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

17 September 2026

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of **Bishop Auckland Town Council** on **29TH September 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 28th September 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

SHarris

Sarah Harris
Clerk to the Council

Agenda – Full Council 29 September 2026

1. **Welcome** 6.00pm

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

3. **Monthly Dash Board –** To show achievements and activities from July to September 2026

4. **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.

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

    a) Town Council Minutes 11 August 2026

    b) Policy and Resources Committee 1st September 2026

    c) Community Committee 9th September 2026

    d) Allotment and Environment Committee 15 September 2026

6. **Matters Arising & Action Log update** - To from the above Minutes which are not included elsewhere on the agenda

    a) **Insurance**

    b) **IT** – Internet Connectivity

    c) **Bishop Auckland's Christmas Town 2026**

    d) **Floral Planting**

7. **Reports -**
    a) **Durham County Council** – representatives will be able to provide an update on activities and issues affecting Bishop Auckland.
    b) **Outside bodies representation** feedback including the Stronger Towns Board
    c) **NALC National Conference feedback** – to receive a summary of feedback from the attendance at the NALC national Conference

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

9. **Finance and Audit –**
    a) AGAR External Audit Report for year ending 31 March 2026 and Notice of Completion of Audit (copies attached)
    b) Payments for Authorisation
    c) Budget and precept Setting Process and Timeline

10. **Correspondence**
    a) Letter of thanks received from Dame S Snowdon DCVO – to Note
    b) Letter from 1873 RTM Company Limited

11. **Town Council Strategy Consultation Feedback** – to receive the feedback from the recent consultation on the Town Council Strategy

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

13. **Consultations**
    a) North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Bus Franchising Consultation draft response
    b) Interim HMO Policy – briefing note for members
    c) DCC - Annual budget (2027/28) and Medium Term Financial Plan (2027/28-2030/31) consultation

14. **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.

15. **HR update**

[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 of the Extra Ordinary Town Council Committee

11 August 2026 at 18:00

Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

Present:
Chair Cllr M Siddle, Cllrs M Harker, Cllr D. Wilkinson, L Zair, S Zair, T Redmond, R Elliott, S Gray and J Fox.

Also present:
S Harris, Town Clerk

TC042/26 Welcome –
Mayor Siddle welcomed everyone to the Extra Ordinary meeting of the Town Council and thanked members for attending in what usually would be recess. He asked members to note his thanks to the Staff team for the delivery of the Freedom of the Town Event, last week. It was a fantastic event and put Bishop Auckland truly on the map. To have Northern Echo, local press and Tyne Tees cover the event was brilliant.

Resolved: Members noted the Mayors remarks and agreed that the Freedom event had been fantastic.

TC043/26 - Declaration of Interests

Cllr D Wilkinson declared an interest in Bishop Press for media activities.

Resolved: that members noted the declaration.

TC044/26 – Minutes –

To approve the follow minutes of the Town Council meeting on the 28th July 2026.
Resolved: that the members noted and approved subject to an amendment of agreeing apologies from Cllr Legge, and that the point of order raised by Cllr S Zair, included a request for a meeting. Members agreed with this and the minutes were changed and printed for signature.

TC045/26 Action Log –
The format of the action log have been changed, and moving forward members will receive them as excel documents so that they can view the achieved actions on the second sheet. Members were asked to re-approve the minutes of the 21 July 2026 Allotment and Environment Committee meeting, two of the minute numbers were incorrect and the actions in the closed part of the meeting had not been recorded in full. A copy of the wording change can be found on file

Resolved: Member noted and approved the action log. There were four members of the Allotment Committee present, and they agreed with the new wording for the decisions, as it was more detailed and reflective of the discussions taken. The Mayor signed the changed minutes for file.

TC046/26 Public participation
No members of the public in attendance.

Resolved: that members noted that there were no members of the public in attendance.

Signed Chair:

TC047/26 Exclusion of the press and Public

Resolved:

That the Members agreed to now exclude the press and public for the remaining item on the agenda by reason of Confidential nature of the business to be transacted since publicity would be prejudicial to any public interest. This is in accordance with the provisions of section 1 of the Public Bodies Act (admission to meetings) 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972.

TC048/26 – Finance – Christmas Town Donation

Members of the Council considered the paper presented. Each member was given the opportunity to speak in relation to the paper.

Resolved:

- that members were unanimous in their support for Bishop Auckland's Christmas Town, and the benefit that it brings to the residents, business and the volume of visitors it brings to the Town, and the positive impact upon the economy.
- That members agreed the revised grant agreement, and that whilst both companies would be jointly liable for the grant terms, the funds would be paid to Baccanalia CIC. A named vote was held and resolved that the Payment would be made in three instalments, 12th August 2026, 12 September 2026 and 12th October 2026 over making the payment in Full. The vote was as follows:
    - Those in favour of making the grant payment in full, Cllr Siddle, Wilkinson and Elliott.
    - Those in Favour of making the grant payment in three instalments Cllr S Zair, L Zair, J Fox, S Gray, T Redmond and M Harker.
- That members agreed that during the autumn budget setting the terms and payment timelines would be agreed for any grants.

Signed Chair:

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

1st September 2026 at 16.30

Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

Cllr Present: Chair S Zair, Cllr Mike Harker, Cllr D Wilkinson and Cllr S Gray

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

PRC011/26 Apologies for Absence – Cllr Siddle & Cllr Wilson

Resolved: that members agreed and accepted the apologies

PRC012/26 Declaration of Interests

Resolved: that Cllr Wilkinson declared an interest in The Bishops Press

PRC013/26 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.

PRC014/26 Finance

a. Account Balances & Bank Signatories update
   i. Lloyds Current Account - £11,428.95
   ii. Lloyds Deposit Account - £593,123.20
   iii. CCLA Account - £210,000.00
   iv. Hinkley & Rugby - £10,000.00
   v. Unity Trust Account - £56,693.78

PRC014a/26 Resolved: that members noted the report and balances as they stand today, and note that there will be fund transfers this week, and work is underway to add Cllr S Zair to bank accounts.

b. Q1 Report and Forecasting

PRC014b/26 Resolved: that members noted updates and that by Q2 the forecasting report will be available to bring to October's meeting.

c. Payments for Authorisation

PRC014c/26 Resolved: that members noted the report and authorised the payments listed.

d. NJC 2026-27 -Pay Award

Signed:

PRC014d/26 Resolved: that members note the award and that the Clerk is to instruct the payroll provider to backdate the increase from 1st April on the next payroll (September).

e. Milage Rates

PRC014e/26 Resolved: that Members noted the report and agree to 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.

PRC015/26 Corporate

a. Insurance Renewal

Resolved: that the members noted the report; and agree the renewal; and agree that the Clerk is to undertake request a desk top valuation using the Insurance companies recommended agent.

PRC016/26 IT

b. Telecoms and Internet

Resolved: that members consider the updated report, and agree 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.

PRC017/26 Planning

a) To consider any planning applications for which the Town council may wish to make representations.

Resolved: that members noted that the latest weekly report circulated by the Deputy Clerk did not have any applications for which they wished to make representation.

PRC018/26 Policies

a) Policy Review Cycle and Policies for review
    - Co-option Policy
    - Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure

Resolved: that the members noted the report and agree to the suggested review schedule as per appendix 1, which sees a number of policies brought each month for review until the end of the year.

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 criteria be welcome to apply not just white collar workers.

Signed:

PRC019/26 Strategy

a. Town Council Strategy update
b. Media report

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.

PRC020/26 Public Participation

Resolved: that no members of the public were present**.**

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.

PRC021/26 Human Resources Report

a. Job Vacancy

Resolved: 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.

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.

b. Conference – SLCC National Conference 12& 13 October 2026.

Resolved: That members permit the Clerk to attend the conference as it will be beneficial to the business, and to book train and accommodation.

Signed:

Appendix 1 – payments authorised as per Minute Number: **PRC014c/26**

Ref	Date	Total	VAT	Description	type	Organisation	Power used for Spend	Status
	ADMIN							
269	21.08.2026	£27.29	£4.55	screen protector and file dividers	EP	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l.		paid
210	30.07.2026	£10,940.68	£0.00	Staff Salaries - July 2026	EP	Bishop Auckland Town Council	Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	contract
193	22.07.2026	£1,664.00	£277.33	ICT Systems Support, Office 365 & Google, Anti Virus and Web Domain Services 01/04/2026-31/03/2027	EP	Durham County Council	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
211	21.08.2026	£4,250.05	£0.00	HMRC, Tax & NI for Staff - July 2026	EP	Bishop Auckland Town Council	Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	paid
274	21.08.2026	£4,207.60	£0.00	HMRC, Tax & NI Staff - Aug 2026	EP	Bishop Auckland Town Council	Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	paid
232	31.07.2026	£480.00	£0.00	24Hrs Social Media Services	EP	Moore Growth Marketing	Local Government Act 1972, section 142	contract
56	08.04.2026	£2,123.37	£0.00	Staff Pensions Variances - March 2026	EP	Durham County Council	Local Government Act 1972 s 112 (1)	paid
251	06.08.2026	£17.96	£2.99	Mailchimp Mailing , August 2026	DC	Mailchimp	Newsletters - LGA 1972 s.142	contract
250	07.07.2026	£18.10	£3.02	Mailchimp Mailing , July 2026	DC	Mailchimp	Newsletters - LGA 1972 s.142	contract
239	31.07.2026	£265.00	£0.00	10.5Hrs Media Strategy, Activities for June and July 2026	EP	Hawkey PR	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
226	07.08.2026	£232.40	£38.73	Mobile Phones 24/07/2026-23/08/2026	DD	O2 - Telefónica UK Limited	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
260	12.08.2026	£15.60	£2.60	4x Personalised Name Badges with BATC Logo, Brushed Gold	EP	Devon Print Group Ltd	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	paid
238	31.07.2026	£42.52	£7.09	Photocopier Usage 30/06/2026-30/07/2026	EP	Totals Business Computers Ltd. (Total Business Group)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	contract
258	18.08.2026	£10.93	£0.00	Lloyds Banking Fees 10/06/2026-09/07/2026	EP	Lloyds Bank Plc.	Local Government Act 1972 s.112(2)	contract
255	20.07.2026	£15.25	£0.00	Lloyds Banking Fees 10/05/2026-09/06/2026	EP	Lloyds Bank Plc.	Local Government Act 1972 s.112(2)	contract
240	01.08.2026	£180.84	£30.14	Telephone and Broadband, August 2026	DD	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Parish & Community BuildingsLGA 1972, s.133	contract

Signed:

265	21.08.2026	£480.00	£0.00	24 Hours Social Media Services	EP	Moore Growth Marketing	Websites - LGA 1972, s.142	paid
263	14.08.2026	£9.00	£1.50	Key Cut for Town Council Office	DC	Timpson Ltd.	Parish & Community BuildingsLGA 1972, s.133	paid
	KINGSWAY							
261	31.08.2026	£108.89	£18.15	Sanitary Bins 12/08/2026 - 11/08/2027	EP	Initial Washroom Hygiene - Rentokil Initial	Parish & Community BuildingsLGA 1972, s.133	contract
229	31.07.2026	£500.00	£0.00	Cleaning of Town Council Offices, July 2026	EP	Blitzed 24/7 Cleaning	Parish & Community BuildingsLGA 1972, s.133	contract
225	23.07.2026	£11.50	£1.92	2x Key Tidy Hooks, Chrome/Pine	DC	Boyes	Parish & Community BuildingsLGA 1972, s.133	paid
252	31.08.2026	£90.00	£0.00	Kingsway, Window Cleaning, April, May, June and July 2026	EP	AIWC Cleaning Ltd.	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
231	31.07.2026	£2,100.00	£0.00	13x 5ft Shed with Double Doors, Supply & Fit	EP	Cornerstone	Parish & Community BuildingsLGA 1972, s.133	paid
259	12.08.2026	£641.05	£106.84	Repairs Following Emergency Lighting Service	EP	Durham County Council	Parish & Community BuildingsLGA 1972, s.133	paid
248	31.08.2026	£328.50	£54.75	Kingsway Keyholding Services - Quarterly	EP	Vinovium Associates Ltd.	Parish and Community Buildings - LGA 1972, s.133	contract
	ALLOTMENTS & ENVIRONMENT							
235	31.07.2026	£35.87	£0.00	Allotment Officer, Travel Expenses 06/07/2026-30/07/2026	EP	Boody Spelk (Owen Richardson)	Local Government Act 1972, section 142	outstanding
233	31.07.2026	£43.84	£0.00	Allotment Officer, Travel Expenses 06/07/2026-30/07/2026	EP	Boody Spelk (Owen Richardson)	Local Government Act 1972 s.111	outstanding
175	02.07.2026	£1,350.00	£225.00	6 Months Pest Control at Pollards, Tindale Crescent, Woodhouse Close Allotments	EP	A. Breeze Pest Control Ltd.	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	contract
228	31.07.2026	£240.00	£40.00	4x Removal of Wasps Nests at Plots 2-3, Broken Banks Allotments	EP	A. Breeze Pest Control Ltd.	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	paid
242	31.08.2026	£120.00	£20.00	Removal of Wasps Nest, at Plot 7, Broken Banks Allotments	EP	A. Breeze Pest Control Ltd.	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	paid
257	12.08.2026	-£44.99	-£7.50	Credit: 1x Pair of Protective Chainsaw Chaps, Hi Viz	EP	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l.	Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 s26	received

Signed:

