Baccanalia CIC acknowledges them, as well as providing information for future consultation.
- That that the council is in agreement that it would be beneficial for organisations, partners and residents to have the opportunity to comment on the activities which take place in the Market Place, however at this time it is not within the gift of the Town Council to grant this.
- That Council has considered community priorities identified through resident engagement, councillor feedback, service usage data, correspondence received from residents, and previous consultations when preparing the budget and setting the precept. Town Council is elected to make decisions on behalf of its community. Councillors are accountable to residents through the democratic process and are responsible for setting the precept and determining how it is spent.
- Agree for the Clerk to write to Corporate Land and Property and the Safety Advisory Group at Durham County Council asking if they can become a formal/ statutory consultee for events and activities within Bishop Auckland, within public spaces managed by Durham County Council.

TC058/26 – Town Council Strategy Consultation Feedback

The Clerk gave an overview of the responses received and the consensus reached by the Towns residents.

That the findings be taken back to each Committee and establish what can be honed in at each committee for the overall strategy.

Resolved: That members gave consideration to the feedback and agreed that the strategy is on track overall however emphasised needs to be given to, the following:

- Partnership working and holding other partners to account especially around the high street,
- planning , enforcement, litter and cleanliness
- Antisocial behaviour and community safety
- Communication and engagement with the community
- Reflection of how regeneration is perceived and actioned

Signed:

- Consideration of the historic and built environment and not just the natural environment.

The Clerk and Committee Chairs to work to include the feedback into the strategy, and at the next meeting of the council present the updated final strategy documents.

The Clerk and Deputy were tasked to development of a media campaign similar to 'you said, we did' to highlight

- what is already happening and what is already available, to residents. Also highlight that their feedback is
- reflected in the strategy and how the strategy will be monitored and how the council will be accountable.
- This is to be presented at the next meeting of the council, and to include the launch of the strategy.

TC059/26 – Public Participation

Resolved: that there was no public present.

Signed:

Appendix 1 - Payment Report – Town Council 29th September 2026

voucher	date	total	Description	Payment Type	VAT	Orgnaisation	Legal Power used for Spend	status
DEMOCRACY								
325	21.09.2026	£66.20	HMRC, Tax & NI for Members - September 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regs 2003, Part 5, s.26	contract
326	24.09.2026	£300.50	Members Allowances - September 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regs 2003, Part 5, s.26	contract
KINGSWAY								
279	28.08.2026	£400.00	Cleaning of Town Council Offices, August 2026	EP	£0.00	Blitzed 24/7 Cleaning	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
281	21.08.2026	£38.41	Kingsway, Water 01/07/2026-31/07/2026	DD	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Town Council Office	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
295	07.08.2026	£180.64	Telephone and Broadband, August 2026 (Duplicate Payment)	EP	£0.00	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
296	12.08.2026	-£180.64	Telephone and Broadband, August 2026 (Refunded Payment)	EP	£0.00	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
298	02.09.2026	£180.84	Telephone and Broadband, September 2026	DD	£30.14	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
317	30.09.2026	£69.00	Replacement of Damaged 1Gang, 2 Way Lightswitch, Stairs	EP	£11.50	R. Lightfoot Electrical & Alarm Engineers	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	paid
318	30.09.2026	£25,000.00	Overpayment on Principle, Public Works Loan Board (1 of 3)	EP	£0.00	Public Works Loan Board	Borrowing money - Local Government Act 2003 Schedule 1 para 2	paid
319	30.09.2026	£8,000.00	Overpayment on Principle, Public Works Loan Board (2 of 3)	EP	£0.00	Public Works Loan Board	Borrowing money - Local Government Act 2003 Schedule 1 para 2	paid
320	30.09.2026	£9.17	Overpayment on Principle, Public Works Loan Board (3 of 3)	EP	£0.00	Public Works Loan Board	Borrowing money - Local Government Act 2003 Schedule 1 para 2	paid

Signed:

321	30.09.2026	£20.00	Kingsway, Window Cleaning, September 2026	EP	£0.00	AIWC Commercial and Business Cleaning Ltd.	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
334	30.09.2026	£7.96	Gtechniq W5 All Purpose Cleaner and Degreaser Spray, 500ml	EP	£1.33	Gtechniq Ltd. (Amazon Business)	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
335	30.09.2026	£9.95	Gtechniq W7 Tar and Glue Remover Spray, 500ml	EP	£1.66	Gtechniq Ltd. (Amazon Business)	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
340	30.09.2026	£450.00	Cleaning of Town Council Offices, September 2026	EP	£0.00	Blitzed 24/7 Cleaning	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	outstanding
ADMIN								
214	21.08.2026	£2,602.69	Staff Pensions - July 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	contract
235	04.09.2026	£26.42	Allotment Officer, Travel Expenses Adjustments 02/04/2026-30/06/2026 (Mileage Rate Increase)	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
273	28.08.2026	£10,868.82	Staff Salaries - Aug 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	contract
275	21.08.2026	£2,602.69	Staff Pensions - Aug 2026	EP	£0.00	Durham County Council	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	contract
280	28.08.2026	£35.09	Photocopier Usage 31/07/2026-30/08/2026	EP	£5.85	Totals Business Computers Ltd. (Total Business Group)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
287	01.09.2026	£27.32	iPhone 16e Mobile Phone Case and 10x Pack Subject Dividers	EP	£4.58	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
294	07.09.2026	£232.40	Mobile Phones 24/08/2026-23/09/2026	DD	£38.73	O2 - Telefónica UK Limited	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
297	03.09.2026	£175.00	7 Hrs Media Strategy, Activities for August 2026	EP	£0.00	Hawkey PR	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
301	04.09.2026	£56.65	Town Clerk, Travel Expenses 26/05/2026-05/08/2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
302	04.09.2026	£43.60	Deputy Town Clerk, Travel Expenses 01/04/2026-16/07/2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
303	04.09.2026	£18.52	Admin Officer, Travel Expenses 03/03/2026-24/08/2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid

Signed:

304	04.09.2026	£13.20	Allotment Officer, Travel Expenses 03/08/2026-31/08/2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
313	31.12.2026	£236.77	Samsung Galaxy Tab A11+, Grey, 128GB and SEYMAC Heavy Duty Case	EP	£39.46	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
316	30.09.2026	£858.00	SLCC National Conference 2026	EP	£143.00	Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
323	24.09.2026	£11,745.03	Staff Salaries - September 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	contract
324	21.09.2026	£5,123.34	HMRC, Tax & NI for Staff - September 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	contract
327	21.09.2026	£3,109.00	Staff Pensions - September 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of the council - Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	contract
332	30.09.2026	£624.00	Payroll Services, April-September 2026	EP	£104.00	Anderson & Co. Accountancy & Taxation	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
336	30.09.2026	£99.74	Maxtek Magnetic Whiteboard, 180cm x 100cm	EP	£16.62	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
ALLOTMENTS								
254	10.07.2026	£1.61	SumUp Card Transaction Fees - Allotment Rents 2025/26, 10/07/2026	DC - 9Edge (10/07/2026 SumUp)	£0.00	SumUp Payments Ltd.	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	paid
282	21.08.2026	£15.61	Broken Banks, Water 01/07/2026-31/07/2026	DD	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Broken Banks Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	paid
283	31.03.2027	£7.23	Edge Hill, Water 01/07/2026-31/07/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Edge Hill Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a
284	31.12.2026	£59.17	Pollards, Water 01/07/2026-31/07/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Pollards Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a
285	31.03.2027	£129.54	Tindale, Water 01/07/2026-31/07/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Tindale Crescent Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a
286	21.08.2026	£47.44	Woodhouse, Water 01/07/2026-31/07/2026	DD	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Woodhouse Close Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	contract
305	20.09.2026	£13.91	Broken Banks, Water 01/08/2026-31/08/2026	DD	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Broken Banks Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a
306	31.12.2026	£32.29	Edge Hill, Water 01/06/2026-30/06/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Edge Hill Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a
307	31.12.2026	£7.22	Edge Hill, Water 01/08/2026-31/08/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Edge Hill Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a

Signed:

308	31.12.2026	-£381.50	Pollards, Water 01/06/2026-30/06/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Pollards Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a
309	31.12.2026	£60.72	Pollards, Water 01/08/2026-31/08/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Pollards Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a
310	31.12.2026	-£157.02	Tindale, Water 01/06/2026-30/06/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Tindale Crescent Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	n/a
311	20.09.2026	£130.95	Tindale, Water 01/08/2026-31/08/2026	DD	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Tindale Crescent Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	contract
312	20.09.2026	£299.82	Woodhouse, Water 01/08/2026-31/08/2026	DD	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Woodhouse Close Allotment	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	contract
COMMUNITY								
234	31.07.2026	£233.00	Brick Fairytales, 14 Clue Cards, 50x Posters 300x Trail Cards and 80x FoT Order of Service Booklets	EP	£28.00	Lintons Printers Limited	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
278	22.07.2026	£303.06	Community Fund - Printing of Lealfets, Bookmarks and Materials for DAFT Museum/Shop Exhibition	EP	£0.00	Durham Amateur Football Trust (DAFT)	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
288	28.08.2026	£48.49	Enchanted Princess Singalong, Arts and Crafts Supplies for Sessions, 28th August 2026	DC	£0.00	Mega Discount Store	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
289	30.08.2026	£200.00	Brick Fairytales, £200 Gift Voucher for 1st Prize (1 of 2 - £250)	DC	£0.00	LEGO Company Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
290	30.08.2026	£50.00	Brick Fairytales, £50 Gift Voucher for 1st Prize (2 of 2 - £250)	DC	£0.00	LEGO Company Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
291	30.08.2026	£150.00	Brick Fairytales, £150 Gift Voucher for 2nd Prize	DC	£0.00	LEGO Company Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
292	30.08.2026	£100.00	Brick Fairytales, £100 Gift Voucher for 3rd Prize	DC	£0.00	LEGO Company Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
293	03.09.2026	£120.00	8x Tickets to Northumbria in Bloom Awards Presentation, 16th September 2026	EP	£0.00	Northumbria In Bloom	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid

Signed:

300	04.09.2026	£2,268.00	Watering of Summer Flower Tubs and Flower Beds throughout the Town	EP	£378.00	I C Liddle Services	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	contract
328	18.09.2026	£1,000.00	Community Fund - Bishop Auckland Choral Society Concert	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Choral Society	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
329	18.09.2026	£30.00	2x Tickets to Northumbria in Bloom 2026 at 'The Fed'	DC	£0.00	Northumbria In Bloom	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
338	30.09.2026	£50.00	10x Catering for Northumbria in Bloom Judging, 15th July 2026	EP	£8.33	Bishop Auckland College	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
EVENTS								
299	01.09.2026	£378.00	9x A1 Foamex Boards for Heritage Fayre 2026	EP	£63.00	PMI Creative Ltd	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
314	31.12.2026	£18.00	20x Heritage Fayre Poster	EP	£3.00	Lintons Printers Limited	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
315	11.09.2026	£360.00	Heritage Fayre, 3x Full Page Advert in Bishop Press, Shildon&District Town Crier and Spenymoor News	EP	£60.00	South West Durham News CIC	Newsletters - LGA 1972 s.142	paid
322	30.09.2026	£384.00	2x Event Feather Banners, Large Cross Base	EP	£64.00	PMI Creative Ltd	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
330	14.09.2026	£110.00	Heritage Fayre, 1x £50 and 3x £20 One4All Gift Vouchers	DC	£0.00	Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
331	19.09.2026	£15.80	Heritage Fayre, 4x Quality Streets Tubs, 550g	DC	£2.63	Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
333	30.09.2026	£51.60	Heritage Fayre 2026, 1x Banner 1.5m x cm and 6x A4 Foamex Boards	EP	£8.60	PMI Creative Ltd	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
337	30.09.2026	£97.73	MoverX Storage Trolley 200L, 1x Pack of Wooden Pegs, 1x Pack of Coloured Felt and 1x PVA Glue	EP	£16.29	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding
339	30.09.2026	£900.00	150x Catering for Youth Awards at Town Hall, 22nd June 2026	EP	£150.00	Bishop Auckland College	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding

Signed:

341	30.09.2026	£32.70	Hertitage Fayre, 200x Kraft Paper Coffee Cups, 100x Paper Plates 100x 2-Ply Napkins	EP	£5.45	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT No. 305 634 227)	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding
343	30.09.2026	£970.50	Town Hall Room Hire, Table/Chair Covers, Projector, Reception Drinks, Youth Awards, 22nd June 2026	EP	£161.75	Durham County Council	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding

Signed:

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

6th October 2026 at 16.30

Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

Cllr Present: Chair S Zair, Cllr M Harker, Cllr Wilson

Also, present: S Harris Town Clerk and V Booth Deputy Clerk

PRC022/26 Apologies for Absence – Cllr Gray & Cllr Wilkinson

Resolved: that members agreed and accepted the apologies

PRC023/26 Declaration of Interests

Resolved: that members noted that no declarations of interest were made.

PRC024/26 Matters Arising and Action Log from Previous Meeting – action log presented with an overview, that most outstanding items are on the agenda today and the updates were accepted.

Resolved: that the members noted the action log and members agreed that it was accurately updated.

PRC025/26 Finance

PRC025i/26 Account Balances

Lloyds Current Account - £7,879.20

Lloyds Deposit Account - £523,249.90

CCLA Account - £210,000.00

Hinkley & Rugby - £10,000.00

Unity Trust Account - £56,693.78

Resolved: that members noted the report and balances as they stand today.

PRC025ii/26 Q2 Report – the Clerk gave a summary of the Q2 report highlighting the key areas, what the approved budget of each spend it along with the forecast spends and the actual for Q1 & Q2. Along with the predicted total spend at the end of the financial year. Variances were discussed and explained.

Resolved: that members noted spreadsheet and welcome it being updated monthly to have a clear indication of the ongoing outturns.

PRC025iii/26 Forecasting

The Clerk presented the forecasting information on screen. A copy can be found in the file.