262	22.07.2026	£50.00	£0.00	Mini Bus Hire, Bishop Auckland in Bloom Judging, 15th July 2026	EP	Dene Valley Community Transport Ltd	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	paid
256	12.08.2026	£60.98	£7.50	1x Pair of Protective Chainsaw Chaps, Hi Viz and 1100x Tetleys Teabags	EP	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l.	Parish & Community BuildingsLGA 1972, s.133	paid
180	01.07.2026	£1,302.00	£217.00	Spring Bedding	EP	I C Liddle Services	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	paid
221	22.07.2026	£22.50	£0.00	Flowers for marketplace round beds	EP	Boody Spelk (Owen Richardson)	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	paid
241	31.08.2026	£3,564.00	£594.00	Summer Flowers for Single and 3 Tier Tubs throughout the Town and Sustainable Flower Bed	EP	I C Liddle Services	Open Spaces - Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10	paid
Community Supoprt								
247	31.08.2026	£1,000.00	£0.00	Community Fund - Bridge Creative, South Shields Bus Trip	EP	Bridge Creative Enterprises CIC	GPC - Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	outstanding
237	31.07.2026	£9,000.00	£0.00	Donation - AYCC, School Holiday Activities,and Overheads	EP	Auckland Youth and Community Centre (AYCC)	GPC - Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	paid
236	31.07.2026	£1,000.00	£0.00	Community Fund - Men's Group Activities (Pending Receipts)	EP	Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre	GPC - Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	paid
246	31.08.2026	£6,000.00	£0.00	Community Support - WCCCC Support Activities and school holiday Activities	EP	Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre	GPC - Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	paid
245	31.08.2026	£1,000.00	£0.00	Community Support - WVCAG Social Events Throughout 2026	EP	Wear Valley Community Action Group	GPC - Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	paid
253	07.07.2026	-£1,000.00	£0.00	Community Fund - Men's Group Activities (Recovered Payment made in error)	EP	Woodhouse Primary Academy	Localism Act 2011 s1-8 GPC	received
270	21.08.2026	£56.97	£9.49	fairytale backdrop and stand	EP	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
266	21.08.2026	£234.00	£39.00	2000 brick fairytale trail cards	DC	Lintons Printers Limited	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
230	31.07.2026	£428.40	£71.40	Summertime Activities 2026, Full Page advert in Bishop Press	EP	South West Durham News CIC	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
267	21.08.2026	£740.00	£0.00	4 x 1hr lego workshops (30 childen each workshop)	DC	Construction Kids	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid

Signed:

227	31.07.2026	£583.33	£0.00	Brick Fairytales, 2x Lego Disney Themed Sessions (90 Minutes), Town Hall	EP	Smarty Party	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
268	21.08.2026	£428.40	£71.40	full page advert - lego trail	EP	South West Durham News CIC	Local Government Act 1972, section 142	paid
	DEMOCRACY							
272	28.08.2026	£307.70	£0.00	Members Allowance - Aug 2026	EP	Bishop Auckland Town Council	The Local Authorities Regs 2003, Part 5, s.26	paid
271	21.08.2026	£59.00	£0.00	HMRC, Tax & NI Members - Aug 2026	EP	Bishop Auckland Town Council	The Local Authorities Regs 2003, Part 5, s.26	paid
	EVENTS							
207	10.07.2026	£2,340.00	£390.00	Freedom of the Town, Ornamental Scroll and Artwork Setup	EP	Walker Print Ltd.	GPC Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	paid
249	31.08.2026	£145.00	£0.00	FoT (Donation to Butterwick Hospice)	EP	Butterwick Hospice	Local Government Act 1972, s.249	paid
264	21.08.2026	£96.00	£16.00	Foamex boards for heritage	DC	PMI Creative Ltd	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
244	31.08.2026	£300.00	£0.00	Freedom of the Town Photography 3.5Hrs, 4th August 2026	EP	Outside The Box Photography	Local Government Act 1972, s.249	paid
243	31.08.2026	£962.40	£160.40	2x Freedom of the Town Medallion with Blue Collarettes	EP	Michaels Civic Robes & Regalia	Local Government Act 1972, s.249	paid
276	21.08.2026	£15,000.00	£0.00	1st Installment Christmas Town 2026	EP	Baccanalia	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
237	31.07.2026	£2,000.00	£0.00	Wider Christmas AYCC, Christmas Activities	EP	Auckland Youth and Community Centre (AYCC)	GPC - Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	paid
189	08.07.2026	£1,551.60	£258.60	3000x Leaflet Distribution with Bishop Press and Printing of 3000x A5 Booklets	EP	South West Durham News CIC	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
224	31.07.2026	£38.32	£6.38	2x Suggestion Boxes, Wood	BT	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l.	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
204	09.07.2026	£4,666.00	£0.00	Ward and In Year Events - Family Festival 2026	EP	Baccanalia	Entertainment and the Arts - LGA 1972, s.145	paid
246	31.08.2026	£1,000.00	£0.00	Wider Christmas Activity - WCCCC SChristmas Lunch/Activities	EP	Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre	GPC - Localism Act 2011, s.1- 8	paid

Signed:

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Minutes of the Community Committee

9th September 2026 at 18.00

Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

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

Also, present: S Harris, V Booth, M Jordan

CC015/26 - Apologies for Absence – none received

Resolved: that as no apologies were received therefore as no apologies were received from Cllr Fox none are accepted or approved. Cllr Fox arrived at 18:10.

CC016/26 - Declaration of Interests –

Resolved: that members noted that Cllr Ellott declared an interest in AYCC as he was joining the Board of Trustees.

CC017/26 - Action Log from Previous Meeting –

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

CC018/26 Community Engagement Update –

a. Enchanted Bricks Fairy Tales

Resolved: that member noted the report, and agreed to explore the possibility of having another 'summer trail' with a report to the next meeting where they will consider the allocation for the 2027-28 budget. The rate to be established once the paper has been presented.

b. Media Dashboard

Resolved: that member noted the report and they welcomed increase in media and social media presence.

CCO19/26– Event Update –

a. Heritage Fair (see file copy)

Resolved: that members note the report and agree to support the council staff at the event.

b. Word Fest (see file copy)

Resolved: that members noted the report and look forward to the post event feedback.

Signed:

CCO20/26– Summary of 2026-27 spends and future considerations

a. **Community Organisation Support**

Resolved: that members noted the update, and consideration was given to other organisations which they feet needed support. Members agreed that at the next meeting of this committee that they will agree the allocations for the remaining £4,000 of this budget, after there has been meetings with Bridge Creative and Four Clocks Centre.

That members discussed supporting the Bishop Football Museum and for the Clerk to establish how much would be required to support their rent for a 12 month period and for information to be brought to full council, under matters arising.

That members considered and agreed for this allocation for community support in the 2027-28 budget to remain at the current rate.

b. **Community Fund Grants**

Resolved: that member noted the report, and agree that the community fund be advertised via social media and the press, along with mail shot to organisations asking for applications, to be considered at the November 2026 meeting.

That members considered and agreed for this budget allocation in the 2027-28 budget to remain at the current rate.

c. **School Holiday Support**

Resolved: that member noted the report, and agreed that the school holiday support funding should be advertised via social media and the press, along with mail shot to organisations asking for applications, to be considered at the November 2026 meeting.

That members discussed supporting the October half term for fun and food. That consideration was given to advertising for groups to apply for some funding and a proposal to be brought to the next meeting.

That members considered and agreed for this allocation in the 2027-28 budget to remain at the current rate.

d. **Summer Time Activities**

Resolved: that member noted the report, and agreed to explore the possibility of having another 'summer trail' with a report to the next meeting where they will consider if they wish to include this allocation in the 2027-28 budget at the current rate or if they wish to review it. If a trail is to be replicated then the funding for summer time activities will need to be increased. Based on proposals for 2027 this will be considered.

e. **National and Regional Celebrations**

Resolved: that member noted the report, and agreed that the remaining funds be held, until end of quarter 3 in case of a national event arising.

That members considered and agreed for this allocation in the 2027-28 budget to remain at the current rate.

Signed:

That members consider an event around the football centenary year celebrations.

That the Freedom of the Town event take place once every 4 years – once per election term – ideally in the second year of the term.

f. Town Youth Awards

Resolved: that member noted the report, discussed and agree to include this allocation in the 2027-28 at a reduced rate of £8,000 a reduction of £2,000 as this has historically come under budget.

That members agreed to continue to have sponsors of the awards. That consideration be given to review the event to make it bigger or change it up again and the clerk to bring a report to the next community committee. If the event is to be larger a reconsideration of the budget is needed.

g. Christmas Town

Resolved: that members noted the update, and would welcome a reduction in prices in tickets if that was possible and agreed to consider the budget allocations after the 2026 event as part of the councils budget setting, and included the payment timeline in advance.

h. Wider Christmas Activities

Resolved: Members to consider still holding a 'Potential Christmas Vehicle Parade' as previously mentioned. Page 8 of 12 of the file copy of the report.

That member note the report, and agree that the previous recipients, along with other community organisations be contacted to seek applications for funds, and this also be advertised via social media and the press, to maximise the reach to community organisations. Applications to be considered and awarded at the October 2026 meeting.

That members considered and agreed for this allocation in the 2027-28 budget to remain at the current rate.

i. Food Festival (see file copy)

Resolved: that member noted the report, agreed to continue to support this event for the good of the town and local businesses. That consideration be given to include this allocation in the 2027-28 budget at the current rate.

j. Heritage Festival (see file copy)

Resolved: that member noted the report, and agreed to review the event once it takes place following which members will consider if they wish to include this allocation in the 2027-28 budget at the current rate or if they wish to review it, as the event has been running for 5 years and always proves challenging for engagment.

k. Recognition Awards (see file copy)

Resolved: that member noted the report, and agree to review the event once it takes place in October via the Allotment and Environment Committee, following which members will consider if they wish to include this allocation in the 2027-28 budget at the current rate or if they wish to review it, as well as if they wish to widen the recognition awards to more categories.

Signed:

That members agree that a report be brought to the next meeting with options for a volunteer event for 2027, for inclusion in the 2027-28 budget.

l. **Remembrance Parade (see file copy)**

Resolved: that member noted the report, and consideration was made to include this allocation in the 2027-28 budget at an increased rate based upon indicative costs.

m. **Ward & in Year Events (see file copy)**

Resolved: that member noted the report, and discussed what type of events they wish to support for the remaining part of 2026-27, and tasked the Clerk to seek proposals and costings for the October 2026 meeting where allocations will be awarded.

That members considered and agreed that they wish to include this allocation in the 2027-28 budget at the current rate.

CCO21/26 – Public Participation

Resolved: Members accepted the recommendation and the spend required

Signed:

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Minutes of the Allotment and Environment Committee

15th Sept 2026 at 6PM

Town Council Offices, Kingsway Court, Bishop Auckland

Cllr Present: Chair Cllr M Siddle, Cllr Fox, L. Zair, Elliott, Redmond.

Also, present: S Harris, V Booth and 6 members of the public

AEC022/26- Apologies for Absence – None received in advance

Resolved: that there was no apologies from Cllr Legge therefore his absence was not accepted

AEC023/26- Declaration of Interests – no declarations made

Resolved: that no declarations were made.

AEC024/26 - Action Log from Previous Meeting – action log presented by the Clerk.

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

AEC025/26 – Allotment Update

i)Landscape

The Clerk gave an overview of the report presented to council. An update was given from the summer inspections. A summary of the warnings issued was presented and from that a number of people have advised they want to terminate their contracts which will cut down on the 90 day process.

Resolved: that members noted and accepted the landscape report. That members requested future reports to advise which are applying for livestock and which are purely cultivation.

ii) Summer Inspections

The Clerk gave an update on the current allotment inspections, and a full outcome will be presented at the next committee once inspections are complete.

Resolved: that members noted the update and report and that a follow up will be brought to the next meeting. That Cllr Zair advised road filings need to be put down at Woodhouse before the winter.

iii) Quotes for Works

The Clerk gave an update on the quotes received for the cutting of the ash tree at Pollards and other site works.

Resolved: that members noted the update and approved the quote and for the tree works.

Signed:

AEC026/26– Finance and Policy

The annual review of allotment polices and procedures, along with setting of allotment charges and rates for tenants for the year ahead was highlighted.

i) Bishop Auckland Town Council Allotment Rules and Regulations – Appendix 1 was presented as an exception report highlighting the changes recommended.

Resolved: that members accepted the changes recommended.

ii) Bishop Auckland Town Council Allotment Tenancy Enforcement Procedure –

Resolved: that members accepted the procedure document.

iii) Bishop Auckland Town Council Allotment Charges and rates 2026-27 and 2027-28 – that the Clerk gave a summary of the charges for sites. That a full year of water bills will be monitored going forward with a look to make changes in the following year.

Resolved: that members noted the paper, agreed to accept the rent review charge and the other recommendations.

AEC027/26 – Environment

a) Greener Together Working Group
b) Floral Displays 2026-27 and 2027-28
c) Environmental Improvement Project 2026-27 and 2027-28

Resolved: that members accepted the reports presented. That members agreed for the planters to be the two blue colours for Bishop Auckland to mark the football anniversary. That the Clerk look to put floral planters in the entrance areas of the town such as Henknowle, Woodhouse etc and bring a report to the next meeting. Continue to work with the community committee re engagement of businesses and organisations across the town to be involved with the towns floral arrangements.

AEC028/26– Recognition Awards October 2026

The clerk gave an overview of a more well-rounded recognition award evening that extends beyond the allotments. That there are a number of volunteers in the town that are unsung heroes.

Resolved: that members noted the update and agreed the awards are a good idea and for the awards to proceed.

AEC029 – Public Participation

The public asked questions regarding external sit tree works, tenants who live outside the parish boundaries, suggestion regarding banning sprinklers to conserve water, splitting of larger plots, spring inspections.

Resolved: that members discussed the questions posed and answered the queries. That the Clerk has been tasked to reapproach the principle authority regarding the trees on the external boundaries and how the weeds are coming up through the ground as far as 3 plots into site. That plot sizes are part of the larger council strategy discussion.

Signed:

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.

AEC030 – Update

Land Sales: Broken Banks update

Resolved: members noted the update.

Land Sales: Toronto update

Resolved: members noted the update agreed on full fee required and reduce the legal fee contribution of up to £1000.

Reinvestment/Redevelopment of Land at Woodhouse Close, Mill Race and West Mills: that a discussion took place of the councils ideas.

Resolved: that members discussed the sites, and agreed that priority would be to re-develop the land a Woodhouse Close site. To do this the Clerk is to establish costings and a detailed plan for the council to asses if it needs to go to a tender process. As part of this a strategy on the division of plots it to be agreed for when larger ones become vacant.

Signed:

Item 6

Bishop Auckland Town Council

29 September 2026

Matters Arising

The action logs are attached in appendix 1. However the following report contains updates on specific items including:

- Insurance
- IT – Broadband and VOIP telephones
- Bishop Auckland Christmas Town 2026
- Floral Planting 2026-27
- Support for Bishops Museum

Insurance

The council's insurance policy renews on 21st September annually. The pre-renewal question has been completed, and the Clerk has been in liaison with the provider regarding ensuring that the policies insured values are reflective of true costs. Policy and resources discussed this at their meeting in early September and agreed under Minute No PRC015/25. A desk top valuation of the Kingsway building is being scheduled.

We are awaiting confirmation that the updated insured values have been added to the policy.

Recommended: that the members note the update.

IT – Broadband

The council have been trying for several months to get an updated and appropriate quotation for fibre broadband. In July the council agreed to get a contractor to assess what was needed. They attended but have never provided a quote despite being asked. At the Policy and Resources Meeting in September IT PRC 016/26 it was agreed to treat the telephone system and broadband separately and to get quotes once a specification was developed. The specification has been delayed as it is hard to get a contractor to engage with an organization of our size without guaranteed contract at the end.

BT have been out and provided details, and the current provider has also been asked to confirm quotatons. Final spec and quotes will be brought to Policy and resources early next month.

Recommended: that members note the update and acknowledge the ongoing challenges.

Bishop Auckland's Christmas Town 2026

Following the extra – ordinary meeting in August the funding agreement has been signed and payments, 1 and 2 have been made, with 3rd and final payment in early October.

Following strategic delivery planning and cost modelling the two delivery organisations Baccanalia for Culture CIC and Bridge Creative CIC took the decision, and the financial risk to further reduce the ticket costs, to ensure that Christmas town remains as affordable as possible. This is following feedback from the public and from the council. The risk on any difference between sales and delivery costs remains that of Baccanlia CIC and Bridge Creavtive CIC.

The organisers chose to utilise 'Engagement baiting' sometime known as *rage bait which is a* marketing, media and social media technique where content is deliberately designed to provoke anger, outrage or frustration in order to generate attention and engagement.

The principle is simple: people are often more likely to comment, share and react to something that makes them angry than something they simply agree with. As a result, controversial content can spread rapidly through social media algorithms. Many media outlets took the bait and thought that this could mean that event would possibly be cancelled. This has generate lots of debate about the event, and that it is viewed as a positive event for the town and that lots of people were not happy that they thought there was a risk to the event taking place.

The Town Clerk was advised that they were making all tickets between £5-10 across the weekend and it would be reported at this meeting that this was taking place. They made the announcement on Tuesday 15th September 2026 that a special announcement/ statement would be made on 17th September. This was to give time to assure traders that the event was taking place, and to ensure that those who had already purchased tickets were refunded the difference. The Town Clerk was advised of the pricing change but not about how the message would be conveyed.

At the time of writing the sales for the event are exceeding the predicted levels and Baccanalia are confident that sufficient tickets will be sold ahead of the event. Details of ticket sales will be brought to the meeting.

Recommended: that the members note the update and the reduced price of tickets making the event even more affordable.

Floral Planting 2026 -27

As members are aware the Allotment and Environment Committee have been managing the Town Centre floral displays, including planters and fixed beds in Market Place, Bus Station and Bob Hardisty Drive.

The planting scheme and the community engagement/ inclusion has been very well received and received Gold award at the 2026 Northumbria in Bloom Awards, and then went on to win the best in class for the towns category. The judges have commended the excellent partnership working and community engagement activities. The introduction of sustainable and perennial planting is

The Committee have been considering options for 2027, these include:

- having two blue themed planting of the 'Bishops' colours which is extra special with the football club celebrating special anniversaries.
- In preparation are looking to implement bulb planning in October.
- Additional planters at key entry points in the town.
- Use of sustainable Perennial planting where possible, including in new project sites.

However the project planning for this is quite vast to ensure this is delivered successfully all resources will need to be directed into this project for a couple of weeks.

Recommended: that to ensure that the preparation is in place for the project management of the bulb planting, and themed planting and tubs for 2027.

Support for Bishops Museum

The Community Committee were made aware under minute no CC020/26a the Bishops Museum shop is struggling for funding. They have applied for Charitable status, and this keeps getting delayed from the awarding body as smaller originations fall to the bottom of the pile. This limits the funding which they are able to apply for meaning that local Network funding etc is not within their reach. The shop is more than shirt sales, it has memorabilia and exhibitions, and most importantly is a hub for people who would not necessarily attend other groups or activities. They have had huge success with work experience and helping young people too. It is a lifeline to those who are involved. The costs for running the shop have been privately funded historically, and the supporter isn't able to continue this at the moment. The shop costs approx. £12,000 per annum to rent and run with bills, currently the rent given at a 50% from the landlord. However, the rent payment is behind and the landlord is considering selling the building.

The clerk has asked DCC if there is any support available.

Recommended: that members consider the situation.

Item 7c

Bishop Auckland Town Council

29 September 2026

Feedback from NALC Conference

The Clerk and Deputy attended the NALC national conference in London on the 24th June 2026. The below is a summary of the sessions attended.

Conference title - Setting the Agenda: Leadership, priorities and the future parish and town councils 24 June 2026

The opening session by Cllr Iain Hamilton, Chair, National Association of Local Councils set the tone for the conference, bringing the sector together at the start of a pivotal day for parish and town councils. The session set the strategic context for the day ahead, reflecting on the changing local government landscape and the vital role parish and town councils play at the heart of their communities.

Devolution Delivered: What the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 means for parish and town councils

With the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 becoming law, this session cuts straight to what matters for parish and town councils. The minister for this policy area Baroness Sharon Taylor of Stevenage, reflected on what the legislation will mean in practice. This was informative, but the view was that there is still more to do to include Town and Parish Councils as it doesn't always feel like things are cascading down in the way that they have been promised. The imminent change in Government leadership was reflected on and the hope of improvements to town and parish councils.

Power, Assets and Influence: Have parish and town councils gained from reorganisation?

Local government reorganisation has created new opportunities and new pressures for parish and town councils willing to step up. We in Durham went through this change almost 20 years ago, however some areas are just facing this now. Northampton Town Council, established in 2021, inherited a substantial portfolio of assets and services following the abolition of the former principal authority. Bridgwater Town Council has taken a different but equally ambitious route, entering into formal agreements with Somerset Council to manage and own a wide range of local services, from parks and markets to street cleaning and tackling fly-tipping. Together, these case studies explored the reality behind the headlines.

It raised questions relating to whether reorganisation genuinely strengthened town councils' status, budgets and ability to shape place. Lessons learnt from previous re-organisation didn't seem to have been taken into account and successful outcomes were based upon existing relationships between town and parishes and their principal authorities, therefore the quality of outcomes reported were based on quality of exiting relationships.

From Declaration to Delivery: How a parish and town council turned climate ambition into action

Many parish and town councils have declared a climate emergency, but turning ambition into sustained action is the real challenge. Exmouth Town Council moved decisively from commitment to delivery. After declaring a climate and ecological emergency, Exmouth took a hard look at its carbon footprint and, crucially, what it could realistically control. That work sparked a series of practical steps, from building strong partnerships with the local climate movement and investing in dedicated officer capacity to adopting a clear, deliverable climate action strategy.

Crowned Climate Response of the Year at NALC's Star Council Awards 2024/25, Exmouth's experience offers honest insight into what worked, what required cultural change, and how even within limited powers and resources, town and parish councils can lead by example.

There were some parts which we could look to implement, however Falmouth had made climate change their key priority in the council plan, with even declaring that people should eat a meat free diet.

Local Government Finance: Challenges, resilience, and good governance

The government has promised a simpler, more sustainable and more efficient system of local government, the session explored what does that ambition mean for parish and town councils in practice?

The session brought together a panel of sector experts to examine how recent reforms, including devolution and local government reorganisation, are affecting parish finances. It questioned whether councils better supported and more resilient, or are pressures increasing? It was discussed that the smaller authorities' audit regime still fit for purpose, or is further change on the horizon. It was discussed about changes and potential changes to AGAR including digital submission, and further changes to assertions. This was delivered by Chief executive, Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments.

Your Voice, Your Impact: What comes next for parish and town councils

This closing session brought the conference to a conclusion, reflecting on the ideas, challenges and opportunities explored throughout the day. Together, we considered how parish and town councils have used the conference to make their voices heard, engage with national decision-makers and strengthen their influence within a changing local government landscape. The session drew out key messages from across the programme and look ahead to how councils can build on new insights, connections and confidence to drive positive change in their communities.

Overall the conference was very well organised, and there was 'market place' event during breaks and lunch to meeting with suppliers such as energy, lighting and IT as well as the likes of the Boundary commission. We had conversations with them regarding a boundary review they confirmed that this was something which the council had to pursue with the principal authority and not something they would be involved in.

It was good to be in a room with a range of peers, a good mix of councillors and town council staff were present. Some good connections were made with other parishes out of area, along with good conversations with contacts and offers of peer support as well as lots of interest in Bishop Auckland and our activities.

Staff will be looking to utilise some of the information learnt as well as utilising the contacts made. Valued contact with national NALC colleagues was made, and hearing about national developments enables Bishop Auckland to be on the front foot with developments and more responsive to change.

Recommended: that members note the update, and consider enabling annual attendance at this event, and increasing training budgets to reflect this.

Bishop Auckland Town Council

28 September 2026

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

The Town Council have received notification of the limited assurance review for the year ending 31 March 2026 from the external auditor Forvis Mazars. As shown in section 3 of the appendix 1 as attached, the external auditor reports that their limited opinion assurance opinion for 2025-26 is as follows:

On the basis of our review of sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Audit Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with the Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention for giving cause for concern that relevant legislation ad regulatory requirements have not been met.

Under other matters they report:

Box 11 of Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been incorrectly completed. The Council has recorded "No" where "Yes" would have been appropriate, as it does not act as a sole-managing trustee and should therefore confirm the exclusion of trust fund transactions. Although the intended position can be inferred from other disclosures within the AGAR, it is acknowledged that the updated wording of the 2025/26 form may have contributed to this misinterpretation. The Council is reminded of the importance of accurate completion of all assertions to ensure clarity and compliance with proper practices.

The Clerk and RFO confirms that this was incorrectly completed, and it was the changes in the wording which has caused this confusion. It is noted for 2026-27 and will not happen again.

Under minor scope for improvement in the covering letter they report:

The authority did not fully quantify and explain the variance in Box 9 (Total Fixed Assets and Long-Term Investments and Assets) in the significant variances document. As Box 9 is exempt from the 15% threshold, any movement must be fully explained and reconciled to the pound. Although explanations were subsequently obtained the authority must ensure that for the 2026/2027 AGAR, any variance in Box 9 is clearly quantified and explained within the significant variances document to comply with reporting requirements.

The explanation of variance had been provided, in full however in transcribing the information it appeared that there was unaccounted for amount, as the Dell Monitors has been recorded at 347.85 and it was actually 374.85 the 7 and 4 had been put the wrong way round. This explanation was accepted with the appropriate evidence.

For 2026-27 the AGAR is going digital and transcription errors will be reduced, as information will pull directly from the asset register.

In line with Proper Practices the completed AGAR is available on the Town Council website, along with a Notice of Conclusion of Audit, which has also been placed in the Town Notice Board.

Recommended: that members

- receive and note the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the financial year ended 31 March 2026, together with the External Auditor's Report and Certificate, and confirms that the required publication requirements have been met.
- That Mitchel and Grieveson are re-appointed as Internal Auditor for 2026-27.

Newcastle office
Sustainably routed via:
30 Old Bailey
London
EC4M 7AU

Tel: +44 (0)191 383 6300
forvismazars.com/uk

Ms S Harris
Bishop Auckland Town Council
Kingsway Court
54 Kingsway
Bishop Auckland
County Durham
DL14 7JF

Direct line: +44 (0)191 383 6348
Email: local.councils@mazars.co.uk

Date: 7 September 2026

Dear Ms Harris

Completion of the limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2026

We have completed our review for the year ended 31 March 2026 and I have pleasure in enclosing the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The External Auditor's Certificate and Report is given in Section 3.

If there are any significant matters arising from the review, they are summarised in the External Auditor's certificate in Section 3. If we have identified minor scope for improvement we have recorded this on page 2 of this letter. The Council should consider these matters and decide what action is required. In most cases this will be self-evident. In some instances we have referred to further guidance available, such as the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel Practitioners' Guide (England) 2026/27. This can be obtained via your NALC or SLCC branch, or downloaded free of charge at the following website: **https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/practitioners-guide-2025.html**.

Please also note that a copy of the 2026/27 Practitioner's Guide has now been released and is available, alongside a summary of the summary of changes from the 2025 version, at the following website: **https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/practitioners-guide-2026-27.html**. We would encourage all authorities to become familiar with this document ahead of preparing their 2026/27 Annual Governance and Accountability Returns.

Action you are required to take:

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 set out what you must do at the conclusion of the review. In summary, you are required to:

Publish (which must include publication on the authority's website) a statement **on or before 30 September to confirm:**

- that the review has been concluded and that the statement of accounts has been published;
- of the rights of inspection conferred on local government electors by section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; and
- the address at which, and the hours during which, those rights may be exercised.

- Keep copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return remains available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was first published.

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 do not specify the period the Completion Notice needs to be on the council's website, but this period must be reasonable.