Resolved: that members noted the report and the detailed forecasting agreed to be used in the budget preparations for 2027/28 financial year.

PRC025iv/26 Budget Setting

The report (see file copy) was presented for information.

Resolved: that members noted the report and the detailed information to be used in the budget preparations for 2027/28 financial year. Committees are looking at their individual areas and will bring back to council on their comments.

PRC025v/26 Payments for Authorisation

The payment report was presented (see appendix 1) for approval.

Resolved: that members noted the report, accepted and approved the payments (see appendix 1). That members agreed the proposed quote for a new bespoke bin store to house the bins with a third compartment to house the can crushing facility so the recycling, environment awareness and support continues.

PRC026/26 Corporate

PRC026a/26 – IT – Broadband and VOIP

The Clerk gave a summary of the revised IT requirements which are more bespoke to the Councils needs in comparison to the first quotes brought to Council in June. Quotes A & B are the most suitable contract offerings. The meeting room screening with conferencing facilities.

Resolved: that the members noted the update and acknowledge the ongoing challenges, they considered the quotations and agreed for the contract to go with company A due to the support network. However members did advise that they would prefer a shorter contract if negotiable.

That members agreed that up to £3000 plus VAT can be used to secure an OWL meeting system. Members agreed for 2 screens to be purchased and wall mounted for safety reasons and not have a mobile screen as this could cause an accident when moving it around. Members agreed that a simple easy to use system is what is required.

PRC026b/26 – Admin and Asset Management

Kingsway Decorating – that the remaining of the building be decorated, following the decorating of the meeting room earlier in the year. The quote was presented.

Resolved: that members agreed for the contractor to be appointed.

Kingsway Pointing – that quotes were presented to members for consideration.

Resolved: that members agreed that a survey to be contracted to assess the building and review what other works are also required as there are some small signs of damp and possible subsidence.

Kingsway Notice Board – that members were presented with consideration for notice boards to be erected at the Town Council office also consideration for further notice boards around the town.

Resolved: that members advised for a notice board to be purchased for one in Kingsway however more boards around the town will be time consuming to get through planning permissions so recommended for further boards to be put on hold at present. That the board should have Perspex rather than glass. That members agreed on company B.

PRC026c/26 – Policy Review

- Co-option Policy – amended
- Equality and Diversity Policy including Dignity at Work Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Document Retention Policy

Resolved: that members considered the updated policies, they agreed to adopt the Co-option Policy and that more time is needed to read the others therefore they are to be brought back to the next meeting. s. That members agreed that future policy reviews to be sent out a month in advance of the meeting so that they have several weeks to read, absorb and comment on the draft revised policies.

PRC027/26 Consultations

The draft response to DCC's MTFP consultation was considered.

Resolved: that members requested the MTFP response to be delayed until nearer the closure date on the 15th November. That members support the ongoing consultation and engagement with residents, businesses and local councils throughout the budget-setting process and welcome continued dialogue regard any proposals that may affect Bishop Auckland and its residence. That the response also remind DCC that the Town Council has an Asset of Community Value on the property. That the paper be presented to full council. That consideration be made for a member from DCC to be invited to a meeting to discuss the future of Bishop Auckland and especially the town hall.

PRC028/26 Planning – that the Gleeson Homes application for Woodhouse was not missed that the application was submitted in 2024 and the recent comments are based on some small proposed changes but has not been put back out to planning.

Resolved: that the members noted there were no new planning applications to consider at this time.

PRC029/26 Strategy Consultation and Dashboard Development

Resolved: that members note the report has not yet been compiled and will be issued in good time for consideration prior to the meeting.

PRC030/26 Public Participation

Resolved: that no members of the public were present.

Appendix 1 – Payments authorised as per PRC025v/26

Events							
277	28.08.2026	£2,412.50	Freedom of the Town, Refreshments for 75x People and Out of Hour	EP	The Auckland Project	GPC Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	
373	06.10.2026	£10,000	2nd installment Christmas Town	EP	Baccanalia for Culture CIC	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	Paid
363	29.09.2026	£160.00	Heritage Fayre - Staffing	EP	M Webstell	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	Paid
364	30.09.2026	£97.20	9x A2 Posters, Hertiage Fayre	EP	Lintons Printers Limited	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	Paid
362	26.09.2026	£147.01	Heritage Fayre, 3x Sandwich 1x Sponge 1x Wrap Sharing Platters, Cri	DC	Morrisons (WM Morrison Supermarkets Ltd	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	Paid
353	28.09.2026	£200.00	Heritage - Donation to Northern Bygone Society	EP	Northern Bygones Society	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding
361	28.09.2026	£100.00	Heritage - Donation Event Coverage	EP	Bishop FM	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding
360	28.09.2026	£250.00	Heritage - Speakers Donation Req to local food bank	EP	Woodhouse Close Church Community Cent	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding
356	24.09.2026	£2.19	1x Cuticura Hand Sanitiser Gel, 250ml	DC	Savers Health and Beauty Limited	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.1	Paid
354	28.09.2026	£300.00	Heritage - Donation Ayclifee Bus Preservation Society	EP	Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Socie	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding
351	24.09.2026	£330.00	Hertitage - Room Hire for Guest Speakers at Spanish Gallery, 26th Se	EP	The Auckland Project	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	outstanding
Admin							
355	28.09.2026	£26.15	5x Yearly Wall Planners, 3x Nutradol Air Fresheners, 1x Pack of Spong	DC	Boyes	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.1	Paid
367	02.10.2026	£595.00	NALC National Conference 2026, Deputy Clerk	EP	Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	Paid
365	02.10.2026	£100.94	2x Koby A3 Photo Frames Wood/Gold (3 Pack), 1x Box A4 Paper, 1x P	EP	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	Paid
345	25.09.2026	£28.80	100x Business Cards, Community Support Officer	EP	Lintons Printers Limited	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	Paid
Kingsway							
346	08.10.2026	£232.40	Mobile Phones 24/09/2026-23/10/2026	DD	O2 - Telefónica UK Limited	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	Paid
349	15.09.2026	£89.93	Kingsway, Electricity 01/08/2026-31/08/2026	DD	EDF Energy (54 Kingsway)	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.1	contract
347	19.08.2026	£101.92	Kingsway, Electricity 01/07/2026-31/07/2026	DD	EDF Energy (54 Kingsway)	Provision of Parish and Community Buildings - L	contract
366	02.10.2026	£57.80	Photocopier Usage 30/08/2026-29/09/2026	EP	Totals Business Computers Ltd. (Total Busin	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
368	02.10.2026	£217.01	Telephone and Broadband - October 2026	DD	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.1	contract
Comm Supp							
344	01.09.2026	£120.00	8x Tickets to Northumbria in Bloom 2026 at 'The Fed'	DC	Northumbria In Bloom	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	Paid
348	03.09.2026	£56.56	Skatepark, Electricity 01/07/2026-31/07/2026	DD	EDF Energy (Skatepark)	Highways - Parish Councils Act 1957 s.3	Paid
370	06.10.2026	£2,916.00	Watering of Spring/Summer Flower Tubs and Flower Beds throughou	EP	I C Liddle Services	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	Paid
350	05.10.2026	£56.63	Skatepark, Electricity 01/08/2026-31/08/2026	DD	EDF Energy (Skatepark)	Highways - Parish Councils Act 1957 s.3	Paid
Allotments							
358	30.09.2026	£526.00	Repair to Concrete Post and Boundary Fence at Woodhouse Close Al	EP	S&P Landscapes/Groundworks & Fencing Co	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	Paid
371	06.10.2026	£143.15	Garden Maintenance and Equipment	EP	Boody Spelk (Owen Richardson)	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	outstanding
Mayoral							
342	25.09.2026	£120.00	2x Tickets, BAFC 140th Anniversary Dinner, 7th November 2026	EP	Bishop Auckland Football Club	GPC Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	Paid

Also the purchase of a new bin store for £595 from Cornerstone was agreed.

Signed:

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Minutes of the Community Committee

16th October 2026 at 18.00

Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

Cllr Present: Chair Cllr L Zair, Cllr Elliott, Cllr T Redmond,

Also, present: S Harris, V Booth, M Jordan and 2 members of the public.

CC022/26 - Apologies for Absence – Cllr Harker & Cllr Fox

Resolved: that Cllr Harker & Cllr Fox absence was approved.

CC023/26 - Declaration of Interests –

Resolved: that no declarations of interest were submitted

CC024/26 - Action Log from Previous Meeting – the Clerk gave an update on outstanding items.

Resolved: that the members noted the action log and members agreed that it was accurately updated. That members agreed for flowers to be purchased and delivered to B.Laurie following the Youth Awards held in June.

CC025/26 Community Fund Applications –

I. Bishop Auckland Rugby Club

Resolved: that members noted the request and approved the request to the value of £990 as per application.

II. Bishop Auckland Baptist Church

Resolved: that members noted the request and approved the request to the value of £499.95 as per application.

III. Bishop Auckland Community Partnership

Resolved: that members noted the request and approved the request to the value of £1000 as per application.

Signed:

CCO26/26– Events/Community Engagement

a. Word Fest feedback

Resolved: that members note the feedback presented by Alison Curry and that the event had been successful.

b. Flying Scotsman

Resolved: that members noted the report and the collaborative work with the Weardale Railway and look forward to the post event feedback.

CCO27/26– Community Support 2026-27 plus proposals for 2027-28 and events 2026-27 plus proposals for 2027-28

a. Community Fund (see report Item 6)

Resolved: that member made a commitment for the remainder of the budget allocation remaining is reviewed again in January 2027 to ensure that all funds are allocated fort his years budget by the end of the financial year.

b. Community Organisation Support (see report Item 6)

Resolved: that member noted the update and agreed for the remaining £4,000 of the budget is allocated by way of £1,000 to Bridge Creative CIC for their Friday Friends group and agreed that the community fund allocation can be transferred to the Friday friends group as well. That £3,000 to be allocated to the Community partnership to support their wide range of work and groups.

c. Organisation Support for 2027-28 (see report Item 6)

Resolved: that members considered and recommend to full council as part of the budget setting that the community organisation support funding allocation is a vital life line for community organisations and the people they support and the budget should be increased to £25,000 for the 2027-28 financial year.

d. School Holiday Support (see report Item 6)

Resolved: that members considered and recommend to full council as part of the budget setting that the school holiday support is merged with summer activities and allocated to the activities proposed in the report. That members may need to reconsider the amount for a summer professional trail should a partnership agreement not happen. That members were concerned regarding capacity and requested Council use professional event companies for the activities to support the Community Support Officer.

e. Live it Local Booklet (see report Item 6)

Resolved: that members will actively encourage Policy and Resources Committee to champion that this booklet is developed again in early 2027. For it to involve as many organisations and community groups as possible, to consider adding in a directional page for contacts for support organisations. That the booklet may be bigger than in 2026 and would want it to reach every household rather than the 6000 it did this year and that will need to be considered in the marketing budget. That members agreed this should not include advertising space and is entirely a directory for groups and organisations in the town.

Signed:

f. Christmas Town (see report Item 6)

Resolved: that member await the outcome of the 2026 event and agree the budget with full council a part of the budget setting.

g. Wider Christmas activities (see report Item 6)

Resolved: that member noted the report, and agreed that the applications would be agreed at the November meeting.

h. Events 2027-28 (see report Item 6)

Resolved: that member noted the report, welcomed the two blue theme and the suggested calendar proposals, as this gave a well rounded event programme for 2026-27. Members were happy to support the High Sheriff event to the sum of £1000, welcome the Town Quiz and recommended contracting in a curator for the International Women's Day. They agreed the overall budget request for 2027-28 for which they would be looking for council support.

CCO27/26 – Public Participation – A member of the public asked if Council were aware the donation to Wordfest had involved the commissioning of artists from the Artists Hub and that clarification was required regarding some of the funds being spent on arts in residence, when the Artist Hub was a partner in the event.

Resolved: that members advised they were aware that due to the short time frame Wordfest had to put the exhibition in place that local artists were commissioned. They used artists who were local, knew the organisations aims and objectives and could achieve the vision within the time scale given, however it had given the members food for thought as it wasn't quite what they had imagined.

Signed:

BATC Dashboard October 2026

Headlines:

- Held the Greener Together Awards
- Budget Planning underway
  - Committees considering their 2026-27 spending and forecasting
  - Planning for 2027-28 underway
- SLCC Conference Attended
- BATC Member now Co Durham NALC representative
- Allotment Tenancies Issued
  - Payments and paperwork are being received
  - Terminations and Notices to quit also being processed
- Range of engagement meetings including:
  - Completion of sale of Plots at Broken Banks
- Mayor and Clerk attended HE Graduation of BA College
  - Over 85 awards were given including first class honors degrees and Masters Certificates
- Multi-agency walk about undertaken in the town
  - Police and Wardens invited to the December meeting
- Issues raised with DCC regarding the state of the planting at the bus station – action taken and monitoring underway.
- 3 Community Fund Grants awarded
- Events and Activities in planning for q4
- Recruitment for Administrative Support Officer undertaken
- Autumn planting project underway for spring/ summer bulbs

Social Media & Press:

- 4351-followers
- 174K views
- 884 content interactions
- 1.5K visits

Stats are slightly lower as there has been no big public facing event this month.

- 4 x Press releases
  - Featured in Bishops Press, Durham Magazine
  - Planned articles for Local Council Clerks Direct and the Clerk industry magazines

Engagement and Community connections:

- Attended Move Together second event
- Facilitated partnership working with the Kings Trust and ISS at Bishop Auckland Hospital
- Attended Northern Futures Community Organisation Fair
- Re-established connections with Bishop Auckland Community Partnership
- Coordinated a visit to community forest for Greener Together

Coming up in November 2026:

- STB scheduled for November
- All committee meetings scheduled
- SLCC regional Finance Seminar
- Allotment enforcement action for not return of tenancies to be issued
- Brokerage of Sale of Land at Toronto
- Final review of of Strategy following consultation

Item 5

Bishop Auckland Town Council

27 October 2026

Matters Arising

Action logs for the committees are attached.