Minor scope for improvement in 2026/27

The authority did not fully quantify and explain the variance in Box 9 (Total Fixed Assets and Long-Term Investments and Assets) in the significant variances document. As Box 9 is exempt from the 15% threshold, any movement must be fully explained and reconciled to the pound. Although explanations were subsequently obtained the authority must ensure that for the 2026/2027 AGAR, any variance in Box 9 is clearly quantified and explained within the significant variances document to comply with reporting requirements.

Amendment to the Practitioners' Guide 2026/27 in respect of Section 2 Box 11 Trust Fund Transactions

As part of the Accounting Statements (Section 2), the authority is asked to confirm whether there are any trust fund transactions included in the figures. Box 11 has been amended to state the authority should answer based on whether trust fund transactions have been excluded from the AGAR.

We wish to draw attention to a change within the 2026/27 Practitioner's Guide (point 2.32) which confirms the authority will need to respond 'Yes' where the figures include trust fund transactions. We would encourage all authorities to familiarise themselves with the 2026/27 Practitioner's Guide (available on the NALC website) ahead of completing their 2026/27 AGAR.

Accessibility Regulations

We are aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requirement for a physical 'wet ink' signature on the original AGAR, does not allow parish council's to fully comply with the Accessibility Regulations. The National Audit Office are aware that the two pieces of legislation are not compatible, therefore smaller authorities are advised to make it clear on their website that the document is a scan and will not be fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.

Audit fee

Our fee note for the audit, which is in accordance with the audit fee scales set by SAAA, and available at **Audit Fees | Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (saaa.co.uk)** will follow.

If your invoice is not as expected, please check the audit fee scales via the link above as your fee band may have changed.

We would be grateful if you could arrange for this to be paid at the earliest opportunity.

Commitment to achieving net zero

We've made an important change to how we handle post - and sustainability is driving it.

In line with our net zero targets, we encourage digital communication wherever possible. However, should it be necessary for you to communicate with us by post, our correspondence address is **30 Old Bailey, London, EC4M 7AU**.

Yours sincerely

James Collins
Director
For and on behalf of Forvis Mazars LLP

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- **where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £15 million; or**
- **where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:**
  - **are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or**
  - **have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)**

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices.*
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
   - The **Annual Internal Audit Report must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
   - **Sections 1 and 2 must** be completed and approved by the authority.
   - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2026.**
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2026** Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
   - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
   - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2026
   - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
   - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
   - Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities **must** publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2026 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2025/26** approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2025/26** approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2026 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

**for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.*

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments **must** be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2026
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) **must** be approved before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references, even where approved on the same day.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) **must** certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority **must** in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor **must** be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements **(Section 2, page 5)**. An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- Additional costs may be incurred if additional audit work is required.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2025) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2026).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2026**

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✔	
	Has all additional information requested, including **the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights**, been provided for the external auditor?	✔	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✔	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✔	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✔	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?	✔	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✔	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at **31 March 2026** been reconciled to Box 8?	✔	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✔	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? **NB:** do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.	✔	

Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices, can be downloaded from **www.nalc.gov.uk** or from **www.ada.org.uk**

Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL

WWW.BISHOPAUCKLAND-TC.GOV.UK

During the financial year ended 31 March 2026, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2025/26 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			✓
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024/25 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(during the 2025/26 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2024-25 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2024/25 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✓		
O. The authority has complied with laws, regulations & proper practices relating to digital and data compliance.	✓		

	Yes	No	Not applicable
P. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 13/05/2026 DD/MM/YYYY DD/MM/YYYY

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: NIGEL REA FCA

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: [signature]

Date: 13/05/26

***If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).**

Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report **must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

Bishop Auckland Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	*'Yes' means that this authority:*
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✔		*prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.*
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✔		*made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.*
3. We have assured ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✔		*has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.*
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✔		*during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.*
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✔		*considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.*
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✔		*arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.*
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✔		*responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.*
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✔		*disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.*
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes: —	No: —	N/A: ✔ — *has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.*
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.	✔		*has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.*

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

26/05/2026

and recorded as minute reference:

TC013d/26

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair [illegible]

Clerk Harris

www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

Bishop Auckland Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures **must** agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	312311	291853	*Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value **must** agree to Box 7 of previous year.*
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	404699	483029	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	48047	46432	*Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.*
4. (-) Staff costs	155052	171207	*Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.*
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	85047	4113	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	233104	248695	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	291853	397300	*Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. **must** equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).*
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	287018	396522	*The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – **To agree with bank reconciliation.***
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	203954	208906	*The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.*
10. Total borrowings	98446	97440	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?		✔	*For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.*

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval.

SHarris

Date 13 - 05 - 2026

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

26|05|2026

as recorded in minute reference:

TC013d|26

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of **Bishop Auckland Town Council**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit,** it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/ .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2026 and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2025/26

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

Box 11 of Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been incorrectly completed. The Council has recorded "No" where "Yes" would have been appropriate, as it does not act as a sole-managing trustee and should therefore confirm the exclusion of trust fund transactions. Although the intended position can be inferred from other disclosures within the AGAR, it is acknowledged that the updated wording of the 2025/26 form may have contributed to this misinterpretation. The Council is reminded of the importance of accurate completion of all assertions to ensure clarity and compliance with proper practices.

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2026

*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable

External Auditor Name

Forvis Mazars LLP, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 1DF

External Auditor Signature Forvis Mazars LLP Date **4 September 2026**

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Notice of conclusion of the audit

Annual Return for the year ended 31st March 2026

Section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015

	Notes
1. The audit of accounts for the Council/Meeting (a) for the year ended 31 March 2025 has been concluded. 2. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of the Council /Meeting (a) on application to:	(a) Delete as appropriate
(b) Sarah Harris, Clerk & RFO, Bishop Auckland Town Council, 54 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7JF. The hours available to view the return are 9-5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am-4.30pm on a Friday.	(b) Insert name, position and address of the person to whom local government electors should apply to inspect the Annual Return
2. Copies will be provided to any local government elector on payment of £1.00 (c) for each copy of the Annual Return.	(c) Insert a reasonable sum for copying costs
Announcement made by: (d) Sarah Harris, Town Clerk & RFO	(d) Insert name and position of person placing the notice
Date of announcement: (e) 16 September 2026	(e) Insert date of placing of the notice

Item 9B

BATC

Payments for Authorisation 29 September 2026

vouch	date	total	Description	Payment Type	VAT	Orgnaisation	Legal Power used fo	status
DEMOCRACY								
325	21.09.2026	£66.20	HMRC, Tax & NI for Members - September 202	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	The Local Authoritie	contract
326	24.09.2026	£300.50	Members Allowances - September 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	The Local Authoritie	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 a	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 a	contract
295	07.08.2026	£180.64	Telephone and Broadband, August 2026 (Dupli	EP	£0.00	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Provision of Parish a	contract
296	12.08.2026	-£180.64	Telephone and Broadband, August 2026 (Refur	EP	£0.00	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Provision of Parish a	contract
298	02.09.2026	£180.84	Telephone and Broadband, September 2026	DD	£30.14	Bluecom Services Ltd.	Provision of Parish a	contract
317	30.09.2026	£69.00	Replacement of Damaged 1Gang, 2 Way Lights	EP	£11.50	R. Lightfoot Electrical & Alarm Engineers	Provision of Parish a	paid
318	30.09.2026	£25,000.00	Overpayment on Principle, Public Works Loan	EP	£0.00	Public Works Loan Board	Borrowing money - I	paid
319	30.09.2026	£8,000.00	Overpayment on Principle, Public Works Loan I	EP	£0.00	Public Works Loan Board	Borrowing money - I	paid
320	30.09.2026	£9.17	Overpayment on Principle, Public Works Loan I	EP	£0.00	Public Works Loan Board	Borrowing money - I	paid
321	30.09.2026	£20.00	Kingsway, Window Cleaning, September 2026	EP	£0.00	AIWC Commercial and Business Cleaning Ltd.	Provision of Parish a	contract
334	30.09.2026	£7.96	Gtechniq W5 All Purpose Cleaner and Degrease	EP	£1.33	Gtechniq Ltd. (Amazon Business)	Entertainment and t	paid
335	30.09.2026	£9.95	Gtechniq W7 Tar and Glue Remover Spray, 500	EP	£1.66	Gtechniq Ltd. (Amazon Business)	Entertainment and t	paid
340	30.09.2026	£450.00	Cleaning of Town Council Offices, September 2	EP	£0.00	Blitzed 24/7 Cleaning	Provision of Parish a	outstanding
ADMIN								
214	21.08.2026	£2,602.69	Staff Pensions - July 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of th	contract
235	04.09.2026	£26.42	Allotment Officer, Travel Expenses Adjustment	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government A	paid
273	28.08.2026	£10,868.82	Staff Salaries - Aug 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of th	contract
275	21.08.2026	£2,602.69	Staff Pensions - Aug 2026	EP	£0.00	Durham County Council	Administration of th	contract
280	28.08.2026	£35.09	Photocopier Usage 31/07/2026-30/08/2026	EP	£5.85	Totals Business Computers Ltd. (Total Busine	Local Government A	contract
287	01.09.2026	£27.32	iPhone 16e Mobile Phone Case and 10x Pack Su	EP	£4.58	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT N	Local Government A	paid
294	07.09.2026	£232.40	Mobile Phones 24/08/2026-23/09/2026	DD	£38.73	O2 - Telefónica UK Limited	Local Government A	contract
297	03.09.2026	£175.00	7 Hrs Media Strategy, Activities for August 202	EP	£0.00	Hawkey PR	Local Government A	paid
301	04.09.2026	£56.65	Town Clerk, Travel Expenses 26/05/2026-05/0	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government A	paid
302	04.09.2026	£43.60	Deputy Town Clerk, Travel Expenses 01/04/202	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government A	paid
303	04.09.2026	£18.52	Admin Officer, Travel Expenses 03/03/2026-24	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government A	paid
304	04.09.2026	£13.20	Allotment Officer, Travel Expenses 03/08/2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Local Government A	paid
313	31.12.2026	£236.77	Samsung Galaxy Tab A11+, Grey, 128GB and SE	EP	£39.46	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT N	Local Government A	paid
316	30.09.2026	£858.00	SLCC National Conference 2026	EP	£143.00	Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)	Local Government A	paid

BATC

Payments for Authorisation 29 September 2026

323	24.09.2026	£11,745.03	Staff Salaries - September 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of th	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 th	contract
327	21.09.2026	£3,109.00	Staff Pensions - September 2026	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)	Administration of th	contract
332	30.09.2026	£624.00	Payroll Services, April-September 2026	EP	£104.00	Anderson & Co. Accountancy & Taxation	Local Government A	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 N	Local Government A	paid
ALLOTMENTS								
254	10.07.2026	£1.61	SumUp Card Transaction Fees - Allotment Rent	DC - 9Edge	£0.00	SumUp Payments Ltd.	Small Holdings and A	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 A	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 A	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 A	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 A	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 A	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 A	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 A	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 A	n/a
308	31.12.2026	-£381.50	Pollards, Water 01/06/2026-30/06/2026	-	£0.00	Wave Utilities - Pollards Allotment	Small Holdings and A	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 A	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 A	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 A	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 A	contract
COMMUNITY								
234	31.07.2026	£233.00	Brick Fairytales, 14 Clue Cards, 50x Posters 300	EP	£28.00	Lintons Printers Limited	Entertainment and t	paid
278	22.07.2026	£303.06	Community Fund - Printing of Lealfets, Bookma	EP	£0.00	Durham Amateur Football Trust (DAFT)	Entertainment and t	paid
288	28.08.2026	£48.49	Enchanted Princess Singalong, Arts and Crafts S	DC	£0.00	Mega Discount Store	Entertainment and t	paid
289	30.08.2026	£200.00	Brick Fairytales, £200 Gift Voucher for 1st Prize	DC	£0.00	LEGO Company Ltd.	Entertainment and t	paid
290	30.08.2026	£50.00	Brick Fairytales, £50 Gift Voucher for 1st Prize (	DC	£0.00	LEGO Company Ltd.	Entertainment and t	paid
291	30.08.2026	£150.00	Brick Fairytales, £150 Gift Voucher for 2nd Priz	DC	£0.00	LEGO Company Ltd.	Entertainment and t	paid
292	30.08.2026	£100.00	Brick Fairytales, £100 Gift Voucher for 3rd Prize	DC	£0.00	LEGO Company Ltd.	Entertainment and t	paid
293	03.09.2026	£120.00	8x Tickets to Northumbria in Bloom Awards Pr	EP	£0.00	Northumbria In Bloom	Entertainment and t	paid
300	04.09.2026	£2,268.00	Watering of Summer Flower Tubs and Flower B	EP	£378.00	I C Liddle Services	Open Spaces - Open	contract
328	18.09.2026	£1,000.00	Community Fund - Bishop Auckland Choral Soc	EP	£0.00	Bishop Auckland Choral Society	Entertainment and t	paid
329	18.09.2026	£30.00	2x Tickets to Northumbria in Bloom 2026 at 'Th	DC	£0.00	Northumbria In Bloom	Entertainment and t	paid
338	30.09.2026	£50.00	10x Catering for Northumbria in Bloom Judging	EP	£8.33	Bishop Auckland College	Entertainment and t	paid

Item 9B

BATC

Payments for Authorisation 29 September 2026

EVENTS								
299	01.09.2026	£378.00	9x A1 Foamex Boards for Heritage Fayre 2026	EP	£63.00	PMI Creative Ltd	Entertainment and t	paid
314	31.12.2026	£18.00	20x Heritage Fayre Poster	EP	£3.00	Lintons Printers Limited	Entertainment and t	paid
315	11.09.2026	£360.00	Heritage Fayre, 3x Full Page Advert in Bishop P	EP	£60.00	South West Durham News CIC	Newsletters - LGA 1	paid
322	30.09.2026	£384.00	2x Event Feather Banners, Large Cross Base	EP	£64.00	PMI Creative Ltd	Entertainment and t	paid
330	14.09.2026	£110.00	Heritage Fayre, 1x £50 and 3x £20 One4All Gift	DC	£0.00	Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd.	Entertainment and t	paid
331	19.09.2026	£15.80	Heritage Fayre, 4x Quality Streets Tubs, 550g	DC	£2.63	Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd.	Entertainment and t	paid
333	30.09.2026	£51.60	Heritage Fayre 2026, 1x Banner 1.5m x cm and	EP	£8.60	PMI Creative Ltd	Entertainment and t	paid
337	30.09.2026	£97.73	MoverX Storage Trolley 200L, 1x Pack of Wood	EP	£16.29	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT N	Entertainment and t	outstanding
339	30.09.2026	£900.00	150x Catering for Youth Awards at Town Hall, 2	EP	£150.00	Bishop Auckland College	Entertainment and t	outstanding
341	30.09.2026	£32.70	Hertitage Fayre, 200x Kraft Paper Coffee Cups,	EP	£5.45	Amazon Business EU S.á r.l. UK Branch (VAT N	Entertainment and t	outstanding
343	30.09.2026	£970.50	Town Hall Room Hire, Table/Chair Covers, Proj	EP	£161.75	Durham County Council	Entertainment and t	outstanding

Item 9B

BATC

Payments for Authorisation 29 September 2026

Item 9c

Bishop Auckland Town Council

29 September 2026

Budget and precept Setting Process and Timeline

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.

Proposed Budget Setting Timetable

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

Key Considerations

- The timetable allows committees adequate opportunity to identify service needs and priorities.
- Budget proposals will take account of the Council's Strategic Plan, existing commitments, earmarked reserves and anticipated inflationary pressures.
- Members will receive sufficient financial information to support informed decision-making.
- The budget and precept must be approved before the deadline set by Durham County Council for parish precept requests, this deadline is usually within the first two weeks of January.

Financial Implications

The budget-setting process will determine the Council's revenue and capital expenditure plans and the level of precept required for 2027/28.

Recommendation

That Members of the council is recommended to approve the proposed budget-setting timetable for the preparation and approval of the 2027/28 Budget and Precept.

Item 10

Bishop Auckland Town Council

29 September 2026

Correspondence

A. **Letter from Dame Snowdon DCVO** – has been received in appendix 1

Recommended: that members note the letter.

B. **Letter from 1973 RTM Company Limited** – has been received in appendix 2, with regard to Christmas Town. It is good to see that the Christmas Town Event is supported and that the benefits of having such an event are acknowledged, and that 1873 RTM Company limited are not objecting to the event taking place, they are highlighting some issues that they wish to be addressed.

Events the size and nature of Bishop Auckland Christmas Town are complex to plan, manage and run. All appropriate legislation are followed including the Martyn's Law requirements. The Town Council can confirm that they ensure that appropriate risk assessments and insurance are in place for the event, as well as appropriate Safety Advisory Group sign off. The event has been running for 5 years.

An acknowledgement letter (appendix 3) was sent to the directors at 1873 RTM Company Limited, at their registered address, as no address was included in the request.

Baccanalia for Culture CIC as event management have responded to the letter and a copy of their response is included in appendix 4.

Image A in over leaf shows the location of the residential properties and the location of the generator compound and Ferris wheel. Images B and C show the Ferris wheel in situ.

The letter sets out two main areas for the council to address:

- Precept and
- Requirements for the 2026 event.

Precept

The directors also comment in the letter that they would like the opportunity to comment on activities taking place in the Market Place, and on how the town's precept is spent.

As the Market Place is owned and controlled by Durham County Council the Town Council and the residents are not consulted in terms of activities and events taking place on the land. The current Safety Advisory Group and Right to Occupy process does not include residents or town and parish councils as a consultee.

A 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. There is no general statutory duty requiring parish or town councils to consult residents before setting the precept or before spending precept income on ordinary council services and projects.

The 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 for 2026-27, including supporting events such as Christmas Town, Bishop Auckland Food Festival, etc.

The Council have also undertaken consultation throughout the summer of 2026 relating to the Council plan and priorities, for which the Council are receiving feedback at September meeting.

Requirements for the 2026 event

Response and updated information for the range of concerns under requirements for the 2026 event are as follows:

1 – Keep frontage clear & 2 – maintain safe separation from the building

In their response Baccanalia have confirmed that in 2025 part of a Ferris wheel, which was primarily placed in front of 7 Market Place. Passengers may have had views towards the westmost upstairs windows at 9/9A Market Place. They have also confirmed that a closed generator compound was located on the roadway outside of 9/9a Market Place, however this was more than 2.5 meters from the property.

The Ferris wheel is predominantly located outside of no. 7 Market Place. photos overleaf show the location.

At all times the pavements, and roadways need to be clear from obstruction to enable emergency access across the site. No infrastructure in installed on pavement outside of the property or on the road adjacent. However it is installed in parking area and central pavement area beyond the single carriageway road outside of the property.

The entire Market Place is within a conservation area, and whilst no one wishes for a residential properties privacy to be compromised, the wider restrictions of the Market Place area, weather conditions, emergency access, legislation and practicalities for load in are all considered when designing the site layout.

3 – Control lifting Operations

Baccanalia for culture CIC asked for further clarity around this, as the report is not consistent with site operations. No crane has been used to install or dismantle equipment over the building of 9/9a Market Place. The generators arrive on a low loader lorry with a hiab, but this is not high enough to go above the building as the letter suggests.

4 – Re-locate generators and continuously operating plant

The location of generators and continuously operating plant equipment was considered for 2025. The Ferris wheel needed direct generator access to ensure the adequate power supply. However, consideration is being given for 2026 as to whether continuous power needed by traders and if it is, then if this power supply can be alternatively located, provided that the other Health and Safety elements of generator supply can be achieved.

5- Prevent light and privacy intrusion

The Ferris wheel stops operation at 9pm, with all attractions and lighting turned off no later than 10pm. There are no attractions on site with flashing lights, and festoon lighting is turned off no later than 10pm.

Acknowledgement has been given to the potential perceived privacy intrusion, by Baccanalia and where possible this risk has been mitigated, due to direction of the seating on the wheel.

Image B,C and D overleaf shows the location of the Ferris wheel in 2025. The seating on the wheel all faces left to right as per the photo, and looks across the Market Place to the where the tipi bars are located. Therefore, the risk of privacy intrusion is further mitigated, as to look into the upstairs windows of 9/9A Market Place the rider would need to physically turn their body in the Ferris wheel carriage.

6- Recognise the residential and listed nature of the building

The event organiser are aware that the property has residential elements, as well as being one of many listed buildings in the Market Place event area. This has been acknowledged in the Baccanalia response.

7 – Consult before the layout is finalised

The final site plan is being created, based on attraction requirements for infrastructure and appropriate safety requirements. Ongoing dialog has been encouraged in the Baccanalia and Town Council responses. No other communication has been received from 1873 RTM Company Limited.

8 – Provide clear event contact

A clear event contact has been named, and will again be circulated to the neighbouring properties in advance of the event by way of neighbour letter. This was also done in previous years.

Image A – Showing Market Place photo with addresses and locations of attractions.

Image B - location of Ferris wheel from 2025.

Image C - (Stuart Boulton N Echo) shows that the Ferris wheel 2025

Image D - Photo by L Dobinson Photography from 2025 showing location of the attractions.

Recommended: that members:

- consider the correspondence and agree that the Clerk is to write a letter back to the 1873 RTM Company Limited:

    - 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.

Dame Susan Snowdon DCVO

8th August 2026

Dear Sarah

To be one of the first recipients of the Freedom of Bishop Auckland was an honour and huge privilege.

My sincere thanks to all at the Town Council who made this possible, although I rather think the well behaved sheep!! and Town Crier were the highlight of the occasion.

With renewed thanks and every good wish.

Sue

Beechburn Farm, High Grange, Crook, DL15 8AL
Tel: 07505 053066 email: beechburnfarm@gmail.com

1873 RTM COMPANY LIMITED
Company No. 14444743

3 September 2026

To: Bishop Auckland Town Council
Cc: Baccanalia For Culture CIC
Cc: County Durham Safety Advisory Group / Events Safety, Durham County Council

Re: Bishop Auckland Christmas Town: event arrangements adjacent to 9 Market Place, 9A Market Place and 76–84 Kingsway

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write collectively as the Directors of 1873 RTM Company Limited ("1873 RTM"), the Right to Manage company responsible for the building incorporating 9 Market Place, 9A Market Place and 76–84 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland.

We support Christmas Town and recognise the benefits that a successful event can bring to Bishop Auckland. We are not objecting to the event taking place.

We are writing because rides, generators, lighting and lifting equipment associated with previous Christmas Town events have been positioned extremely close to our building, causing significant disturbance to residents and, on occasions, serious concern about the risk of physical damage to the building itself.

We understand that Bishop Auckland Town Council has agreed to provide funding towards Christmas Town again this year and that Baccanalia For Culture CIC is directly involved in the production and delivery of the event. We are raising these matters now, before the 2026 site layout is finalised, so that the problems experienced in previous years can be addressed at the planning stage.

The building and its residential use

The configuration of the building is not immediately obvious to someone viewing it from the marketplace.

At ground-floor level, 9 Market Place is currently occupied by Fifteas Vintage Tea Rooms. 9A Market Place is a ground-floor residential property. Directly above 9 Market Place are further residential apartments forming part of 76–84 Kingsway, which are accessed from the other side of the building.

The building is therefore principally residential, despite having a commercial unit facing into the marketplace.

A number of bedrooms face directly into the marketplace and some apartments have no alternative bedrooms or living accommodation facing away from it. Equipment positioned immediately outside this frontage can therefore directly affect residents' bedrooms, privacy and ability to sleep.

Other buildings around the marketplace have a similar mixture of residential and commercial use. The event area should not therefore be planned on the assumption that the properties surrounding it are simply commercial premises.

Crane and lifting operations

Our most serious safety concern relates to the crane and associated lifting equipment used during the installation of last year's event.

Several residents were alarmed by its proximity to the building. On one occasion, a resident began filming because they genuinely believed the crane was about to strike the property.

Another resident was concerned that the crane was operating so close to their window that a further movement towards the building could have resulted in it striking and potentially smashing through the window glass.

At points, residents considered the clearance between the equipment and the building to be measured in centimetres.

The property is a substantial listed building with a rebuild value running into millions of pounds. The elevation facing into the marketplace also contains important historic architectural fabric at high level. Heavy lifting equipment should not be operated so close to the building that there is a credible concern about contact with its windows, elevations or listed fabric.

Rides, generators, noise, light and privacy

Fairground rides and associated equipment have also been positioned extremely close to residential windows. Last year, equipment was measured at less than approximately 2.5 metres from parts of the building.

At that distance, residents experienced more than ordinary event noise. People using rides were able to look directly into bedroom windows, resulting in a significant loss of privacy.

The location of the generators caused a separate and more prolonged disturbance.

Last year, a substantial generator bank was positioned opposite the residential frontage. The only separation between the generators and the building was the pavement, a narrow one-way vehicle access road and the opposite edge of that road.

Because the generators and associated infrastructure were installed before the event and remained during dismantling, residents experienced continuous generator noise for approximately one week, including throughout the night. Some residents had to sleep using earplugs.

Lighting from rides and other event equipment has also entered residential bedrooms despite curtains and existing window coverings being closed. Last year, some residents used eye masks and attempted to install additional temporary coverings simply in order to sleep. One resident reported that prolonged flashing light from the event area triggered migraines when using an affected bedroom.

A former tenant of one of the residential properties also told Directors that prolonged additional noise and lighting associated with Christmas Town had caused considerable difficulty and had been one of a number of factors in their decision to leave.

These concerns are not limited to last year. Residents and Directors have raised concerns verbally over a number of years about the proximity and operation of event equipment. In an earlier year, residents also reported what appeared to be sparks coming from the Ferris wheel while it was positioned close to the building.

Taken together, these are recurring concerns about the way this part of the event site has been configured, rather than a complaint about the ordinary inconvenience associated with a short town-centre event.

Consultation and the Town Council precept

The lack of meaningful consultation with residents is also a significant concern.

Residents living around the marketplace currently have little or no opportunity to see the relevant part of the proposed site layout, explain problems experienced in previous years or suggest practical changes before equipment is installed around their homes.

This is particularly disappointing given Bishop Auckland Town Council's financial support for Christmas Town.

Residents living within and around the marketplace pay council tax, including the Bishop Auckland Town Council precept. They therefore contribute directly to the funds from which the Town Council supports events such as Christmas Town.

We do not believe it is reasonable for residents to contribute towards the Town Council's expenditure while having little or no meaningful opportunity to be consulted about arrangements, supported by that expenditure, which directly affect their homes.

We are not suggesting that residents should determine how Christmas Town is run. We are asking for reasonable engagement at a sufficiently early stage to identify obvious problems and agree practical solutions before equipment arrives.

That consultation should include other affected residential property owners and occupiers around the marketplace and surrounding area, not simply the residents within our building.

Requirements for the 2026 event and future years

We ask that the following measures are incorporated into the final site plan and operating arrangements:

1. Keep the frontage clear.

Fairground rides, generators and comparable major infrastructure should not be positioned immediately in front of 9 and 9A Market Place. Our clear preference is for this adjoining area to be kept free of such equipment altogether.

2. Maintain safe separation from the building.

The very limited separation used previously, including equipment positioned within approximately 2.5 metres of the building, is not acceptable. A demonstrably safe and reasonable distance should be maintained from residential windows and the listed structure.

3. Control lifting operations.

Cranes and similar lifting equipment should not operate immediately adjacent to or over the building in the manner witnessed previously. Installation and dismantling arrangements should provide appropriate clearances, exclusion zones, supervision and controls to prevent contact with the building.