Town Council

Boundary Review still no update from DCC on timelines. The letter in appendix 1 was sent to the Leader of DCC and Helen Bradly on the 18th May 2026. It was copied to DCC Member Stephen Gray and CDALC

Recommended: that members note that no response, or acknowledgement has been received from DCC.

NHS Primary Care Services

The letter in appendix 2 was sent on the 29th June 2026 to the following persons.

Samantha Allen CEO NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Levi Buckley NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) North East

Mayor Kim McGuiness

The Rt Hon Sam Rushworth MP

The Hon Mary Foy MP

The Hon James Murray MP Secretary of State for Health

Sir James Mackey Interim CEO NHS England

Plus Michael Laing at DCC, and the DCC members for Bishop Auckland

Recommended: that members note that responses were only received from Mary Foy MP, Michael Laing, and acknowledgment from NHS

Community Committee

Events calendar

For information the proposed event Calendar which Community Committee would like to adopt for 2027-28 is in appendix a. The Calendar shows events which will take place in the remaining quarter of this financial year. Their proposal does add additional events to compliment the growing event, community support and engagement programme. Whilst budgets for the financial year 27-28 are still to be finalised. The calendar shows the events which are proposed for early 2027 and planning is underway.

Recommended: that members note the event calendar.

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Kingsway Court, 54 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland,
Co. Durham DL14 7JF

Tel: 01388 207110 **Email:** council@bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk
Web: www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk

Town Clerk: Sarah Harris

18th May 2026

Dear Helen Bradley and Cllr A Husband, Leader

Consideration of Community Governance Review (Boundary Review)

I am writing on behalf of Bishop Auckland Town Council to reiterate its request that Durham County Council consider undertaking a Community Governance Review (Boundary Review) for the Bishop Auckland Town Council area.

National government guidance recognises best practice as reviewing community governance and parish boundaries every 10–15 years. As Bishop Auckland Town Council approaches its 20th year of operation (established 2007) and has never been subject to a boundary review, the Council considers that a review is now overdue when measured against national guidance. A review would help ensure boundaries remain fit for purpose, reflective of community identity, and supportive of effective and convenient local democracy.

Since the Town Council's formation, there have been significant changes within the town, including:

- Changes to Durham County Council electoral divisions in 2025, which are now no longer coterminous with Town Council boundaries, leading to confusion for residents.
- Significant growth and regeneration, particularly in areas adjoining unparished land at the town boundary, meaning the town's natural footprint now extends beyond its current parish boundary.
- The continued maturity and development of the Town Council as an established and active tier of local government.
- The need to ensure that parish boundaries properly reflect the identity and sense of place of Bishop Auckland's communities, recognising how the town has evolved socially, economically, and geographically since 2007.

Initial discussions on this matter took place approximately three and a half years ago with the then Democratic Services Manager, Linda Spence. More recently, I have spoken with the current Head of Service, Michael Turnbull, to reiterate the Council's interest. From those discussions, the Town Council understands that Cabinet Member support is required to progress a review, and we are pleased to confirm that this support is in place from Councillor Stephen Gray, who is also a serving Member of Bishop Auckland Town Council.

We understand that a briefing note for Cabinet has been prepared and that senior leadership are due to consider the approach, priorities, and direction for Community Governance Reviews across County Durham. While we appreciate that Durham County Council is currently receiving a number of similar requests, Bishop Auckland Town Council would welcome the opportunity to act as a test area, supporting the development of a clear, consistent, and robust process for undertaking such reviews.

In addition, the Town Council would be grateful if Durham County Council could provide an indicative timeframe for when this request may be considered, and the anticipated process for progressing Community Governance Reviews. This would assist the Council in planning and communicating effectively with residents and stakeholders.

The Town Council is keen to work proactively and constructively with Durham County Council on this matter and would be grateful for your consideration of this request. We would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss how a Community Governance Review for Bishop Auckland could be taken forward.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Harris
Town Clerk

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Kingsway Court, 54 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham DL14 7JF

Tel: 01388 207110 **Email:** Council@bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk

Website: www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk **Town Clerk**: Sarah Harris

Samantha Allen CEO NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Levi Buckley NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)

North East Mayor Kim McGuiness

The Rt Hon Sam Rushworth MP

The Hon Mary Foy MP

The Hon James Murray MP Secretary of State for Health

Sir James Mackey Interim CEO NHS England

29 June 2026

Dear All

Re: Support for Primary Care Services in the Durham Dales and Bishop Auckland

Bishop Auckland Town Council wishes to place on record its serious concern regarding the ongoing and proposed cuts to Primary Care Services across the Durham Dales, and in particular the impact these cuts are having on residents of Bishop Auckland and the wider rural community.

We are aware that the Durham Dales Health Federation raised wrote to you back in October 2025 regarding the situation.

The Council understands that reductions of approximately 15% are being implemented across a range of frontline community and primary care services, including urgent care, frailty services, home visiting and extended GP access.

We are particularly alarmed by the emerging situation at Bishop Auckland Hospital's Urgent Care Centre, where residents are now facing the prospect of attending the extended GP services without the reassurance of a doctor being available on site, as the cuts mean that only Nurse Practitioners will be available.

The reassurance of a Doctor on site is something which was promised to residents when the hospitals A and E closed some time ago. For many residents, especially the elderly, vulnerable, disabled and those without access to transport, Bishop Auckland Hospital represents an essential and accessible local service. The reduction in clinical support risks undermining public confidence and increasing pressure on already overstretched emergency departments elsewhere.

The Council is deeply concerned that funding decisions are creating what can only be described as a postcode lottery in healthcare provision. Communities such as ours in the Durham Dales and South Durham should not be disadvantaged because local services have historically delivered effective community-based care and reduced pressure on secondary care services. As we understand it the communities in the North of the County are not facing the same challenges as their provision has always been funded differently.

Evidence provided by Durham Dales Health Federation clearly demonstrates the value of these local services, including:

- Over 11,000 Same Day Urgent Care contacts in 2024/25, with 88% of patients retained within Primary Care.
- Over 15,000 Extended GP Access contacts with 96% retained within Primary Care.
- Significant support for frail and elderly residents through wraparound and home visiting services, helping to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

The Council believes these services are preventative, cost-effective and vital to maintaining community wellbeing. Removing or reducing them risks increasing long-term costs to the NHS through avoidable hospital admissions, ambulance callouts and worsening health inequalities.

As a Town Council, we also recognise the wider social impacts these reductions will have on rural and semi-rural communities already facing challenges around deprivation, ageing populations and transport accessibility. Local people should not have to travel further or face reduced standards of care because of funding pressures elsewhere in the system.

Bishop Auckland Town Council therefore calls upon NHS England, the Integrated Care Board and the Government to:

- Urgently reconsider the proposed reductions to Primary Care and community health services in our area.
- Protect medical staffing and clinical provision at Bishop Auckland Hospital Urgent Care Centre.
- Ensure fair and equitable healthcare funding across all areas of the North East.
- Fully consult with local communities, healthcare professionals and elected representatives before implementing further changes.
- Recognise the proven value of preventative and locally delivered healthcare services.

The Council stands alongside local GPs, healthcare workers and residents in opposing cuts that will ultimately hinder patients and place additional pressure on the wider NHS system.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Harris
Town Clerk
Bishop Auckland Town Council

Sarah Harris

From: Department of Health and Social Care <DoNotReply@dhsc.gov.uk>
Sent: 10 August 2026 15:30
To: Sarah Harris
Subject: Your correspondence of 29 June

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Department of Health & Social Care

From the Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries Unit

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Our ref: DE-1715728

10 August 2026

Dear Ms Harris,

Thank you for your correspondence of 29 June on behalf of Bishop Aukland Town Council about primary care and urgent care services in Bishop Auckland. I have been asked to reply, and apologise for the delay in doing so.

I appreciate your concerns.

The Government's 10 Year Workforce Plan aims to ensure the NHS has the skilled workforce needed to deliver high-quality care for patients. The Plan will be published in due course.

The Government is investing £601million in general practice in 2026/27, bringing the total spend on the GP contract to £14 billion. This builds on last year's £1.1billion of investment.

The Department recognises that the way GP funding is allocated across England is considered outdated and it recognises the importance of ensuring funding for core services is distributed equitably between practices across the country. The Department is reviewing the

GP funding formula (Carr-Hill) to ensure that resources are targeted where they are most needed.

The initial phase of review concluded in May, and the recommendations are currently with the Department for consideration. Details of any new funding approach will be confirmed in due course, subject to ministerial agreement regarding the second phase of the review.

Decisions about the commissioning and configuration of local NHS services, including urgent treatment centres, extended access services and other community-based services, are the responsibility of local NHS organisations, namely integrated care boards (ICBs) and NHS providers. These organisations are best placed to determine how services should operate to meet the needs of their local population, taking account of local clinical advice, workforce availability, patient demand and service sustainability. I note from your correspondence that you have contacted NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB, and I hope you have received a reply in full, if you have not done so already.

More broadly, the Government is committed to improving urgent and emergency care services. Through the Urgent and Emergency Care Plan, investment is being made in same day and urgent care services to help patients access timely treatment and to reduce pressure on hospitals.

As the concerns raised relate to local service arrangements, NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board is best placed to provide detail on the current position in Bishop Auckland, including any proposed workforce or service changes and the engagement being undertaken with local communities. I would therefore encourage the ICB to consider the issues raised by the Council and respond directly on the local circumstances.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Correspondence Officer
Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries
Department of Health and Social Care

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Sarah Harris

From: FOY, Mary <mary.foy.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 14 August 2026 13:58
To: Sarah Harris
Subject: RE: Letter regarding NHS Primary Care Services at Bishop Auckland Hospital

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Dear Sarah,

I'm terribly sorry for the delay in personally responding to this. I'm going to reach out to Sam Rushworth MP to see what work he may me doing on this topic and how I can compliment it. I'm conscious the hospital sits primarily in his constituency, but I obviously have constituents who are patients there, too.

With very best wishes,

Mary

From: Sarah Harris <sarah.harris@bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk>
Sent: 29 June 2026 14:51
Subject: Letter regarding NHS Primary Care Services at Bishop Auckland Hospital

Please find attached letter from Bishop Auckland Town Council regarding Letter regarding NHS Primary Care Services at Bishop Auckland Hospital

Many thanks

Sarah

Sarah Harris
Town Clerk
Bishop Auckland Town Council

Tel: 01388 207110
Web: www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk

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Sarah Harris

From: Michael Laing <michael.laing@durham.gov.uk>
Sent: 06 July 2026 13:49
To: Sarah Harris
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL]:FW: Letter regarding NHS Primary Care Services at Bishop Auckland Hospital

Hello

Thanks Sarah. If you could share any replies that would be appreciated.

Regards

Michael

Michael Laing
Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services
Durham County Council
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UL
Telephone 03000267357
Mobile 07917513348



From: Sarah Harris <sarah.harris@bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk>
Sent: 30 June 2026 17:45
To: Michael Laing <michael.laing@durham.gov.uk>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]:FW: Letter regarding NHS Primary Care Services at Bishop Auckland Hospital

You don't often get email from sarah.harris@bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk. Learn why this is important

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Please find attached letter from Bishop Auckland Town Council regarding Letter regarding NHS Primary Care Services at Bishop Auckland Hospital

Many thanks

Sarah

Sarah Harris
Town Clerk
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Matters Arising -Appendix 3 – Events calendar October 2026 - March 2028

October 2026

- **Recognition awards for Allotments and Environment**
  Funded from 2026-27 recognition awards.

November 2026

- **Remembrance Parade** and service See Appendix 3
  Funded from Remembrance 2026-27

- ***new* Sponsorship of the High Sherrif's** – Carol Event at Auckland Palace
  Funded from underspend from 2026-27 National/ Regional Events. See appendix 6

- **Christmas Fair** with Wear Valley Community Action
  Funded from the Ward and In Year Events 2026-27

December 2026

- **Christmas Town** – Principal partner with Bridge Creative and Baccanalia CIC – this is tbc once the 2026 arrangements have been reviewed
  Funded from the Christmas Town 2026-27 budget allocation (£35,000)

- **Wider Christmas activities** with a range of partners
  Funded from the Wider Christmas 2026-27

- ***New* Town Quiz** – to take over the hosting of the annual town quiz from the Civic Society. This a strongly supported town event. It is used as a fundraising activity to support community organisation of choice. C
  Funded from the Underspend of National/ regional celebrations for 2026-27

- **Christmas School holiday** activities
  Funded from the School holiday 2027-28

January 2027

- Don't get the Winter Blues a series of free family friendly event with winter warmer soup, quiz etc at the likes of AYCC, Woodhouse Close Community Centre and the Four Clocks Centre.
  The provision of free family-focused events during the winter period supports the Council's objectives relating to community wellbeing, and social isolation. Such events provide accessible opportunities for residents to engage in community activities, help reduce seasonal isolation, create positive shared experiences for families and strengthen community connections across Bishop Auckland. Events like this have been trailed previously. Funding could be allocated to cover room hire/ refreshments and entertainment and any additional staffing.
  Funded from: ***Ward and In Year Event funding 2026-27 unallocated funds.***

- **Bringing Bishop Auckland Together**
  Networking event for organisations/ businesses/ CICs there is an opportunity for the council to facilitate some networking and sign posting activity to raise awareness of the great organisations within the town as well as facilitating some partnership Activity. This event will help to set the scene and build relationships for better communication. A business and engagement network will form from this and then will be the collection point for the data for the 2027 Live It Local guide to events and activities.
  Funded from: **Ward and In Year Event funding 2026-27 unallocated funds.**

February 2027

- **Half term school holidays** – '*can you beat the blues'* – game themed holiday activates
  Series of gamed themed activities, for families to access at a range of locations across the town.
  Funded from the School Holidays Support Budget 2026-27

- **Heritage on Tour** – see appendix 3
  Funded from the Heritage Festival underspend from 2026-27.