4. Relocate generators and continuously operating plant.

Generator banks and other continuously operating plant should not be positioned directly opposite or in similarly close proximity to residential bedrooms. Particular consideration should be given to equipment operating overnight.

5. Prevent light and privacy intrusion.

Rides, attractions and lighting should be positioned and controlled so that high-intensity or flashing light is not directed into residential windows and ride users do not have direct sightlines into bedrooms.

6. Recognise the residential and listed nature of the building.

The residential properties at 9A Market Place and 76–84 Kingsway, including those directly above 9 Market Place, together with the listed status of the building, should be expressly recognised within the site plan, risk assessments and relevant contractor arrangements.

7. Consult before the layout is finalised.

The relevant section of the proposed site plan should be shared with 1873 RTM early enough for practical concerns to be considered before installation begins. Reasonable steps should also be taken to engage with other affected residents around the marketplace.

8. Provide a clear event contact.

A named point of contact and clear escalation route should be provided for urgent issues arising during installation, the event itself and dismantling.

Written response requested

We ask for a written response within 14 days of this letter and, in any event, before the relevant part of the site layout is finalised.

We would also welcome sight of the proposed site plan for the area immediately outside 9 and 9A Market Place once it is available.

Given Bishop Auckland Town Council's financial support for Christmas Town, we ask the Council to confirm that these concerns will be addressed within the arrangements it is funding.

We ask Baccanalia For Culture CIC to confirm how the matters raised in this letter will be reflected within the planning and delivery of the event insofar as they fall within its responsibilities.

We have copied this correspondence to the County Durham Safety Advisory Group / Events Safety function so that Durham County Council is aware of the concerns before this year's arrangements are finalised.

We want to resolve these matters constructively and see Christmas Town succeed. It should be possible to deliver an event which contributes to the prosperity and vitality of

Bishop Auckland while also protecting the residents who live around the marketplace and the significant listed buildings which surround it.

If adequate assurances cannot be provided, 1873 RTM Company Limited will consider raising a formal complaint and objection with Durham County Council, including the relevant event safety, licensing, environmental health and regulatory services, and with any other appropriate authority where necessary.

We therefore ask that this letter is treated as a formal representation from the Directors of 1873 RTM Company Limited and taken into account before the 2026 Christmas Town arrangements are finalised.

Yours faithfully,

The Directors
1873 RTM Company Limited
Company No. 14444743

Item 11.

Bishop Auckland Town Council

29 September 2026

Town Council Strategy Consultation

Over the summer period the town council have been consulting on its draft strategy. Consultation took place online, and at events over the summer.

There were 138 formal responses to the online questionnaire. In additional there were over 300 informal responses to social media posts on the consultation and posted questions.

Below sets out the responses to the formal online questionnaire with a table showing the free text question responses in summary form, and where they fit within the strategy. This is shown in appendix 1.

The summary of response to the online social media questions are show in appendix 2, again this is plotted against where it fits within the strategy and if the strategy needs to be amended.

Formal responses

Of the formal responses:

- 75.4% agreed and strongly agreed with the overall vision for the town of: A proud, thriving, and sustainable town for everyone.
- 62 Reponses thought that the Council were focusing on the right priorities.
    - 38 were not sure
    - 38 stated no and commented:
        - See appendix 1
- People summarised that the biggest issues facing Bishop Auckland over the last 5 years are:
    - See appendix 1
- People ranked the following as very important
    - 67.7% events and Festivals with 32.6% ranking it as somewhat important
    - 69.6% Support for local groups with 29.7% ranking as somewhat important
    - 81.2% youth engagement with 18.1% ranking as somewhat important
    - 91.3% Community Safety with 8.7% ranking as somewhat important
- 116 people commented on what the council could do to improve community wellbeing
    - See appendix 1
- 115 people commented on what the council could do to improve environmental issues
    - See appendix 1
- People reported the following under very satisfied and somewhat satisfied
- 58.0% Green spaces, 24.6% neither satisfied or dissatisfied, 17.3% dissatisfied

- 57.4% Planting and displays, 19.6% neither satisfied or dissatisfied, 13% dissatisfied
- 33.4% Allotment provision, 57.2% neither satisfied or dissatisfied, 9.4% dissatisfied
- People ranked the following as environmental priorities
    - 88.4% Cleaner streets
    - 57.2% More planting and greener
    - 44.2% Biodiversity
    - 39.9% Climate action
    - 37.7% other
- 33 people said the council were visible and easy to engage with, 60 said they weren't and 41 were not sure.
- People responded that the thought the council should priorities the following to strengthen their role
    - See appendix 1
- People responded that the thought that the council should do one thing to improve it should be:
    - See appendix 1
- They responded with other comments as follows
- 64 people said that they would stay in touch to receive updates from Bishop Auckland Town Council

Social media

From the social media posts, as shown in appendix 2, the key themes/ reoccurring issues were:

- Condition and cleanliness of Newgate Street.
- Empty shops and declining retail offer.
- Parking charges and accessibility.
- Perceived imbalance between investment in the Market Place/tourism and the wider town centre.
- Desire for markets, independent businesses, events and activities that bring people into the town centre.

Recommended

That members consider the consultation feedback and agree that the strategy is on track overall however emphasis 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
- 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.

Task the Clerk and Deputy 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.

Appendix 1 – summary of formal consultation free text comments

Summary of the response	Key messages for the council	Is it covered in the strategy if not what needs to be included?
Vision: A proud, thriving, and sustainable town for everyone.		
If you have said no to question 3 which was (Do you agree with the overall vision for the town? A proud, thriving and sustainable town for everyone)please advise what you think is missing		
Town Centre and Retail A significant number of respondents expressed concern about the decline of the town centre, particularly the high number of empty shops and the loss of traditional retail opportunities. There were repeated calls for greater investment in attracting new businesses, supporting independent traders, reviving the market, and increasing the variety of shops available. Some suggested initiatives such as an indoor food hall within the Newgate Centre and incentives to encourage businesses and restaurants to locate in the town. **Footfall, Parking and Accessibility** Many comments linked the town's challenges to low footfall, with respondents suggesting free parking as a way to encourage more visitors into the town centre. Concerns were also raised about investment priorities, particularly around the new bus station, with some residents questioning its value when compared with measures aimed at revitalising the high street and attracting visitors. **Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety** A recurring theme was the need to address anti-social behaviour, particularly involving young people. Residents felt that tackling these issues was essential to improving perceptions of safety and encouraging greater use of the town centre. Town Appearance and Public Realm Several respondents highlighted concerns regarding the appearance of certain areas of the town. Comments suggested that investment and environmental improvements are concentrated around key visitor areas, while other parts of the town, particularly beyond the Market Place and Newgate Street, receive less attention. Specific concerns were raised about street planting provision and the visual impact of the fencing surrounding the church. **Resident Priorities and Consultation** Some respondents felt that the needs of local residents are being overshadowed by tourism-focused investment and external influences on decision-making. There were calls for greater engagement with residents and for local priorities to be given greater consideration when planning future improvements. **Community Activity and Long-Term Investment**	The comments suggest that residents would like to see: • Greater focus on reducing town centre vacancies and supporting local businesses. • Action to increase footfall and encourage people to visit and spend time in the town centre. • Measures to tackle anti-social behaviour and improve perceptions of safety. • Investment spread more evenly across all parts of the town, not just key visitor areas. • Stronger consideration of resident priorities alongside tourism and regeneration projects. • More sustainable, long-term community programmes rather than predominantly one-off events. • Continued support for local groups, sports clubs and community organisations. • This feedback demonstrates a strong desire for a thriving, attractive town centre that balances tourism, regeneration and investment with the everyday needs of local residents.	The vision of A proud, thriving, and sustainable town for everyone. Covers the concerns, and the other feedback

Whilst community events were generally recognised as positive, some residents questioned the long-term value of one-off events and suggested that ongoing programmes and activities would have a more meaningful impact on community wellbeing and social outcomes. **Support for Community Groups** There were requests for increased support for local community organisations and sports clubs, including recognition of the contribution made by the towns grass roots sports clubs		
What do you think are the biggest issues facing Bishop Auckland in the next 5 years?		
The responses highlight several strong and recurring concerns about the future of Bishop Auckland, with the most commonly raised issues relating to the town centre, anti-social behaviour, opportunities for young people, economic growth, and the balance between regeneration and the needs of residents. **Town Centre Decline and Empty Properties** The most frequently raised concern was the continuing decline of the town centre, particularly Newgate Street and the high street. Residents highlighted the large number of vacant shops, deteriorating buildings, poor property maintenance by landlords, and a general perception that the town centre is becoming less attractive and less viable. Many respondents felt that investment has not translated into a thriving town centre and were concerned that further decline could continue without significant intervention. **Retail, Footfall and Economic Development** Many residents expressed concern about the movement of businesses and shoppers towards Tindale Crescent and other nearby centres such as Darlington. There were repeated calls for investment to attract businesses, reduce shop vacancies, support independent traders and diversify what the town centre offers. Respondents recognised that traditional retail is changing but wanted to see alternative uses developed, including leisure, hospitality, culture, entertainment and community-focused activities. **Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Community Safety** Anti-social behaviour was one of the most frequently mentioned issues throughout the responses. Concerns included youth disorder, vandalism, shop damage, littering, drug-related issues, e-bikes and scooters being used irresponsibly, and a perceived lack of police presence. Many residents felt that improving safety and reducing anti-social behaviour is essential if people are to feel comfortable using the town centre. **Young People and Youth Provision** A substantial number of comments identified a lack of opportunities, facilities and activities for children and young people. Respondents linked the shortage of youth provision to anti-social behaviour and expressed concern about the future prospects of younger generations. Suggestions included increased investment in youth services, clubs, recreational facilities, employment opportunities and involving young people more directly in decision-making. **Employment, Poverty and Cost of Living** Residents raised concerns about economic challenges including limited employment opportunities, particularly for young people, low earnings, unemployment, poverty and the	The responses suggest that residents see the following as the most important issues facing Bishop Auckland over the next five years: • Revitalising the town centre and reducing vacant properties. • Increasing footfall and supporting a stronger local economy. • Tackling anti-social behaviour and improving public safety. • Investing in opportunities, facilities and support for young people. • Creating sustainable employment and addressing poverty. • Ensuring regeneration delivers visible benefits for local residents. • Balancing tourism growth with the everyday needs of the community. • Addressing housing, infrastructure and public service pressures. • Improving transport, parking and accessibility. • Enhancing cleanliness, maintenance and civic pride across the town.	Many of the areas of concern are not directly in the remit of the Town Council. However through the strategy and corporate and the overarching strategy the partnership working more influence over this concerns can be achieved, through appropriate communications more community resilience can be built.

ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Some respondents felt that economic development should focus on creating sustainable employment and supporting local businesses. **Regeneration and Future Vision** Whilst many respondents acknowledged the investment and regeneration already taking place within the town, several expressed concern about whether current projects will deliver long-term benefits for residents. Comments frequently called for a clearer, more joined-up vision that creates a sustainable economy, strengthens the town centre and ensures residents see tangible benefits from investment. **Tourism and the Balance with Resident Needs** Some respondents felt that a balance needs to be struck between attracting visitors and meeting the needs of local residents. Whilst many recognised the positive contribution of tourism assets such as Kynren and The Auckland Project, concerns were raised about whether tourism-led investment alone can address wider issues affecting the town. **Housing and Infrastructure** Housing emerged as a significant issue, particularly concerns around HMOs, affordable housing, infrastructure capacity and population growth. Respondents highlighted pressures on healthcare, schools, roads and other services, stressing the need for future housing development to be accompanied by appropriate infrastructure investment. **Transport and Traffic** Residents highlighted a number of transport-related concerns, including poor bus services, parking charges, congestion around Tindale Crescent, pedestrian safety and the need for improved transport links. Several respondents felt that transport accessibility is fundamental to supporting economic growth and improving access to opportunities. **Cleanliness, Appearance and Civic Pride** Many comments referred to litter, fly-tipping, damaged buildings, poor maintenance and a perceived decline in civic pride. Respondents considered the appearance of the town to be important both for residents' quality of life and for attracting visitors and investment. **Health and Community Wellbeing** Some respondents highlighted concerns about healthcare provision, hospital services, mental health support and community wellbeing. There were calls for improved access to health services and for activities that support both physical and mental wellbeing.		
What more could the Council do to improve community wellbeing?		
Residents identified a wide range of ways in which the Council could support community wellbeing, with key themes focusing on community safety, youth provision, communication, community facilities, health and wellbeing, environmental improvements, and greater involvement of local people in decision-making. **Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour** The most frequently raised issue was the need to improve community safety. Many respondents highlighted concerns about anti-social behaviour, youth nuisance, off-road bikes, speeding, vandalism, crime, drug-related activity and a perceived lack of police presence. Residents expressed a desire for more visible policing, CCTV, community wardens and stronger enforcement to help people feel safer in their neighbourhoods and town centre.	Residents would like the Council to: • Improve community safety and tackle anti-social behaviour. • Increase opportunities, facilities and support for young people. • Provide more community activities that reduce isolation and bring people together. • Support mental health and wellbeing initiatives.	Community safety needs strengthening in the Community Strategy. This is a key priority for residents. Other improvements come from cross partnership working and highlighting to the community the groups, organisations and assets which the town already has.

Young People and Youth Provision A significant number of responses called for increased investment in activities and facilities for children and young people. Suggestions included youth clubs, sports activities, gaming and social spaces, wellbeing support, learning opportunities and dedicated facilities that provide safe and inclusive environments. Many respondents felt that improving opportunities for young people would not only enhance wellbeing but also help address anti-social behaviour. **Community Activities and Social Connection** Residents strongly supported more community activities, events and groups that bring people together. Respondents highlighted the value of family events, social groups, arts and crafts, physical activities, walking groups, cultural programmes and intergenerational activities. There was particular support for initiatives that reduce loneliness and social isolation among both younger and older residents. **Mental Health and Wellbeing Support** Several comments focused on improving access to mental health support, wellbeing groups and safe spaces where people can seek advice, socialise and access support services. Suggestions included community hubs, drop-in sessions, support groups, men's health initiatives, dementia-friendly activities and services aimed at reducing isolation and improving emotional wellbeing. **Better Communication and Engagement** Many residents felt the Council could improve communication about the activities, services and support already available. There were calls for more visibility, clearer promotion of events and initiatives, stronger engagement with residents, regular open meetings, and greater involvement of communities in shaping decisions and priorities. Some respondents felt people need to see evidence that their views are being listened to and acted upon. **Supporting Community Groups and Volunteers** Residents highlighted the important role played by local community organisations, volunteers, sports clubs and grassroots groups. Comments suggested the Council could provide more funding, practical assistance, grants, facilities and partnership working to help local groups continue delivering valuable services and activities. **Improving the Town's Appearance and Public Spaces** A common theme was the importance of maintaining attractive and welcoming public spaces. Respondents called for cleaner streets, more planting and green spaces, better-maintained parks and public areas, action on dog fouling and littering, and measures to address derelict and neglected buildings. Many felt that a cleaner and more attractive town would improve community pride and wellbeing. **Revitalising the Town Centre** Many comments linked wellbeing with the condition and vitality of the town centre. Residents wanted to see vacant properties brought back into use, more businesses encouraged into the high street, greater use of empty buildings for community purposes, and more reasons for people to spend time in the town centre. **Accessibility and Inclusion**	• Improve communication and resident engagement. • Strengthen support for local community groups, volunteers and sports clubs. • Enhance the appearance of the town through cleaner, greener and better-maintained public spaces. • Revitalise the town centre and make better use of vacant properties. • Ensure activities and services are affordable, inclusive and accessible. • Work more closely with partners to deliver joined-up community wellbeing initiatives.	

Several respondents highlighted the need for services and activities that are affordable, inclusive and accessible to everyone. This included support for people with disabilities, older residents, people experiencing financial hardship and those facing barriers to participation. **Health, Physical Activity and Active Travel** Residents suggested a variety of initiatives to improve physical health, including walking routes, cycling infrastructure, affordable sports provision, free or subsidised activities for children, exercise sessions in public spaces and improved access to recreational facilities. **Partnerships and Joined-Up Working** A number of responses suggested that the Council should act as a facilitator, bringing together community groups, schools, businesses, healthcare providers, Durham County Council, the Police and other organisations to work collaboratively on improving community wellbeing.		
What more could the Council do to improve the environmental issues?		
Residents highlighted a range of environmental concerns, with the strongest themes focusing on cleanliness, green spaces, community pride, enforcement, and making the town a more attractive place to live and visit. Cleanliness, Litter and Fly-Tipping The most common concern was the need for higher standards of cleanliness across the town. Respondents frequently referred to litter, dog fouling, fly-tipping, overflowing bins, chewing gum, and poorly maintained streets and footpaths. Many residents called for more frequent street cleaning, additional bins, stronger enforcement against offenders, and increased use of litter-picking initiatives involving residents and volunteers. **Improving the Appearance of the Town** Many comments linked environmental quality to the overall appearance and attractiveness of Bishop Auckland. Residents highlighted concerns about neglected buildings, poorly maintained shop fronts, graffiti, untidy alleyways, and empty properties. There was support for measures to encourage landlords to maintain their properties and for regeneration of derelict areas to improve pride in the town. **Green Spaces, Trees and Biodiversity** A significant number of respondents would like to see more trees, planting, green spaces and opportunities to enjoy nature. Suggestions included additional flower displays, tree planting, conservation areas, community gardens, biodiversity projects, picnic areas, seating, ponds, and small green spaces created from vacant sites. Many residents felt green spaces should be distributed across all neighbourhoods rather than concentrated in key visitor locations. **Pride of Place and Community Ownership** Several respondents felt environmental improvements should focus on encouraging greater pride in local neighbourhoods. Suggestions included community litter picks, sponsorship of green spaces, involving residents in local improvement projects, and encouraging schools, colleges, youth groups and community organisations to take a more active role in environmental initiatives. **Environmental Education and Youth Involvement**	Residents would like the Council to: • Tackle litter, fly-tipping, dog fouling and street cleanliness more robustly. • Improve the appearance of neglected buildings, shop fronts and public spaces. • Increase the number and distribution of green spaces, trees and planting schemes. • Encourage greater community involvement in environmental improvement projects. • Involve schools and young people in environmental initiatives. • Support biodiversity, conservation and community growing opportunities. • Improve walking, cycling and sustainable transport options. • Provide more seating, picnic areas and accessible public spaces. • Work with partners to strengthen enforcement against environmental offences. • Ensure environmental improvements benefit all parts of	Allotment and Environment Strategy covers lots of these areas however, • Litte, fly tipping and cleanliness need inclusion • Inclusion of sustainable transport, walking and cycling routes needed. • Inclusion of more accessible elements in spaces including seating etc • Ensure that environmental improvements are seen for residents and not just visitors

<table>
<tr><td>Many residents supported greater environmental education and awareness raising, particularly amongst younger people. Suggestions included working with schools, involving young people in environmental projects, promoting sustainability, encouraging recycling, and developing initiatives that help younger generations take ownership of local environmental issues.
Allotments and Community Growing
Views regarding allotments were mixed. Some respondents supported increasing access to allotments, providing smaller starter plots, promoting community growing projects and reducing waiting times. Others questioned whether allotments should be a significant priority given the relatively small proportion of residents who benefit directly from them, instead favouring investment in public green spaces that can be enjoyed by the wider community.
Sustainable Transport and Climate Action
Several respondents suggested that the Council could do more to encourage environmentally sustainable lifestyles through improved walking and cycling routes, better public transport, renewable energy initiatives, recycling schemes and measures to reduce car dependency. However, these issues were generally raised less frequently than concerns around local environmental maintenance and cleanliness.
Public Spaces and Accessibility
Residents highlighted the importance of providing attractive public spaces where people can sit, socialise and enjoy the environment. Suggestions included more benches, improved paths, better maintenance of recreational areas, enhanced drainage, and improvements to parks and green corridors.
Enforcement and Regulation
A recurring theme was stronger enforcement relating to environmental issues. Respondents called for tougher action on fly-tipping, dog fouling, neglected buildings, absent landlords, traveller incursions, and activities that damage public spaces. Many felt that visible enforcement would help improve both the appearance of the town and community pride.</td><td>the town, not just visitor-focused areas.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What should the Town Council prioritise to strengthen its leadership role?</td></tr>
<tr><td>The responses suggest that residents see the Town Council's leadership role as being closely linked to visibility, communication, community engagement, advocacy and demonstrating tangible outcomes for the town.
Visibility and Public Awareness
The strongest and most consistent theme was that many residents do not fully understand the role of the Town Council, what it is responsible for, how it differs from Durham County Council, or who their local councillors are. Many respondents felt that the Council needs to be more visible, accessible and present within the community.
Residents expressed a desire to see councillors and officers more active in local neighbourhoods, attending community events, holding drop-in sessions and engaging directly with residents on issues affecting the town.
Communication and Engagement</td><td>Residents would like the Council to:
• Increase its visibility and presence across the community.
• Improve awareness of what the Town Council does and how it differs from Durham County Council.
• Strengthen communication and make information easier to access.
• Listen to residents and involve them more meaningfully in decisions.</td><td>Being visible is key and having more information available to residents on who the council is what they do, is very important. The council have taken steps to make these improvements already and the community strategy strengthens it but it is clear the messages are still not reaching across the population.</td></tr>
</table>

A significant number of comments called for improved communication. Residents wanted clearer information about: • What the Council does. • Decisions being made. • Services and support available. • Funding and projects being delivered. • Opportunities for residents to get involved. There were also suggestions for improved use of social media, newsletters, public meetings, community forums and more user-friendly access to agendas, minutes and council information. **Listening to Residents** Many respondents stressed the importance of the Council actively listening to local people and demonstrating that community views influence decision-making. Some residents expressed concern that consultation can sometimes feel like a "tick-box exercise" and wanted greater involvement earlier in the decision-making process. There were calls for more direct engagement with residents through regular consultations, open meetings, drop-in sessions and community discussions. **Community Leadership and Advocacy** Residents felt the Town Council should take a stronger leadership role in representing the interests of Bishop Auckland and advocating on behalf of residents. Some respondents suggested the Council should be more proactive in challenging decisions made by external organisations and agencies where local interests are affected. Several comments referred to the Council taking a stronger position with Durham County Council and other partners to ensure local priorities are properly represented. **Town Centre and Place-Shaping** Many comments linked leadership to visible improvements within the town itself. Respondents highlighted the condition of the high street, empty properties and neglected buildings as issues where stronger leadership was needed. Residents wanted the Council to play a more active role in influencing regeneration, supporting the town centre and addressing concerns regarding absentee landlords and vacant properties. **Community Presence and Accessibility** A common suggestion was for the Council to become more approachable and easier to access. Ideas included: • Community drop-in surgeries. • Evening and weekend engagement opportunities. • Attendance at local events and markets. • Greater visibility of councillors. • More opportunities for residents to meet decision makers. Many residents felt local government should be more accessible to working-age people who are unable to attend meetings during office hours. Supporting Young People	• Act as a stronger advocate for Bishop Auckland's interests. • Take a more active leadership role in tackling town centre issues. • Make councillors and decision-makers more accessible. • Increase engagement with younger residents. • Strengthen partnerships with businesses, community organisations and public agencies. • Demonstrate transparency, accountability and visible results.	

<table>
<tr><td>Several responses highlighted the importance of engaging younger residents and involving them in shaping the future of the town. Respondents felt that effective leadership should include creating opportunities for young people to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making.
Partnership Working
Some residents felt the Council should continue strengthening relationships with businesses, community groups, Durham County Council, the Police, the Auckland Project and other partners to maximise benefits for the town.
There was support for the Council acting as a coordinator and facilitator, bringing organisations together around shared goals.
Transparency and Accountability
A number of comments suggested that residents would like greater transparency about council actions, achievements and outcomes. Respondents wanted clearer evidence of progress, regular updates and greater visibility of how feedback is being acted upon.</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What one thing would you most like the Town Council to improve?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Whilst responses covered a wide range of issues, several clear themes emerged, with the condition of the town centre, community safety, communication, and opportunities for young people being the most frequently raised priorities.
Town Centre and High Street Regeneration
The most common response was a desire to see significant improvements to the town centre, particularly Newgate Street and the high street. Residents expressed concern about:
Empty and derelict buildings.
Poor shop frontages and neglected properties.
A lack of retail diversity.
Cleanliness and general appearance.
The decline of traditional shopping and town centre activity.
Many respondents felt that improving the appearance, occupancy and vitality of the town centre would have a positive impact on community pride, visitor perceptions and economic activity.
Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour
A significant number of residents identified safety as their single biggest priority. Concerns included anti-social behaviour, young people riding e-bikes and scooters dangerously, vandalism, crime, rough sleeping and a general perception that parts of the town feel unsafe.
Many comments suggested that creating a safer environment would encourage more residents and visitors to spend time in the town centre.
Communication and Community Engagement
Many respondents felt the Town Council should improve how it communicates and engages with residents. Residents wanted:
Better information about what the Council is doing.</td><td>If limited to one priority, residents most commonly identified:
Regenerating the town centre and improving Newgate Street.
Tackling anti-social behaviour and improving safety.
Improving communication and engagement with residents.
Providing more opportunities and facilities for young people.
Supporting local businesses and increasing footfall.
Improving cleanliness and civic pride.
Taking a stronger, more visible leadership role.</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

- More visibility of councillors and council activity.
- Greater opportunities to contribute ideas and provide feedback.
- Improved use of community networks and social media.
- Clearer communication about major projects and decisions.

Several respondents noted that many people still do not understand the role of the Town Council or how it differs from Durham County Council.

Opportunities for Young People

A number of comments focused on the need for more activities, facilities and opportunities for children and young people. Residents highlighted the lack of dedicated youth spaces and suggested investment in youth centres, holiday activities, sports provision, social spaces and youth support services.

Many respondents linked increased youth provision with reductions in anti-social behaviour and improved community wellbeing.

Cleanliness and Environmental Quality

Residents frequently referred to litter, dog fouling, untidy streets and neglected public spaces. Many felt that improving cleanliness and ensuring public spaces are well maintained would have a significant impact on perceptions of the town.

Support for Local Businesses

Several responses called for greater support for independent businesses through measures such as:

- Encouraging new businesses into vacant premises.
- Reducing barriers to business growth.
- Tackling long-term empty shops.
- Supporting local markets and town centre activity.
- Considering parking arrangements to encourage footfall.

Stronger Leadership and Representation

Some respondents wanted the Council to take a stronger leadership and advocacy role. Comments included calls for the Council to:

- Be more outspoken on local issues.
- Represent residents more robustly.
- Hold other organisations accountable.
- Campaign on behalf of the town where projects have stalled or concerns remain unresolved.

Community Facilities and Support

Residents also highlighted a need for:

- More facilities for older people.
- Better support for mental health and wellbeing.
- More accessible community spaces.
- Greater family and community support services.