March 2027

- ***new* Bishop isn't just Blue- event 1 –** Linked to International Women's Day
  - *New* **The new shade of blue – is Pink**
    - To recognise the rise in importance of women – a campaign aimed at celebration and recognition.
      Inclusion of partnership working with the college and female sport with recognition of
      - Bishop Girls (known as the pinks)
      - Growing female rugby sides across ladies and Girls
      - Funded from the underspend of the Youth Awards 2026-27

- **Easter school Holidays** – free family activities at a range of venues, at to include additions of cookery workshop activities to link to the food festival.
  Funded from the School Holidays Support Budget 2026-27

- **Easter Fair** with Wear Valley Community Action
  Funded from the Ward and In Year Events 2027-28

- ***new* Annual Meeting of the parish**
  Wider annual meeting of the parish to encourage residents to participate and see the work of the council. A partnership event which will showcase the range of activities and organisations which the Council have supported for 2026-27 and opportunity for the council to launch the work they are doing moving forward into 2027-28
  Spend will be minimal with room hire and refreshments.
  Funded from underspend of National and Regional Events 2026-27

April 2027

- ***new* Bishop Bites/ Edible Auckland** - food trail – engagement with the businesses of the town to have a special themed Bishop item on their menu – launched for the food festival. Would predominantly be a media focused campaign with participating businesses, having a window sticker and a themed item on their menu with a themed icon.

  The development of a Bishop Auckland-themed food trail would support the Council's objectives relating to town centre vitality, tourism, community engagement and economic development. By encouraging residents and visitors to discover and support local food businesses, the initiative has the potential to increase footfall, promote civic pride and contribute to the wider regeneration and promotion of Bishop Auckland as a destination.

  Funded from underspend from budgets from 2026-27 as it will need to be planned and costed before the end of March for delivery in April.

May 2027

- ***new*celebrating all of the 'Blues'** – opportunity for the Council to look to Sponsor the teams start/ end of season celebrations and to have a sponsor board at the grounds.
  - End of the football season
  - Rugby end of Season
  - Start of the Cricket season

Supporting local sporting awards evenings aligns with the Council's objectives of promoting community cohesion, health and wellbeing, and civic pride. Sponsorship enables the Council to champion the volunteers and grassroots organisations that make a significant contribution to the social fabric of Bishop Auckland and the development of young people.

Funded from Community Organisation Support 2027-28 (this will need increased budget allocation).

June 2027

- **Town Youth Awards** – see Appendix 1 – funded by 2027-28 Recognition awards
- **Bishop Auckland In 'Blu-om'**
    - Celebration of the work of Greener Together and Bishop in Bloom which are theming the town planning for summer of Two Blues
    - Ties to Volunteers week which is the 1-7th

  Funded from Recognition Awards 2027-28

- ***new* Bishop isn't just Blue- event 2**
    - Support of **Bishop Auckland Pride** Event
      Funded from Ward and In year events 2027-28
- ***new* Armed Forces Day – at BA College**
    - Support the college event through sponsorship from Ward and In Year Events 2027-28

July 2027

- ***new*Bishop Brass**
    - Funded event in partnership with Durham Brass
      Approx Cost £8,000 - Funded from Ward and In year events 2027-28

- ***New* BATC 'Blues' Cup**
    - Celebratory sports events linked to school sports days where teams compete for the Bishops Blues cup. Decisions to be made about if it is a secondary or primary initiative.
    - Largely a campaign, cost of cup to be bought
      Approx Cost £1000 - Funded from underspend of Heritage festival 2026-27 to purchase the cups, on going future costs would be the cost so engraving.

August 2027

- Summer **Time Activities and school holiday** activities
    - Summer trail - School Holiday support 2027-28
    - Family Festival – Supported though Ward and In year events funding 2027-28
    - Other free family activities supported through School Holiday support 2027-28

- **Connecting Communities event** with Wear Valley Community Action
  Funded from the Ward and In Year Events 2027-28

September 2027

- Bishop Auckland **Heritage Festival** (see Appendix 2)
  Funded by the Heritage Festival Funding 2027-28

October 2027

- **Halloween event** with Wear Valley Community Action

Funded from the Ward and In Year Events 2027-28

November 2027

- **Bishop Auckland Remembers**
  Wider remembrance events as shown in appendix 3.
  Funded from the Remembrance Budget 2027-28.

- **Christmas Event** with Wear Valley Community Action
  Funded from the Ward and In Year Events 2027-28

December 2028

- **Christmas Town** – Principal partner with Bridge Creative and Baccanalia CIC – this is tbc once the 2026 arrangements have been reviewed
  Funded from the Christmas Town 2027-28 (£TBC)

- **Wider Christmas activities** with a range of partners
  Funded from the Wider Christmas 2027-28

- ***New* -Wishing tree** – where members of the public can add a blue ribbon to remember a loved one – look to do in partnership with Newgate Centre or St Annes Church or a range of Venues
  Funded From Wider Christmas Activity 2027-28.

January 2028

- Don't get the Winter Blues – see January 2027.
  Funded from: ***Ward and In Year Event funding 2027-28 unallocated funds.***

- **Bringing Bishop Auckland Together**
  See January 2027
  Funded from: **Ward and In Year Event funding 2027-28**

February 2028

- **Half term school holiday** activates
  Funded from the School Holidays Support Budget 2027-28

- **Heritage on Tour** – see appendix 3
  Funded from the Heritage Festival 2027-28.

- ***New* Wider Town Awards** – see appendix 4.
  Funded from Town Awards 2027-28

March 2028

- **Bishop isn't just Blue- event 1 –** Linked to International Women's Day
  - See March 2027 for information

- **Easter School Holidays** – see March 2027
  Funded from the School Holidays Support Budget 2027-28

- **Easter Fair** with Wear Valley Community Action
  Funded from the Ward and In Year Events 2027-28

- **Annual Meeting of the parish -** See march 2027 - Funded from ward and in year events 2027-28

2026-2027 Bishop Auckland Town Council Community Committee Action Log Outstanding Items and Last meeting actions

Min Ref	Item	Action	Status
Community Committee 3rd June 2025			
CC004/25	That members requested clarification on what 106 monies can be used for so then council can consider ideas, to feed into the process to address needs of the area. A report to a future meeting was requested	Report to be drafted for 8th July Meeting	Further update requested and will be at July 2026
CC007a/26	Youth Award 2026 Update given on Youth Awards, special Barbara Laurie award was discussed for special achievements. It was agreed to recognise the two young members of BARUFC who had been selected for England north. As Barabara Laurie it was suggested that the Council buy some flowers as she is unwell.	**Resolved**: that members noted the update, and agreed that their be a Barbara Laurie Award and agreed to send Barbara Laurie some flowers and Cllr Zair to present the award in Barbaras name.	Award given Cllr L Zair to arrange to take some flowers to B Laurie
CC013a/26	Strategy Update	**Resolved:** members agreed to promote the Strategy at all events and will commit to supporting activity. It was agreed by members that shorter information sheets, and surveys into shops and cafes would be useful, and the clerk was tasked with enabling this.	In progress
CC024/26	action log	Agreed that due to illness that flowers are to be sent to B Laurie	In progress
CC025/26	Community Fund Applications	Agreed that Rugby Club be awarded 990, BA Baptist Church be awarded 499.95 and Four Clocks Community Parntership be awarded up to £1000 for a laptop	In progress
CC026/26	EVENTS COMMUNITY ENAGEMENT	Word fest noted, and Flying Scotsman feedback to be given to next meeting	In progress
CC027/26	**Community Support 2026-27 plus proposals for 2027-28 and events 2026-27 plus proposals for 2027-28**	Community Fund that member made a commitment for the remainder of the budget allocation remaining is reviewed again in January 2027 to ensure that all funds are allocated fort his years budget by the end of the financial year.	In progress
		Communiy org support agreed to give Bridge creative 1000 plus transfer their 1000 from Community Fund. Award 3000 to Four Clocks community Partnership	In progress
		that members considered and recommend to full council as part of the budget setting that the community organisation support funding allocation is a vital life line for community organisations and the people they support and the budget should be increased to £25,000 for the 2027-28 financial year.	In progress
		that members will actively encourage Policy and Resources Committee to champion that this booklet is developed again in early 2027. For it to involve as many organisations and community groups as possible, to consider adding in a directional page for contacts for support organisations. That the booklet may be bigger than in 2026 and would want it to reach every household rather than the 6000 it did this year and that will need to be considered in the marketing budget. That members agreed this should not include advertising space and is entirely a directory for groups and organisations in the town.	In progress
		Christmas Town - that member await the outcome of the 2026 event and agree the budget with full council a part of the budget setting.	In progress
		wider christmas Events - that applications be considered at the next meeting	In progress

2026-2027 Bishop Auckland Town Council Policy and Resources Action Log

Minute ref	Item	Action / resolved	Status
06-Jan-26			
	Clerk escalate the boundary review enquiry in writing from electoral services since initial there hasn't been a response since the original enquiry in Oct 2025	**email sent 30.01.2025**	
	For the Clerk to look at what are the community assets within the boundaries are if it is worth exploring further	**ongoing**	
PRC061/25	IA - That staff development is approved and encouraged.	training to be added to PDR and Appraisals	
	Resolved: that members agreed for this to replace the existing policy. That members/staff should have cyber essential qualifications and for this to be explored in further detail, but agreed that if it is less than	**qualification being looked at**	
7th April 2026			
PRC093/25	**– IT Equipment –** the Clerk advised the Ipads requested for members has been purchased, that sourcing of a larger monitor is still ongoing.	**Resolved:** that members noted the update, and welcomed the revised quote for the screen.	**screen still being quoted**
Jun-26			
PRC006/26 –	IT Equipment – the costs for an appropriate screen are still to be further addressed.	**Resolved**: that members agreed that the Clerk to look at cost of projector, tv/Bluetooth also to quote to see if wall can be removed with partition to make more useable space	ongoing
Septmeber 2026			
PRC014b/26	finance - Q1 report	**the** Q2 the forecasting report will be available to bring to October's meeting	complete
PRC014c/26	finance - payments	**payment was** authorised and the paymentsbe made	complete
PRC014d/26	fiannce - pay awards	**pay award noted and** the Clerk is to instruct the payroll provider to backdate the increase from 1st April on the next payroll (September).	complete
PRC014e/26	fiannce - Milage Rates	adopt the newly increased national rate in line with employee terms and conditions and that the mileage allowance rate for employees and members from 1st April 2026 of 55p per mile, and agree to backdate claims made from 1st April 2026, and that necessary budget adjustments being made when planning for 2027-28.	complete
PRC015/26	Insurance	agreed the insurance agree the renewal; and agree that the Clerk is to undertake request a desk top valuation using the Insurance companies recommended agent beofre the 2027 renewal	in progress
PRC016/26	IT Broadband	**A**gree for an alternative contractor to be contacted. That consideration be given to getting fibre installed and have a separate contract for the telephone contract. To also consider looking at other local providers to provide quotations once a specification developed.	in progress
PRC018/26	Policy review	: that the members noted the report and agreed to threview schedule That members agreed that the policy attached in appendix 3 - Comments, Compliments and Complaints be readopted, and that they agreed that appendix 2 – Co-option policy be re-adopted provided that the person specification be more inclusive and reads that all persons who fit the eligibility cireteria	in progress
PRC019/26	Council strategy	**Resolved:** that members note the strategy update and look forward to receiving the analysis at the next brought to the next committee. That members discussed the data and noted the report.	complete
PRC021/26	HR - Vancancy	That Members note the resignation of the Governance Support Officer, Members considered the possibility of replacing the role with administration apprentice however they agreed that this would be something that they would consider in the future to go along side future town council strategy and delivery plans. They felt that it was more important to get some administration support in place to replace the Governance Support Officer.	complete
		Members considered the replacement and agreed that the role title should be changed to Admin Support Officer withs some small changes to the job description and person specification, as they wished to recruit an experienced administrator. Members agreed that they wished desirable of level 2 or 3 in business admin on the specification. Interview process to be brought to the next full council for consideration.	complete

		HR - National Conference	That members permit the Clerk to attend the conference as it will be beneficial to the business, and to book train and accommodation.	complete
Oct-26				
PRC025ii/26	**Q2 Report**	the Clerk gave a summary of the Q2 report highlighting the key areas, what the approved budget of each spend it along with the forecast spends and the actual for Q1 & Q2. Along with the predicted total spend at the end of the financial year. Variances were discussed and explained.	that members noted spreadsheet and welcome it being updated monthly to have a clear indication of the ongoing outturns.	complete
PRC025iii	**Forecasting**	The Clerk presented the forecasting information on screen. A copy can be found in the file. that members noted the report and the detailed forecasting agreed to be used in the budget preparations for 2027/28 financial year.		complete
PRC025iv/26	**Budget Setting**	The report (see file copy) was presented for information.	that members noted the report and the detailed information to be used in the budget preparations for 2027/28 financial year. Committees are looking at their individual areas and will bring back to council on their comments.	complete
PRC025v/26	**Payments for Authorisation**	The payment report was presented (see appendix 1) for approval.	that members noted the report, accepted and approved the payments (see appendix 1). That members agreed the proposed quote for a new bespoke bin store to house the bins with a third compartment to house the can crushing facility so the recycling, environment awareness and support continues.	complete
PRC026a/26	**IT – Broadband and VOIP**	The Clerk gave a summary of the revised IT requirements which are more bespoke to the Councils needs in comparison to the first quotes brought to Council in June. Quotes A & B are the most suitable contract offerings. The meeting room screening with conferencing facilities.	that the members noted the update and acknowledge the ongoing challenges, they considered the quotations and agreed for the contract to go with company A due to the support network. However members did advise that they would prefer a shorter contract if negotiable.	appointed date for completion TBC
			That members agreed that up to £3000 plus VAT can be used to secure an OWL meeting system. Members agreed for 2 screens to be purchased and wall mounted for safety reasons and not have a mobile screen as this could cause an accident when moving it around. Members agreed that a simple easy to use system is what is required.	appointed date for completion TBC
PRC026b/26	**Admin and Asset Management**	Kingsway Decorating – that the remaining of the building be decorated, following the decorating of the meeting room earlier in the year. The quote was presented.	that members agreed for the contractor to be appointed.	appointed date for completion TBC
		Kingsway Pointing – that quotes were presented to members for consideration.	that members agreed that a survey to be contracted to assess the building and review what other works are also required as there are some small signs of damp and possible subsidence.	in progress
		Kingsway Notice Board – that members were presented with consideration for notice boards to be erected at the Town Council office also consideration for further notice boards around the town.	that members advised for a notice board to be purchased for one in Kingsway however more boards around the town will be time consuming to get through planning permissions so recommended for further boards to be put on hold at present. That the board should have Perspex rather than glass. That members agreed on company B.	in progress
PRC026c/26	**Policy Review**	Coption, E&D, Digntiy at Work and Data Protection Policies and Document Retention Policy	that members considered the updated policies, they agreed to adopt the Co-option Policy and that more time is needed to read the others therefore they are to be brought back to the next meeting. s. That members agreed that future policy reviews to be sent out a month in advance of the meeting so that they have several weeks to read, absorb and comment on the draft revised policies.	Co-option adopted others to come back in November
PRC027/26	**ConsultationsThe draft response to DCC's MTFP consultation was considered.**		that members requested the MTFP response to be delayed until nearer the closure date on the 15th November. That members support the ongoing consultation and engagement with residents, businesses and local councils throughout the budget-setting process and welcome continued dialogue regard any proposals that may affect Bishop Auckland and its residence. That the response also remind DCC that the Town Council has an Asset of Community Value on the property. That the paper be presented to full council. That consideration be made for a member from DCC to be invited to a meeting to discuss the future of Bishop Auckland and especially the town hall.	on Town Council for october

PRC028/26	Planning	that the Gleeson Homes application for Woodhouse was not missed that the application was submitted in 2024 and the recent comments are based on some small proposed changes but has not been put back out to planning.	that the members noted there were no new planning applications to consider at this time.	complete
PRC029/26	**Strategy Consultation and Dashboard Development**		that members note the report has not yet been compiled and will be issued in good time for consideration prior to the meeting.	to be brought to next meeting

2026-2027 Bishop Auckland Town Council - Full Council Action log

Min Ref	Item	Action	Status
TC130/25 Reports	Cllr Gray provided a DCC update which covered: That DCC continue with the local plan consisting of a number of consultations with a new plan to be set by 2029. That the bus station has a target opening date of in early May however haven't promoted this date in case of any slippage.	**Resolved:** that Members noted the update and requested the council write to DCC to establish if security will be in place and if the facilities will be open 24 hours per day	Confirmation of times have been requested
TC132/25	TC132a/25 Sponsorship Opportunity to Support Catering Academy Members considered the opportunity set out in the paper (see file copy)	**Resolved**: Members noted the report and agreed that sponsoring the catering academy for the next 3 years at £1000 per year from the community grant support to show our commitment to the project and the future of the young people of Bishop Auckland.	agreement communicated with TAP - funding not yet paid over.
TC013/26	Finance	**Resolved:** that the Members nominated and agreed that Cllr Harker, Cllr Siddle, Cllr Wilson and Cllr S Zair be the Council Bank Signatories, along with the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk for the Current and Deposit accounts for Lloyds.	in process
TC013a/26	Appointment of Bank Signatories		
TC021/26	Matters arising and Action Log - boundary review	**Resolved:** that the members noted the update. Members requested the Clerk contact NALC and the local MP on the matter.	in progress
TC041/26	NHS Correspondence	For the non responders to be contacted for a response	Clerk to Chase
Sep-26			
TC051/26	**Monthly Dashboard**	that members noted the update, requested the town's police inspector to attend a future meeting and an invite be extended to the Police and Crime Commissioner.	Acting Sgnt James Sewell to attend in December full council. Inviation sent to the PCC.
TC053/26	Matters arising		
	Insurance	that members noted the update and aware a desk top valuation needs to be sourced before next years insurance is due.	insurance in place - in hand for the desk top valuation
	IT – Internet Connectivity	that members noted the updated and acknowledged the ongoing challenges and the quotes are to be agreed by Policy and Resources Committee next week and actioned for installation immediately to fix the issue	notice to be served and new contract entereed into
	Bishop Auckland's Christmas Town 2026	that members noted the update and the reduced price making the event more affordable. Members commented that they were not in agreement with the marketing strategy taken and were concerned over reputational damage to the council as the principle partner.	noted
	floral planting	that members were assured that the necessary preparations are taking place for the project management of the bulb planting, and were happy for staff to prioritise this and agreed on the themed planting for 2027.	noted
	Bishops Museum	that the Clerk contacted DCC economic regeneration but no funds are currently available. That there is limited capacity for the Town Council to support the Bishops Museum. That the museum needs to be sustainable and need to establish their long term plan. That a paper be presented at the next Policy and Resources Committee regarding arrears and how the Town Council can help in the short term.	PRC considered.
	other matters arising	Cllr Harker advised members to give consideration to the Deputy Clerk attending the upcoming SLCC conference in order for all sessions available are covered s some are scheduled at the same time and the Clerk cannot attend them all.	Deputy Clerk attended the confrence
	reports		

	DCC report	Cllr Redmond gave an update regarding the bus shelters been cleaned. That 2 additional CCTV camera are required but is having problems getting a dept at DCC to take ownership for the process to move forward. That a proposal is that section 106 money be used for a fence between the station rec and the private allotments. He agreed to look at getting a road sign fixed which was brought to his attention by Cllr S Zair.	in progress
TC054/26	Outside Bodies feedback	Stronger Towns Board – the Mayor expressed his frustrations at the last meeting which was on 24th September. The attendance from DCC was disappointing along with the papers, that the Chair was extremely frustrated about the process. That the Durham Gateway planning permission has been submitted and is out for consultation with the statutory consultees. Highways have asked for further information, flood plain approval, timelines are going to end up rushed, as all Stronger Towns funding has to be spent by March 2028. Discussion took place re the £1.7m which had been allocated for industrial units at South Church, and as that project is not going ahead, as DCC have pulled their support funding. No decision has been made on how to re-allocated yet. Meetings are being brought forward to every 6-8 weeks rather than quarterly. The Mayor has raised questions were raised about the Artist Hub and the quick wins that were proposed back at the start of the funding but answers still haven't been received. The master plan for Bishop Auckland (Strategic Place Plan) was raised and DCC have promised to bring it to the next meeting and to the Town Council. Stack are still in conversation with the adjoining building. The Cit has been highlighted via the Multiagency walk about that persons are accessing the Stack Site as it was not secure. The Coms update advised that banners on columns, are being installed and that they have paid for the stress testing. It was highlighted that paying for this shouldn't have had to come from the Board as it is a DCC core responsibility and that the timing of the banners is poor as they will have to be taken down by 8th Nov for the Christmas Lights to be installed.	in progress
		Cllr Harker attended the Northern Regional NALC meeting. That the infrastructure of councils are fractured and disjointed and is being addressed through Project Keystone. That he also attended a national NALC today online and it covered the 21st Century of Town and Parish Councils and Clerks and the information from that will be shared to members.	noted
		the Clerk gave a summary of the NALC conference attended in June, Members noted this update.	noted
TC055/26	Report of the Mayor	That he attended the Family Festival and the attendance was very well attended and the activities were good. Attended the SSAFA annual luncheon with the Deputy Mayor. He also attended WordFest, PACT meeting and Heritage Fayre as both Mayor and exhibitor.	noted
	Finance and Audit		
TC056/26	AGAR	that members received and noted the completed Annual Governance Return (AGAR) for the financial year ending 31 March 2026, together with the External Auditors report and certificate an confirms that the required publication requirements have been met. Members also agreed that Mitchel and Grieveson be appointed as internal auditor for 2027. Payments for Authorisation	noted and documents published
	Budget and precept	Budget and precept setting process and timeline – the Clerk gave an overview of the plan going forward. That each committee review their budget areas and what is required for the remaining year. In October the first round of what each committee require in the financial year 2027/28 in order for the precept to be submitted to DCC in the first week of January 2027.	that members agreed the budget setting timeline proposed, agreed to look at the budget requirements within committees and that the Town Council meeting for November to be a one item meeting to focus Soley on the precept and budget for 2027-28.

	payments	a) Payments for Authorisation – that the report was presented.	and made
TC057/26	Correspondence	that members noted the letter from Dame Snowdon.	noted
		That members noted the letter from RTM Company Limited as included in the meeting papers. raised and that they felt the response from Baccanalia CIC responded to the concerns raised but a follow up letter from the Town Council is to be send to state this. That members agreed it would be better to have continued communication with residents in the Market Place when a large event takes place. That a request is to be submitted to the Safety Advisory Group and to Corporate Land and Property at DCC to request that the Town Council become a statutory consultee so Council are aware and considered for upcoming events in the town.	that members agreed the Clerk is to write a letter back to the 1873 RTM o expressing that their concerns have been considered, and that the response from Baccanalia CIC acknowledges them, as well as providing information for future consultation That that the council is in agreement that it would be beneficial for organisations, partners and residents to have the opportunity to comment on the activities which take place in the Market Place, however at this time it is not within the gift of the Town Council to grant this. That Council has considered community priorities identified through resident engagement, councillor feedback, service usage data, correspondence received from residents, and previous consultations when preparing the budget and setting the precept. Town Council is elected to make decisions on behalf of its community. Councillors are accountable to residents through the democratic process and are responsible for setting the precept and determining how it is spent. Agree for the Clerk to write to Corporate Land and Property and the Safety Advisory Group at Durham County Council asking if they can become a formal/ statutory consultee for events and activities within Bishop Auckland, within public spaces managed by Durham County Council
TC058/26	Town Council Strategy Consultation Feedback	The Clerk gave an overview of the responses received and the consensus reached by the Towns residents. That the findings be taken back to each Committee and establish what can be honed in at each committee for the overall strategy.	noted
		That members gave consideration to the feedback and agreed that the strategy is on track overall however emphasised needs to be given to, the following:	noted
		Partnership working and holding other partners to account especially around the high street,	
		planning , enforcement, litter and cleanliness	
		Antisocial behaviour and community safety	
		Communication and engagement with the community	
		Reflection of how regeneration is perceived and actioned	
		Consideration of the historic and built environment and not just the natural environment.	
		The Clerk and Committee Chairs to work to include the feedback into the strategy, and at the next meeting of the council present the updated final strategy documents.	in progress
		The Clerk and Deputy were tasked to development of a media campaign similar to 'you said, we did' to highlight what is already happening and what is already available, to residents. Also highlight that their feedback is reflected in the strategy and how the strategy will be monitored and how the council will be accountable.	in progress
		This is to be presented at the next meeting of the council, and to include the launch of the strategy.	in progress
TC060/26	Consultation	North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Bus Franchising Consultation draft response	that members agree in principle to the proposed consultation and agreed on the response proposed be submitted to NEMSA with authority delegation given to the Clerk to make minor amendments prior to submission.
		Interim HMO Policy briefing notes	that members noted that DCC have adopted the policy and it applies to areas outside Durham city centre and is now operational.
		DCC Annual Budget (2027/28) and Medium term Financial Plan (2027/28-2028-31)	that members noted the Clerks overview, members were asked to consider the draft response which had been updated, and then at the October meeting to agreed the final response.

TC062/26	HR update	That the Clerk gave an update regarding the current vacancy. That over 48 applications have currently be received with another day for applications to be submitted. That the interview process will be the Mayor and the Chair of HR subcommittee as well as the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. That a small task regarding their attention to detail will be given at the interviews.	**Resolved:** that members noted the update and note the date for interviews will take place after a 2 day sift but will take place throughout October.

Kingsway								
416	31.10.2026	£480.00	24Hrs Social Media Services	EP	£0.00	Moore Growth Marketing	Local Government Act 1972, section 142	contract
414	16.10.2026	£108.96	Assortment of Winter Bulb, Community Planting throughout the T	EP	£0.00	The Pollards Allotment Associati	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	paid
413	16.10.2026	£59.00	Deputy Clerk Travel Expenses, SLCC Conference, 13th October 20	EP	£0.00	Vicki Booth	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
412	05.10.2026	£95.80	2x Train Tickets, SLCC Annual Conference, 14th October 2026	DC	£0.00	Trainline.com Limited	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
390	08.10.2026	£20.00	Kingsway, Window Cleaning, September 2026	EP	£0.00	AIWC Commercial and Business	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
317	11.09.2026	£82.80	Replacement of Damaged 1Gang, 2 Way Lightswitch, Stairs	EP	£13.80	R. Lightfoot Electrical & Alarm E	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	paid
377	15.10.2026	£99.83	Kingsway, Electricity 01/09/2026-30/09/2026	DD	£4.75	EDF Energy (54 Kingsway)	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
400	04.09.2026	£79.03	Kingsway Gas, 01/07/2026-01/08/2026	DD	£3.76	Corona Energy Retail 1 Limited	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
408	16.10.2026	£20.00	Kingsway, Window Cleaning, October 2026	EP	£0.00	AIWC Commercial and Business	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
368	06.10.2026	£180.84	Telephone and Broadband - October 2026	DD	£30.14	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
406	01.10.2026	£1,057.65	PWLB Interest and Principal Repayment	DD	£0.00	Public Works Loan Board	Borrowing money - LGA 2003 Schedule 1 para 2	paid
405	21.09.2026	£34.73	Kingsway, Water 01/08/2026-31/08/2026	DD	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Town Council Of	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
Allotments								
389	08.10.2026	£45.00	100x A5 Booklets, Allotment Rules and Regulations 2026	EP	£0.00	Lintons Printers Limited	Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908, s.23	paid
Events								
352	24.09.2026	£15.00	Heritage Fayre, Food Refreshments 1x Ham & Egg Pie and 1x Corr	DC	£0.00	Gregorys Bakers and Deli Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
399	12.08.2026	£9.00	Heritage Items from charity shop	DC	£0.00	The Butterfly Hospice		paid
403	26.09.2026	£14.00	Heritage Fayre	DC	£0.00	Gregorys Bakers and Deli Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
398	12.08.2026	£85.95	Kingsway Gas, 01/06/2026-01/07/2026	DD	£4.09	Corona Energy Retail 1 Limited	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
Community Suppport								
407	16.10.2026	£15.00	Floral Displays, 3x Evergreen Multi-Purpose Compost Bags, 60L	EP	£0.00	The Pollards Allotment Associati	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	paid
388	08.10.2026	£894.90	Wordfest - Sarah Genner, J Johnson & printed merch	BT	£0.00	Dispel Develop	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
387	08.10.2026	£300.00	Wordfest - Sip and Stories	BT	£0.00	Laura Roberts	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
378	03.11.2026	£55.76	Skatepark, Electricity 01/09/2026-30/09/2026	DD	£2.66	EDF Energy (Skatepark)	Highways - Parish Councils Act 1957 s.3	contract
392	08.10.2026	£500.00	Wordfest - Moving with the Times	BT	£0.00	Design By Kinship Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
386	08.10.2026	£125.00	Wordfest - Open Mic Set	BT	£0.00	Jane Crawford	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
391	08.10.2026	£500.00	Wordfest - Moving with the Times	BT	£0.00	Design By Kinship Ltd.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
385	08.10.2026	£1,000.00	Wordfest - The Longest Zine	BT	£0.00	Daisy Arts	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
384	08.10.2026	£1,000.00	Wordfest - One Word, Many Stories	BT	£0.00	Daisy Arts	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
383	08.10.2026	£500.00	Wordfest - Puppetry Word Machine	BT	£0.00	Daisy Arts	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
382	08.10.2026	£150.00	Wordfest - workshop and reading	BT	£0.00	Victoria Esther Downes	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
381	08.10.2026	£380.00	Wordfest - Portrait of Place	BT	£0.00	Lizzie Lovejoy Illustrations	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
380	08.10.2026	£400.00	Wordfest - Poetry Open Mic Night	BT	£0.00	Lizzie Lovejoy Illustrations	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
379	08.10.2026	£250.00	Wordfest - storybook, reading & creative activity	BT	£0.00	Flutter by Lorriane	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
Admin								
372	08.10.2026	£37.90	Allotment Officer, Travel Expenses 01/09/2026-29/09/2026	EP	£0.00	Boody Spelk (Owen Richardson)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
369	02.10.2026	£487.50	19.5 Hrs Media Strategy, Heritage Fayre, Northumbria in Bloom A	EP	£0.00	Hawkey PR	Local Government Act 1972, section 142	contract
359	02.10.2026	£626.48	Market Appraisal of Plots at Toronto Allotments	EP	£104.41	Vickers & Barrass	Land - LGA 1972, ss.124, 126 & 127	paid
357	02.10.2026	£610.00	30.5 Hours, Social Media Services	EP	£0.00	Moore Growth Marketing	Newsletters - LGA 1972 s.142	contract
316	11.09.2026	£808.00	SLCC National Conference 2026	EP	£93.00	Society of Local Council Clerks (S	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
404	06.10.2026	£18.29	Mailchimp Mailing List Standard Plan, October 2026	DC (Re	£3.05	Mailchimp - C/o The Rocket Scie	Newsletters - LGA 1972 s.142	contract
402	15.09.2026	£14.80	Lloyds Banking Fees	DD	£0.00	Lloyds Bank Plc.	Administration of the council - LGA 1972 s.112(2)	contract
410	05.10.2026	£80.34	2x Train Tickets, SLCC Annual Conference, 12th October 2026	EP	£0.00	Trainline.com Limited	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
409	05.10.2026	£122.15	Photocopier Lease 01/010/2026-31/12/2026	DD	£20.36	Grenke Leasing Ltd.	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
411	05.10.2026	£29.69	2x Train Tickets, SLCC Annual Conference, 13th October 2026	DC	£0.00	Trainline.com Limited	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
401	07.09.2026	£17.89	Mailchimp Mailing List Standard Plan, September 2026	DC (Re	£2.98	Mailchimp - C/o The Rocket Scie	Newsletters - LGA 1972 s.142	contract

Bishop Auckland Town Council

29 September 2026

Budget & Precept setting 2027-28 – progress update

Background

The Council is required to set a balanced budget and determine its precept requirement for the forthcoming financial year. A structured timetable ensures sufficient time for budget preparation, Member consideration, public transparency and compliance with statutory deadlines. At the Town Council Meeting in September the Council agreed the timeline as shown in appendix A.

During October as scheduled - The Policy and Resources Committee looked at forecasts for the current year spend, and for the next meeting they will be discussing their recommendations to council. The Community Committee have revied their 2026-27 budget allocations, and agreed community support and event spend into the new year with another in year review taking place in January. They have also considered their request to Council for their budget allocations for 2027-28. Allotment and Environment Committee did not meet due to ongoing council pressures, however work is underway for them to review the current spend and forecast as well as establish their recommended budgets for 2027-28 at their meeting in November.

Therefore, there has been some slippage with the timeline, this is also hampered as the Council have not yet received the indicative tax base from Durham County Council, this is usually received by late October early November. This is used to establish the baseline and the required precept for the next financial year. DCC have been asked to provide a timeline for the release of this information.

Recommendation

That Members note the update, and look forward to receiving the draft budget at the November 2026 meeting for early consideration.

Appendix A Budget Setting Timetable as agreed at September 2026 Town Council meeting

Date/Period	Activity
September 2026	Initial review of current year budget position and identification of budget pressures, savings and forecasting preparation for Committees.
October 2026	Committees consider service requirements, projects and budget bids for 2027/28. Some committees have already started to look at this. Detailed forecasting reports will be presented for each committees area. Indicative budgets and forecasts presented to Town Council
November 2026	24 November (Full Council Meeting) - Draft revenue and capital budgets considered by Town Council. Agreement of Budget made, and precept for 2027-28 considered and set provided that the indicative tax base models are received from DCC.
December 2026	15 December – Town Council meeting – if budget and precept not set as above at November meeting Budget and Precept Set.
January 2027	Within the first two weeks the precept demand submitted to Durham County Council by the required deadline.
February 2027	DCC sets their budget.
March 2027	Council Tax bills issued to Residents by DCC
April 2027	Commencement of the 2027/28 financial year. Precept received from DCC

Bishop Auckland Town Council

27 October 2026

Report to Council: Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) National Conference

To provide Members with a brief overview of attendance at the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) National Conference and the key learning points that may benefit Bishop Auckland Town Council.

The Town Clerk and Deputy attended the SLCC National Conference last week as part of continuing professional development. The conference brought together local council professionals from across the country and provided opportunities to hear from sector experts, share best practice, and consider emerging issues affecting local councils.

Key Themes and Learning

- **Governance and Good Practice** – Sessions reinforced the importance of strong governance arrangements, clear policies, effective risk management, and maintaining high standards of transparency and accountability.
- **Community Leadership** – There was significant focus on the growing role of local councils in supporting communities, delivering services, and responding to local needs through partnership working. Strong workshops were delivered on asset transfer and transformation, as well as community support.
- **Digital Transformation** – Councils were encouraged to continue modernising processes through greater use of digital systems to improve efficiency, accessibility, and resident engagement. There were informative sessions on the new digital AGAR process which has to be used for the 2026-27 accounts. System providers were in attendance and we had the opportunity to discuss improvements to the likes of the Finance and Allotment management packages.
- **Staff and Member Development** – Discussions highlighted the importance of investing in training and development to equip councils with the skills needed to meet future challenges.
- **Funding and Financial Pressures** – A number of sessions considered the financial challenges facing the sector and explored innovative approaches to funding, income generation, and service delivery.

Appendix 1 contains summaries of all of the sessions.

Benefits to Bishop Auckland Town Council

Attendance at the conference has provided valuable insight into current best practice within the local council sector and opportunities to review how the Council can continue to modernise its operations, strengthen governance arrangements, and enhance services for residents. It also provided an opportunity to network with fellow clerks and sector leaders, enabling the sharing of ideas and solutions to common challenges.

It was also beneficial for the Clerk who attended the AGM of the SLCC, as she has been appointed Vice Chair of the Durham Branch of the SLCC. The Conference gave great insight into

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report and the ongoing value of professional development and sector engagement in supporting the effective operation of the Council.

Appendix 1 – Summary of Sessions attended at SLCC Conference

Community Asset Transfer – Tom Sykes from Common Works

Used Stroud as an example – their local community hall was losing £350k per year and was put up for sale. A private investor was interested but the community protested and the TC ended up with the freehold on the property, they have trustees and the building was brought back to life. The TC became the faciliatory for the premises.

Phase 1 – Get a list of all assets in our area from DCC and map them o a scale of what we would have and not have.

Establish – Current maintenance costs

Who else has an interest in the asset

Develop a project brief by working with an architect (sketch the capacity, condition survey of the structure, planning review, change of use, visual image)

Phase 2 – Can you make it work have a

- Masterplan
- Feasibility study
- Bottom out as many risks as possible eg plumbing
- Initial schedule of works for cost analysis purposes
- Benchmarking
- Initial capital costs (use architect)
- Make data and costs easy to read

Business Plan –

  - Vision
  - Community needs
  - Building assessment
  - Financial overview
  - 5 year cash flow
  - Funding strategy for the 5 years

Governance – who will own and manage the asset

Who approves spends at each stage

Consultants and lawyers fees

Funding Thoughts – Demonstratable needs

Long term viable model for a) development funding

b) capital funding

40-60% comes from a single source and match funding

25-35% from a few large community scheme pots

Remainder from fundraising

Funders such as

- Architectural Heritage Funds
- Lottery Community Funds
- Local Charitable Trust
- PWLB
- Community shares is a consideration or visual donation e.g name on a wall or bench etc
- Gov has £65m to revamp buildings as part of the £210m high street strategy

Leasing Strategy –

- Old idea of leasing vale = £ sq ft x area
- New idea – repackage in what space is, who using it, for what activities?
- Look at a guaranteed base rent to cover rates etc and a top up rent as a percentage of their turnover if applicable. Start with short leases such as 12 months.

Design Strategies

- How to make the space a gift for the community
- Make the most of your money
- Focus on what matters and some areas might just have to be tidied up for a few years
- Save the character of the building – value based management or creative conservation
- Improve the fabric
- Flexibility of space
- Make the most of the opportunity
- Cost, time & quality triangle

Martyn's law – Laura Gibb from the SIA – (Security Industry Authority)

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025

Public premises are better prepared

- Standard Tier – Low cost/proportionate
- Enhanced tier – more than 800 in attendance (at any one time), is a qualifying event (chapter 6 & 7 of guidance).

Responsible person – can be an organisation or group such as the council. However if enhanced there will need to be a specific named person such as the Clerk. They are the point of contact and responsibility still lies with the organisation. They do not have to be present at the event.

Putting Public Protection Procedures in place (Chapter 27 of guidance).

- Evacuation
- Invacuation

Submitting an application to the SIQ – chapter 8 – a portal is still being built for applications to be submitted but they will look and feel like all the gov applications.

Organisations have a 3 month window from when they go live to notify the SIA via the portal. It is anticipated to go live in spring 2027

Enforcement powers –

- Compliance notice (gaps/risks)
- Restriction notice (e.g. change how the event takes place)
- Penalty notice

Sector specific guidance will not be produced as it is too bespoke and needs to be more generic as it is guidance. Guidance is available at Protect UK.

The Act does not require training for organisers.

There are 4 tests for qualifying events –

- No parameter and no access control not in scope of act
- Use guidance from Protect UK to enhance protection
- Hiring agreement needs to include SIA submission as well as the usual risk assessments etc for the responsibility to lie with the hirer.

Markets in Devolution – Chair of NABMA (National xx British Market Association)

A market is a place of social and economic activity. Its about place, service, legal rights, traditional, modern, physical, digital, food, events, activities etc and not just a traditional idea of what a market is.

What are we asking of the market and how are we supporting the community?

Legal context – Who holds the rights to the market – do you have a copy of the local charter? If there is one.

The council needs to understand who holds the market rights and its important it identify this prior to full devolution so boundaries and responsibilities can be clarified.

Local Quirks –

As the crow flies – is the distance a trader could reasonably travel on foot in one day in daylight hours – this equates to 6.66miles.

Establish –

- What rights do we hold
- What area do we cover
- What is the community value

NABMA represent 1150 markets of which 82% are operated by Town Councils

Research has shown that on market days footfall uplift is approx. 15-27%

No single model will work everywhere, peer learning is important.

How to create and Age-Friendly Town – Bianca Rossetti (centre for ageing better)

18% of people in England are aged 65+

23% are in areas covered by TC's.

We have a super ageing society.

Carsham TC is classed as the 20th best place to live. They hold community wellbeing groups twice a week. They hold older peoples discos and lots of activities and TC's need to think about how to help people be less isolated.

They joined the age friendly network in 2024. Each organisation has 5 years to get through the process and the 5 years are needed. In Carsham there are 14k people and 6k of them are aged 50+

What they have done so far –

Trialed a centre for ageing people (68% of respondents were female, 32% were aged 70-79)

They help address things that are of concern for an ageing population –

- Pavements
- Pharmacy closures
- Public toilets
- Access to shops
- Seating in town
- Banking hub

They rag rated an action plan to 8 domains, KPI's, set a timeline etc

People, place and prosperity in new strategic plan

They have set up a bus group – a *chatty bus* to help with social isolation

Coordinated partners in the town for *warm spaces*

Had sign language at the Remembrance Service

Age without limits day in Juen 27 - disco

Leading through change in turbulent times – Phil Olley

We are all comfortable with things being settled but very reluctant to embrace change. Usually change is one of 4 things

- Political
- Economic

- Sociological
- Technological

But over the last 4 years we have all the changes happen at the same time.

Change happens from the inside and needs to be reflective in the strategy and need to use this to ensure it is successful – use the MARS method

- Mindset
- Action
- Results
- Success

Michaelangelo – Our greatest danger is not that our aims too high and we miss it but that it is too low and we reach it.

There is a huge connection between our performance and our goals, it requires self-leadership and this starts from inside.

Why change still matters in a digital world – Joe Eyden – Blanchere Illuminations

Towns are trying to rebuild that community bond. In a digital world we feel more connected but with less face to face interaction it has some isolating consequences. We are developing a epidemic of loneliness across all generations.

28% of UK retail happens online.

Over 3.8m adults feel lonely which affects their mental health.

Town Councils are in a unique position to bring communities together through festivals, fayres, pride etc

Year round sustainable illuminations can be purchased, light trails, summer displays.

Installed the festive lights in Newcastle

Festoon lighting can be installed for all year round which is a readymade backdrop.

Challenge – think of what the council can do to make people feel proud of where they live.

Code of Conduct – Perry Holmes – Director of Governance and Legal for Wiltshire (Monitoring Officer)

Insightful workshop on compliance and the processes which are applied to code of conduct complaints. Often issues of wrong type are referred, employment issues need to be dealt within the parish council. Wilshire have a documented processes to be followed, which sets out clear parameters for TC/PC and for the Monitoring Officer. There are set timeframes for acknowledgement and for investigation, and for outcome communication.

The SLCC equivalent for Monitoring Officers acknowledges that there are issues within the sector, more complaints per quarter now than 6 years ago, however that doesn't necessarily show that

behaviour is worse now it is more likely that people are happier to complain about it and call it out. Their SLCC are lobbying the Government as are SLCC and NALC regarding sanctions, as sanctions which can be put in place are very low, they used to be higher which may also had a bearing on behaviours.

Clerk going to establish if Durham have a similar established protocol and process which can be shared with parishes.

Item 11a

Bishop Auckland Town Council

27 October 2026

Community Committee Membership

To inform Council of ongoing difficulties in achieving a quorate meeting of the Community Committee due to changes in Members' work and personal commitments, and to seek Council's consideration of appointing an additional or alternative Member to the Committee.

The Community Committee currently operates with five Members. In recent months, attendance has been affected by work commitments and other unavoidable absences, resulting in concerns regarding the Committee's ability to consistently achieve quorum and conduct its business effectively.

Regular difficulties in achieving a quorate meeting can lead to delays in decision-making, project development, event planning, and consideration of community initiatives, potentially impacting the delivery of the Committee's objectives. The last meeting was delayed start of 20 minutes due to the meeting not being quorate.

Recommendation

Council is requested to consider:

1. Appointing an additional Member to the Community Committee to strengthen resilience in attendance and reduce the risk of meetings being inquorate; or
2. Appointing an alternative Member to replace a current Committee Member who is experiencing ongoing difficulties attending meetings due to work commitments.

This would help ensure the Committee remains able to meet, conduct business efficiently, and continue supporting the Council's community activities and priorities.

Item 11b

Bishop Auckland Town Council

27 October 2026

Town and Parish Council representation on Durham County Council's (DCC) Local Networks (LN)

You'll be aware that there is progress with the establishment of the Local Networks (replacements of the Area Action Partnerships) which are DCC's formal community engagement structures. CDALC has agreed to deal with the appointment of Parish and Town Council representatives to the Local Stakeholder Panels which are the 'partner' layer in the LN structure.

This email includes information about the appointment of Parish and Town Council representatives, and we need your help to share the information with your councils and to provide nominations for the positions. Please read on.

- What are Stakeholder Panels and expectations of representatives
- Which councils are in each Local Network, and how representatives are allocated
- How do we nominate a councillor to be on our Local Network?
- Important information about nominations and positions

What are the Stakeholder Panels and expectations of representatives

These are part of the each Local Network's structure. From the bottom upwards they are made up of:

- a Local Network Forum;
- a Stakeholder Panel; and
- an Elected Member (from DCC) Board.

You can find more information at About Local Networks - Durham County Council.

Town and Parish Councils will be represented on the Stakeholder Panels, along with other partner organisations such as housing providers and representatives of health, police and fire. We have been

allocated one Parish Council and one Town Council seat in each Local Network with some adjustments including where there aren't any Town Councils (the Parish Councils can take that seat).

Stakeholder Panels will be an information sharing network which will give shape to and provide oversight of development of Local Network Action Plans. They will also function as an advisory panel to the Local Elected Member Board, making recommendations on priorities and funding proposals.

Expectations of representatives are:

- Attend up to 4 meetings per year.
- Contribute to the development and delivery of Local Networks Plans for the full LN area.
- Actively promote the work of the Local Network.
- Be committed to improving their local area
- Have knowledge of local community issues
- Be committed to the values of equality and diversity
- Be able to communicate effectively

Which councils are in each Local Network and how representatives are allocated

You can see the distribution of Parish and Town Councils across the LNs in this table illustrating which councils are in which LN and how the representation of one Parish Council and one Town Council pans out across the County. Do open this as it will help the rest of this email make more sense.

You can also see the The LNs shown on a map of the county but alas this doesn't show parish boundaries. But still useful.

There will be a total of 23 Parish and Town Council seats, with elections needed in most LNs which have more than one Parish or one Town Council. However, there are a minority of LNs with just one Parish or one Town Council, and these councils, 6 in total, can nominate their representative directly from their own council. They are:

Town Councils

- Barnard Castle TC
- Peterlee TC
- Seaham TC
- Stanley TC

Parish Councils

- Greencroft PC
- Healeyfield PC

Nominations from these councils can be provided directly to DCC via Peter.garrod@durham.gov.uk by the end of December 2026.

All other 98 councils wishing to nominate representatives must submit nominations which will then be put forward for an election which we at CDALC will co-ordinate. See How do we nominate a councillor to be on our Local Network.

This is a summary of how the 23 seats in the 12 LN areas will be decided on.

Town Councils (1 seat per LN)

Election Status	Local Network Area
TC to appoint directly	6 Easington, Seaham and surrounding area (Seaham TC) 7 Horden, Peterlee and surrounding area (Peterlee TC) 10 Stanley and surrounding area (Stanley TC) 11 Teesdale area (Barnard Castle TC)
Will need nominations/election	1 Newton Aycliffe and Sedgefield areas 2 Bishop Auckland and Shildon areas 9 Coxhoe, Ferryhill, Spennymoor areas 12 Weardale
Town council seat to be passed to parish councils for nominations/election as no Town Council in Local Network	3 CLS and surrounding areas 5 Durham City and surrounding areas 8 Mid-Durham and surrounding areas
No Town Council seat	4 Consett and surrounding areas (Healeyfield PC – only one parish/town council in LN area)

Parish Councils (1 seat per LN unless otherwise specified)

Election Status	Where
Will need nominations/election	1 Newton Aycliffe and Sedgefield areas 2 Bishop Auckland and Shildon areas

	3 CLS and surrounding areas (2 seats) 5 Durham City and surrounding areas (2 seats) 6 Easington, Seaham and surrounding area 7 Horden, Peterlee and surrounding area 8 Mid-Durham and surrounding areas (2 seats) 9 Coxhoe, Ferryhill, Spennymoor areas 11 Teesdale area 12 Weardale
PC to appoint directly	4 Consett and surrounding areas **(Healeyfield PC)** 10 Stanley and surrounding area **(Greencroft PC)**

However if we think it will be possible to work out a representative amongst yourselves we can confirm to CDALC, they are envisaging that where there is say, 2 town councils, or similar, you might be able to come to some sort of agreement without resorting to an election. The Clerk has contacted Shildon Town Council to see if they are nominating 1 or 2 representatives.

How do we nominate a councillor to be on our Local Network?

Apart from the 6 councils referred to above which can appoint from their own council, 17 of the 23 seats are open for nominations from all councils in each LN area and to be submitted to CDALC, with a closing date of Tues 17th Nov 2026 at 9am.

- The clerk should confirm the council's nomination Parish and Town Council nomination for DCC Local Networks - to be completed by the Clerk – Fill in form; and
- The nominee must provide a 200 word statement which will be used if an election is necessary. Nominee's Statement for Parish/Town Councillor position on DCC Local Networks – Fill in form

This is what will happen after Tues 17th Nov 2026:

Where only 1 candidate	The candidate will be put forward to DCC as the relevant town or parish council rep
Where >1 candidate	An election will take place. We at CDALC will set up electronic voting arrangements to send out w/b 23rd Nov 2026 with a closing date for councils of 31st Jan 2027. The candidate with the most votes wins. If there is a tie, it will be

	decided by lot and we will arrange for this to take place in person, at which the candidates can attend.
Where >1 candidate - All councils in each LN area will be eligible to one vote, for whichever elections ensue ie a parish council can vote for the town council reps, and vice versa.	

Important information about nominations

- Positions will be for 2 years and with the first tranche to start work early in 2027 and be in post till the May 2029 elections.
- Only one nomination permitted per council
- Town and Parish Councillors may only be on a Stakeholder Panel for one LN at any one time (this would be the scenario where a councillor sits on two councils in different LNs)
- Where a Town/Parish Council boundary straddles more than one LN boundary, the Town/Parish Council may have one councillor sitting on one LN Panel at any one time. This only applies to Etherley and Peterlee, with Peterlee already having the Town Council position on the Horden, Peterlee LN.
- Any Parish or Town Council member who is a County Councillor cannot stand for the Stakeholder Panel. They already have a seat on the Elected Member Panel.
- Town and Parish representatives are not permitted to send a substitute representative if they are unable to attend an LN meeting.

Recommendation: that the Council nominated a rep and a reserve rep to sit on the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Local Network.

Item: 12a

Bishop Auckland Town Council

27 October 2026

Approach to install a CCTV Camera Town Skate Park

Purpose

To consider the future ownership of Town Council lighting columns located within Durham County Council (DCC) owned land and to determine a response to a request from DCC regarding the installation of a CCTV camera on one of the columns. The columns are on our asset register, and the Town Council currently funds the electricity costs.

Background

The Town Council currently owns a four lighting columns, situated within the Town Recreation Ground, Skate Park which is owned and maintained by DCC. County Councillor Tom Redmond is in the process of seeking funding and approval for two new CCTV Cameras for the town. One is to be located in the Town Rec. following this DCC has approached the Town Council seeking permission to install a CCTV camera on one of these columns to support the monitoring and management of the park. DCC would also need to use the Town Council electricity supply. These columns have been in place since December 2016.

While the Town Council can grant permission for this use as the current owner of the column, the request has highlighted the wider issue of ownership and responsibility for infrastructure located on land that is neither owned nor maintained by the Town Council.

The lighting columns are physically located within DCC-owned land and primarily serve facilities and amenities for which DCC is responsible. The Town Council has a licence with DCC for having the columns on the DCC land.

Retaining ownership of assets located on third-party land can create ongoing complexities regarding:

- Maintenance responsibilities – there was agreement that DCC would do visual checks of the columns as part of their play area inspections. We had them inspected in the 23-24 financial year. (best practice is every 3-6 years)
- Insurance and liability.
- Future upgrades and replacement costs – the columns are 10 years Old.
- Permissions required for additional equipment or infrastructure – permissions remain with DCC as the Land owner.

- Asset management and ownership records – currently rest with Town Council.

Transferring ownership of the columns to DCC would align asset ownership with land ownership and operational responsibility, providing greater clarity for both authorities.

The proposed installation of CCTV further strengthens the case for DCC ownership, as the columns may increasingly form part of DCC's broader infrastructure network within the park.

Should Council agree to propose a transfer of ownership of the columns to DCC, an incentive could be offered to facilitate the transfer. It is suggested that the Town Council continues to meet the electricity costs associated with the lighting columns until 31 March 2028. This is approximately £650.00 per year, after which responsibility would transfer fully to DCC. The Town Council could also offer to cover the cost so the inspection prior to transfer, but not the stress testing. The last inspections cost £1,058.42.

The financial impact of this proposal would be limited to the existing electricity budget provision already incurred by the Town Council.

Should Council support the proposal the proposal will need to be put to DCC asking them to agree to the terms whereby they would need to agree to accept ownership and future maintenance responsibilities.

- The Council's Asset Register should be updated accordingly.

Options

Option 1

Retain ownership of the columns and grant permission for DCC to install the CCTV camera.

Advantages

- No change to existing arrangements, however the Town Council would need to grant a licence to DCC for them to have equipment placed upon their equipment and the question of covering the electricity costs would need to be considered.

Disadvantages

- Continues the disconnect between land ownership and asset ownership.
- Retains future maintenance and liability responsibilities for the Town Council.

Option 2 (Recommended)

Transfer ownership of the lighting columns located within DCC land to DCC and grant permission for the CCTV installation as part of the transfer discussions.

Advantages

- Aligns asset ownership with land ownership.
- Reduces future liabilities and maintenance responsibilities for the Town Council.
- Simplifies future management of the park infrastructure.
- Supports DCC's ability to improve security and monitoring within the park.
- Reduces costs for the Town Council moving forward.

Disadvantages

- Loss of ownership of the assets.
- Requires agreement and legal transfer process.

Recommendation

Council is recommended to:

1. Agree in principle to the negotiate the transfer of all four Town Council-owned lighting columns located within Durham County Council owned land at the Skate Park, Town Rec back to Durham County Council and Authorise the Town Clerk to enter discussions with Durham County Council regarding the transfer arrangements.
2. Agree that, subject to a successful transfer, the Town Council will continue to meet the electricity costs associated with the columns until 31 March 2028.
3. Delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of Finance, to finalise the transfer documentation and update the Council's Asset Register accordingly.

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Durham County Council Consultation: Changes to School Oversubscription Criteria from September 2028

Link: https://letstalkcountydurham.co.uk/en-GB/projects/changes-to-oversubscription-criteria-for-schools-from-september-2028

Closes: The consultation runs until **13 November 2026**, with a final decision expected by Cabinet in **February 2027**.

Summary for Council

Durham County Council is consulting on a proposed change to the admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2028/29 academic year. The proposal is to introduce a new oversubscription criterion giving priority to the children of eligible school staff when a school receives more applications than available places.

The new criterion would apply to:

- Children of staff who have been employed at the school for two or more years at the time of application; and/or
- Children of staff recruited to fill a post where there is a demonstrable skills shortage.

The proposed priority order would be:

1. Looked after and previously looked after children.
2. Exceptional medical reasons.
3. Sibling links.
4. Children of eligible school staff.
5. Applicants to their nearest school.
6. All other applicants.

The Council states that the change is intended to support the recruitment and retention of teachers and other school staff, helping schools maintain a stable workforce and continue to deliver high-quality education. The criterion would only be used where schools are oversubscribed.

Draft Response from Bishop Auckland Town Council

Response to Consultation on Proposed Changes to Oversubscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Bishop Auckland Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment to the oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools from September 2028.

The Council recognises the significant challenges many schools face in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified teaching and support staff. We acknowledge that enabling eligible school staff to secure places for their children at the school where they work may assist with staff retention, improve work-life balance, and support recruitment to hard-to-fill positions.

The proposed criterion has been placed below looked after children, exceptional medical cases and sibling links, ensuring that the most vulnerable children and existing family connections continue to receive priority. The Council considers this to be an appropriate balance between supporting school workforce needs and maintaining fair access arrangements.

However, the Council would welcome ongoing monitoring of the impact of this change, particularly in areas where schools are consistently oversubscribed. It will be important to ensure that the introduction of the staff criterion does not disproportionately affect local families seeking access to their nearest school.

Overall, Bishop Auckland Town Council supports the proposed amendment, subject to periodic review and publication of any evidence demonstrating its effectiveness in supporting recruitment and retention within County Durham schools.

Recommended: that members note the consultation and agree if they wish to submit the proposed response.

Bishop Auckland Town Council

29 September 2026

Consultations – DCC Budget Proposals and Medium Term Financial Plan

Durham County Council are currently consulting on the above via the lets talk platform.

Link is as follows https://letstalkcountydurham.co.uk/en-GB/projects/budget-proposals-for-2027-28-and-medium-term-financial-plan-2027-28-2030-31

Summary

Durham County Council (DCC) is consulting on its proposed budget for 2027/28 and its Medium Term Financial Plan covering the period 2027/28 to 2030/31. The consultation states that, like many local authorities, DCC continues to face significant financial pressures arising from increasing service demand, inflationary pressures and rising operational costs.

The consultation seeks views from residents, businesses, partner organisations and community groups on a range of proposals designed to balance future budgets whilst maintaining essential services.

Key Areas of Consultation

The consultation focuses on:

Previously Identified Savings

- Savings proposals consulted on during previous budget rounds and now being implemented.]

New Savings Proposals

- Efficiencies within back-office functions.
- Operational improvements and service redesign.
- Opportunities to generate additional income.
- Greater contributions from third parties where appropriate.
- Changes in the way some frontline services are delivered.

Transformation Programme

- Further savings linked to DCC's "Changing Together" transformation programme, which aims to modernise service delivery and achieve long-term efficiencies.

Council Tax

- The consultation seeks views on future council tax increases as part of DCC's financial planning assumptions.

Equality Impact Assessment

- Assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed savings on different groups within the community.

Consultation Timetable

The consultation opened on **21 September 2026** and closes on **15 November 2026**, with feedback informing a report to Cabinet in January 2027 before final budget decisions are made in February 2027.

Implications for Bishop Auckland Town Council

Whilst the consultation does not contain proposals specific to Bishop Auckland, any reduction in County Council spending could have implications for:

- Community and neighbourhood services.
- Environmental and public realm maintenance.
- Support for community organisations.
- Economic development and regeneration initiatives.
- Services for vulnerable residents.
- Proposed closure of the Town Hall for an additional day per week and outsourcing of the café facility. The facility has already lost its cinema programme and gallery space.
- Potential pressure on parish and town councils to fill service gaps arising from future service changes. No formal approach has been made from DCC to the Town Council on what these areas may be.

Given the Town Council's growing role in service delivery, events, allotments, community engagement and environmental improvements, it is important that DCC recognises the contribution parish and town councils make and seeks to work collaboratively where changes are proposed.

Proposed response from Bishop Auckland Town Council

Bishop Auckland Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on Durham County Council's Budget Proposals for 2027/28 and Medium-Term Financial Plan. Whilst recognising the significant financial challenges facing local government and the forecast budget deficit identified by Durham County Council, the Town Council is concerned about the potential impact of a number of proposals on Bishop Auckland and its residents.

The Council is particularly concerned about proposals affecting Bishop Auckland Town Hall, which is far more than a cultural venue. The Town Hall is a key community asset that supports the social, cultural and economic life of the town centre. It provides a programme of arts, entertainment and community activities,

attracts visitors into the town centre, supports local businesses through increased footfall, and acts as an important venue for community learning, skills development and public engagement activities.

The proposal to reduce opening hours through the closure of the Town Hall for an additional day each week is of particular concern. Whilst such a measure may generate financial savings, the Council believes that consideration must also be given to the wider economic and social impact on Bishop Auckland. Reduced opening hours are likely to result in lower visitor numbers, reduced opportunities for community participation and a loss of footfall within the town centre, potentially undermining wider regeneration efforts that have been supported by significant public investment over recent years.

The Town Council is also concerned about proposals to review the operation of the Town Hall café and any potential move towards outsourcing its management. The café forms an integral part of the visitor experience and contributes to the overall attractiveness and accessibility of the venue. Any changes should carefully consider the potential impact on service quality, accessibility, employment and the ability of the café to support the wider objectives of the Town Hall as a community-focused facility.

Beyond the Town Hall itself, the Council is concerned that further efficiencies and service transformation could lead to a reduction in locally delivered employment, skills and community learning opportunities. Bishop Auckland residents, particularly those who are vulnerable, digitally excluded or reliant on public transport, benefit from services delivered within the town itself. The loss of local provision would risk creating additional barriers to participation and could adversely affect those residents most in need of support.

The Town Council is concerned about the potential cumulative impact that proposed savings may have on neighbourhood services, regeneration activity and the continued improvement of Bishop Auckland as a place to live, work and visit. The town has benefited from substantial public and private sector investment in recent years, helping to transform perceptions of the area, attract visitors and support economic growth. Any reduction in the services, facilities and activities that contribute to this momentum risks undermining the benefits of that investment.

The Council believes that neighbourhood-based services play a vital role in maintaining civic pride, supporting communities and creating attractive and welcoming public spaces. Reductions in services relating to environmental maintenance, public realm management, community engagement, cultural provision or regeneration support may appear modest in isolation but collectively can have a significant impact on residents' quality of life and visitors' perceptions of the town. Regeneration and improvements in the town centre remain key priorities for residents, alongside tackling anti-social behaviour.

The Town Council has already demonstrated its willingness to work proactively with Durham County Council to maintain and enhance the local environment, including taking responsibility for a range of floral displays within the town. Whilst this partnership approach has delivered positive outcomes, there remain areas of environmental maintenance and public realm management that continue to be the responsibility of Durham County Council. The Town Council would therefore be concerned by any further reductions in neighbourhood services without a clear understanding of how affected services would be maintained in the future.

Should Durham County Council be considering any further service reductions, service transfers or changes to operational responsibilities within Bishop Auckland, the Town Council would expect to be engaged in meaningful discussions at the earliest possible stage. Early engagement is essential to allow proper consideration of the financial, operational and resource implications for the Town Council and to identify opportunities for collaborative solutions. The Town Council cannot commit to assuming additional

responsibilities without full dialogue, sufficient planning and a clear understanding of the long-term implications for local taxpayers.

Bishop Auckland continues to face challenges relating to town centre vitality, perceptions of safety, economic inactivity and deprivation within our communities. The Council is therefore concerned that any reduction in regeneration capacity, community development activity or locally delivered neighbourhood services could disproportionately affect the town's ability to sustain recent progress and attract further investment.

The Council would encourage Durham County Council to recognise Bishop Auckland as a strategic regeneration location within County Durham and to ensure that any savings proposals are assessed not only against their financial value but also against their potential impact on the town's long-term economic growth, visitor economy, community wellbeing and future investment opportunities.

One area which is mentioned is car parking, and park and ride services. The Town Council would welcome reduced parking charges, or 1 hour free type schemes in Bishop Auckland to help to drive footfall, as it is not fair to those needing to visit Bishop Auckland that charges are in place, when in neighbouring towns there are no charges for visiting town centres.

Over the last few years the Town has lost many of its services, such as Citizens Advice, full Registrar service, and there has been no customer access point. The Town Council would like to ask that this be re-considered as currently travel to Spennymoor's Green Lane Offices are not easy for those traveling by public transport.

The Council remains concerned about the future of Bishop Auckland Town Hall and the potential impact that service reductions or changes to the operation of the building may have on the wider community. In recognition of its significance to the town's cultural, civic and community life, Bishop Auckland Town Council successfully registered the Town Hall as an Asset of Community Value in 2025. The Council would therefore welcome continued engagement regarding any proposals affecting the building to help safeguard its long-term role as a valued community asset and hub for local residents.

Bishop Auckland has undergone significant regeneration and has worked hard to establish itself as a cultural and visitor destination. The Town Council therefore asks that Durham County Council gives careful consideration to the cumulative impact of any reductions affecting Bishop Auckland Town Hall and locally delivered community services. Decisions should not be based solely on direct financial savings but should also take account of wider economic benefits, community wellbeing, accessibility, town centre vitality and the strategic importance of maintaining public services and cultural assets within Bishop Auckland.

Bishop Auckland Town Council would therefore encourage Durham County Council to

- maintain the current level of access to Bishop Auckland Town Hall wherever possible and fully assesses the economic, social and community impacts of any proposed changes before decisions are taken. They ask that a business case is shared on the reduction in services in the town hall, and how they plan on supporting. Within the business case look at what services could be co-located in Bishop Auckland Town Hall, and consider the introduction of a customer access-point.
- Consider looking at implementation of an hour free car parking to take car parking in line with neighbouring towns.
- Engage with Bishop Auckland Town Council at the earliest opportunity regarding any proposed service reductions, changes to service delivery, asset transfers or the cessation of services within the town. The Council requests that no decisions affecting local service provision are finalised

before meaningful discussions have taken place with the Town Council to explore alternative delivery models and assess the implications for residents and local taxpayers.
- Prioritise the protection of frontline services wherever possible.
- Continue investing in preventative services that reduce long-term costs and improve outcomes for residents.
- Work closely with parish and town councils where service changes are proposed.
- Ensure any transfer of responsibilities to local councils is accompanied by appropriate funding and support.
- Continue to support regeneration, economic development, health improvement and community participation initiatives which contribute to the long-term sustainability of County Durham.

The Council supports ongoing engagement with residents, businesses and local councils throughout the budget-setting process and welcomes continued dialogue regarding any proposals that may affect Bishop Auckland and its residents.

Recommended: That members of the Council :

1. Receive and note the summary of Durham County Council's Budget Proposals for 2027/28 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2027/28 to 2030/31.
2. Approve the draft response for submission to Durham County Council, with authority delegated to the Town Clerk to make any minor amendments prior to submission.
3. Arrange for a the Mayor and Clerk to meet with DCC to discuss the challenges of facing the Town Hall.

Item: 15

Bishop Auckland Town Council

27 October 2027

Strategy Review and Action Plan Update

Following the update at the last meeting of the Council, the feedback from the consultation is still being considered in relation to the Town Council Strategy. This report provides an update Council on the progress of the review of the Council's Strategic Plan and to seek endorsement of the proposed timetable for the adoption and launch of updated Committee strategies and action plans for 2027.

As part of the Council's commitment to effective strategic planning and continuous improvement, a review of the Council's Strategy and associated Committee action plans has been undertaken. This review has been informed by feedback received through the summer consultation programme, which provided residents, stakeholders and community organisations with the opportunity to contribute to the Council's future priorities.

The consultation responses have been considered and will be used to shape the Council's strategic direction and service delivery priorities for the coming years.

An updated overarching Council Strategy is attached at Appendix 1. This document sets out the Council's vision, priorities and strategic objectives and provides the framework from which Committee-specific strategies and action plans will be developed.

Following consideration of the consultation findings, each Committee will now undertake a detailed review of its respective sub-strategy and action plan to ensure that:

- Actions remain aligned with the Council's strategic priorities.
- Emerging opportunities and challenges are reflected.
- Resources are directed towards activities that deliver the greatest benefit to residents and communities.
- Performance measures remain relevant and meaningful.

The revised Committee strategies and action plans will be presented to the relevant Committees during December for consideration and recommendation to Council.

Subject to Committee approval, the updated strategies and action plans will be adopted by the Council and launched as the Council's strategic framework for 2027 onwards.

This approach will ensure that the Council's priorities continue to reflect local needs, community aspirations and the outcomes of the recent consultation exercise, whilst providing a clear direction for Members and officers.

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however clear direction from the strategy will help to inform the councils budget setting process . Any financial commitments arising from future actions within Committee action plans will be considered through the Council's normal budget-setting process.

The review of strategies and action plans supports effective governance and helps ensure that Council resources are aligned with agreed priorities and community needs.

Recommendation

Council is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made in reviewing the Council's strategic framework.
2. Consider the updated overarching Strategy attached at Appendix 1, based on the consultation feedback.
3. Note that each Committee will review and update its strategy and action plan following the summer consultation exercise.
4. Note that revised Committee strategies and action plans will be presented to Committees in November and December for approval and recommendation to Council by the end of the year.
5. Approve the proposed timetable for the adoption and launch of the updated strategic framework for 2027.