Any other comments		
The final comments reinforced many of the themes identified throughout the consultation, whilst also providing some broader reflections on the future of Bishop Auckland, the role of the Town Council and the importance of ensuring residents see meaningful outcomes from regeneration and investment. **Town Centre Regeneration and Empty Buildings** Many respondents returned to the issue of the town centre, particularly the condition of Newgate Street and the number of vacant and deteriorating buildings. Residents expressed concern that the decline of the traditional high street is damaging community confidence and creating a poor impression for both residents and visitors. There were calls for action to encourage independent businesses, improve vacant properties, attract investment and create a more vibrant town centre that serves local people as well as visitors. **Balance Between Tourism and Residents' Needs** A recurring theme was the need to balance tourism and visitor-focused investment with the everyday needs of residents. While many respondents recognised the positive contribution of tourism assets and cultural attractions, some felt that local priorities such as shopping, transport, community facilities and public services require greater attention. Several comments referred to concerns that regeneration should provide clear benefits to residents rather than focusing solely on attracting visitors. Communication, Visibility and Understanding the Council's Role Many respondents indicated that they remain unclear about the role of the Town Council and how it differs from Durham County Council. Several comments suggested that the Council could be more visible, better communicate its achievements and engage more effectively with residents. Respondents highlighted the importance of helping residents understand: • What the Town Council does. • What it is responsible for. • What projects it is delivering. • How residents can become involved. **Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour** Concerns around anti-social behaviour, crime, youth nuisance and public safety continued to feature strongly in the final comments. Respondents linked safety issues directly to confidence in the town centre and wider community wellbeing. Several residents stressed the importance of partnership working between the Council, Police and support agencies to help address these challenges. **Young People and Community Facilities** Many comments reinforced previous calls for improved facilities, activities and support for young people. Respondents highlighted the importance of youth provision in addressing anti-social behaviour, improving aspirations and encouraging positive engagement within communities.	The final comments suggest that residents would like to see: • Continued focus on revitalising the town centre and tackling vacant properties. • Greater balance between tourism investment and residents' everyday needs. • Improved communication about the Town Council's role, achievements and plans. • Action to address anti-social behaviour and improve community safety. • More opportunities and facilities for young people. • Cleaner, more attractive public spaces. • Better transport and accessibility. • Greater transparency, accountability and delivery of promised projects. • Stronger engagement with residents and local communities.	Most of the other comments are covered across the other sections of the consultation.

There were also calls for increased support for local sports clubs and community organisations delivering services for young people. **Environment, Cleanliness and Civic Pride** Residents frequently referred to the importance of maintaining clean, attractive and welcoming public spaces. Comments highlighted concerns about litter, empty properties, shop front appearances and neglected areas. Many respondents felt that environmental improvements could help increase community pride and encourage further investment. **Connectivity, Transport and Accessibility** Some respondents highlighted concerns regarding public transport, traffic congestion and accessibility, including requests for improved bus and rail services and better access for residents without private transport. **Trust, Accountability and Delivery** Several comments reflected a desire to see visible action rather than further consultation. Some respondents expressed concerns that consultation exercises may not lead to meaningful change and emphasised the importance of demonstrating that resident feedback influences decision-making. There was a clear desire for transparency, accountability and evidence that projects and regeneration initiatives deliver promised outcomes. **Positive Feedback and Optimism** Alongside the concerns raised, a number of respondents acknowledged positive changes taking place within Bishop Auckland and thanked the Council for its work. Several comments recognised the town's considerable strengths, heritage assets, community spirit and future potential. Many respondents felt that Bishop Auckland has significant opportunities over the coming years if regeneration, community engagement and investment are delivered in a coordinated and resident-focused way.		

Appendix 2 – Summary of Social Media - free text comments.

General social posts about the consultation as well as specific questions about what people would like to see differently for Bishop Auckland.

The comments generated a significant level of engagement and highlighted a number of recurring themes.

Whilst opinions varied, the majority of comments focussed on the wider condition and future of Bishop Auckland town centre rather than the likes of the floral displays themselves.

Key Themes Identified/ reoccurring issues

- Condition and cleanliness of Newgate Street.
- Empty shops and declining retail offer.
- Parking charges and accessibility.
- Perceived imbalance between investment in the Market Place/tourism and the wider town centre.
- Desire for markets, independent businesses, events and activities that bring people into the town centre.

Social media comment summary	Is this something the Town Council can impact?	Is this already in the draft strategy	Suggested action
Positive feedback on the floral displays Many residents praised the quality and appearance of the flower displays in the Market Place. Several comments stated that the displays improve the appearance of the area and are something the town should be proud of. Some residents suggested extending floral displays further along Newgate Street and into other parts of the town so that all areas benefit equally.	Yes the town council now responsible for the town centre planting. The AE Committee are looking at extending locations of floral displays	Yes – Allotment and Environment Strategy strategic pillar: 4.2 Enhancing the towns natural environment Aim: Improve and protect Bishop Auckland's natural environment through sustainable planting, biodiversity enhancement, and community action.	No further action
Concerns about the condition of Newgate Street and the wider town centre The most common theme was concern about the appearance of Newgate Street and surrounding areas. Residents frequently referred to empty shops, boarded-up buildings, litter, dirty pavements, and a general perception of decline. A number of comments called for deep cleaning, greater street maintenance, and action to improve vacant properties	Not directly But pressure could be put on to DCC to act on residents concerns.	Allotment and Environment Strategy – does contain information about natural environment Community Strategy includes Community Safety and resilience and wellbeing and inclusion with emphasis on partnership working as the responsibility doesn't sit with the Town Council in full	Litter could be included more directly within the Allotment and Environment Strategy Safety and the impact of the built environments impacts on residents could be stronger explained in the partnership working sections.
Desire for more shops, markets, and businesses Many respondents wanted to see:	Not directly		Community Committee could look to explore the opportunities for more

More retail shops. Independent businesses. Cafés, restaurants and Leisure venues. A return of a regular market and farmers' markets. Several residents felt the town centre needs more reasons for people to visit and spend time there	But pressure could be put on to DCC to act on residents concerns, specifically where it does have some control such as the Newgate centre. Regular markets could be explored via the community Committee	Emphasis on partnership working runs through all of the documents.	markets as part of the event programme. Development of a business network for improved communication engagement and participation could be formally included.
Parking and accessibility Free or reduced-cost parking was one of the most commonly suggested improvements. Residents frequently compared Bishop Auckland with neighbouring towns where parking is perceived to be cheaper or free. Some comments suggested parking charges discourage visitors and shoppers.	Not directly BATC did ask for DCC to consider passing the DCC car parks to them if there was to be a round of asset transfer however this was declined. BATC could put pressure on to DCC to ask why other areas have free parking, and why can not 2 hrs free be re-introduced or a disk scheme for town residents.	Not directly covered but working in partnership is covered	More emphasis on how the council will hold organisations to account?
Town centre regeneration and investment Strong and mixed views were expressed regarding regeneration activity in the town. Some residents were supportive of investment by The Auckland Project and Kynren, recognising the role tourism plays in attracting visitors and investment. Others felt regeneration has focused too heavily on the Market Place and visitor economy, with insufficient benefit being seen in other areas of the town centre. Several new ideas emerged including: • Using the former Co-op building as an indoor market. • Creating a food hall in the Newgate Centre. • Offering rent-free periods to new businesses. Providing affordable market stalls and trader incentives	Yes BATC are part of the Stronger Towns Board and questions are being asked, but the council could be more transparent about their requests. There are concerns from the community that the number of jobs promised from the likes of Kynren are not true, as this summer all of the summer hospitality positions were secured from a third party with staff brought in on buses.	Not directly covered but working in partnership is covered	More emphasis on how the council will hold organisations to account?
Support for Town Centre Living	No	Not directly covered but working in partnership is covered	More emphasis on how the council will hold organisations to account?

A new theme emerging is the suggestion of: • Converting upper floors into affordable housing. • Creating a mixed-use town centre with shops below and homes above. • Using increased residential occupation to improve footfall, safety and vitality.	But this is something which they could support via the planning process and via the wider regeneration schemes.		
Stronger Focus on Landlords and Property Management Residents repeatedly called for: • Greater accountability for absentee landlords. • Enforcement action against neglected buildings. • Bringing upper floors above shops back into residential use. • Fines or compulsory action against owners allowing buildings to deteriorate. • Renovation rather than demolition of historic buildings. This suggests residents see the condition of privately owned buildings as a significant contributor to the decline of Newgate Street.	No But pressure could be applied to DCC to ensure that enforcement action does take place. DCC have introduced the High Street Rental Auction. More enforcement could be undertaken	Not directly covered but working in partnership is covered	More emphasis on how the council will hold organisations to account?
Community events and activities A number of suggestions were made for new events including: Summer fairs and gala days. Markets and food events. Family festivals. Activities for young people and teenagers. Live music and cultural events. Residents generally expressed a desire for more activities that encourage community participation and town centre footfall.	Yes the Town Council via the Community Committee can support and help enable a range of free events, as well as encouraging partnerships with the likes of DCC on activities such as the Enchanted Bricks.	Community Strategy covers this, and the growing programme of activity is gaining support.	Events such as markets and the enchanted bricks type activity to give residents a purpose to come into the town and stay for an activity to be explored.

Traffic, transport and public realm issues Comments raised concerns regarding: Traffic congestion, particularly around Tindale. Road safety and pedestrian access. The appearance and management of public spaces. Public transport infrastructure and parking provision	The council can add support to these issues. They have previously written to STB and DCC about the traffic concerns at Tindale. This could be done more regularly and more transparently and when Reponses are not returned the council could speak openly to the community and the press about this.		
Perceptions of safety and anti-social behaviour Some residents expressed concerns about feeling unsafe in parts of the town centre, particularly on Newgate Street. Calls were made for increased policing, stronger enforcement and action on anti-social behaviour.	Whilst responsibility for policing and enforcement sits with Durham Constabulary and other agencies, the Town Council can continue to work with partners to raise residents' concerns, support community safety initiatives, encourage reporting of incidents, and help create a cleaner, more attractive and active town centre environment. Members may wish to consider whether community safety should feature as a priority within the Council's Strategic Plan and future engagement with partner organisations**.**	Community strategy covers community resilience and safety.	More emphasis on how the council will hold organisations to account?
Desire for Greater Partnership Working and Communication Several comments mentioned: • Better visible collaboration between the Town Council, Durham County Council, The Auckland Project, MP and local businesses. • A desire to understand who is responsible for various projects. • Requests for greater transparency about regeneration programmes and investment decisions. This goes beyond criticism and shows a desire for more communication and engagement.	Whilst the town council already has some well established partnerships how their activities can be communicated could be improved the council could have dedicated pages on the website for partnerships Hightlight when partnership meetings are across engagement networks They can continue to use their STB board position to request grater communication and transparency about the regeneration programmes and council decisions.	Addressed under the community strategy, and the overall strategy, with links across corporate and allotment	Generally there needs to be some coms shift and changes to show that action is taken and changes are made. Improved coms over the summer is starting to make this better however across all partners improved coms is needed. More emphasis on how the council will hold organisations to account?

Youth Provision • Facilities for 12-15 year olds. • Splash parks. • Play areas. • Silent discos and youth activities. This appears to be a recurring unmet need.	The council supports youth provision across the town, and there is a substantial amount of provision compared to other locations. However the town has not influence directly on the parks and recreation.	Support for community organisations and partnership working covered	Range of youth provision, not well communicated to the residents, consideration of how these organisations can work together better and how their services can be promoted more. More emphasis on how the council will hold organisations to account?
Preservation of Heritage Buildings A much stronger emphasis is placed on: • St Annes Church roof repairs • Saving the Masonic Hall. • Saving the Mechanics Institute. • Saving the former Co-op building. • Restoring historic buildings rather than demolishing them. • Creating a historical society or heritage group. This goes beyond general concerns about empty shops and reflects concern about the town's heritage assets.	The council could request to be part of the Conservation Area Panel so that they are aware of work and updates.	Partnership working included Heritage events included in the event programme	Request to be part of the Conservation Area Panel More emphasis on how the council will hold organisations to account?
Consultation Engagement Concerns There are several comments specifically stating: • Residents were unaware the consultation was taking place. • Some felt decisions had already been made before consultation. • Working-age residents find it difficult to attend meetings.	Yes Consultation online, and at events advertised online and in local Press. There is an apathy that people think all decisions are make so they don't bother to have a say.	Overarching strategy, and each individual has coms and engagement links with the Community Strategy being the key driver.	More open transparent communication as to the activities undertaken. Transparent feedback on the consultation You said – we did

• Requests for wider surveys and more accessible engagement methods. This suggests confidence in consultation processes may be an issue for some residents.			
Requests outside the Town Council's remit A number of comments related to matters beyond the direct control of the Town Council, including: NHS services and dentistry. Highway infrastructure. Car parking ownership and charging policies. Private property ownership and commercial rents. Banking services. Church building repairs. Durham County Council and central government decisions.	Yes and no This can be done by holding others to account and championing for the town residents	Yes 7.1 Community - Strengthen the wellbeing, safety, and pride of residents. Strategic & Corporate - Strengthen the Council's capacity, governance, and influence.	Develop the action plans to show where accountability is called and where issues are directed.
"Buy Local" and Community Responsibility One particularly detailed response introduced a theme largely absent from earlier comments: Residents themselves have a role to play by: • Supporting independent businesses. • Shopping locally. • Attending events. • Volunteering. • Reporting crime and anti-social behaviour. • Taking pride in the town. This is one of the few strongly positive and solutions-focussed contributions.	No But can help to facilitate by sharing positive messages, on how to get involved, how to report issues, how to volunteer and what events are available etc.	Volunteering included, and well as engagement, participation and communication.	Possible narrative shift and positive spin that people can make a difference and they all have a role to play.

Item 13a

Bishop Auckland Town Council

28 September 2026

North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Bus Franchising Consultation

Background

The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA) is consulting on proposals to introduce a Bus Franchising Scheme across the North East. The consultation runs until 9.00am on 28 September 2026 and will help inform the final decision on how local bus services are planned and operated.

Currently, bus services operate under a deregulated system, meaning private operators determine routes, timetables, fares and service standards. Although an Enhanced Partnership exists between local authorities and operators, bus companies still retain most decision-making powers. [northeast-ca.gov.uk]

The North East MSA believes this arrangement has contributed to declining passenger numbers, reduced service frequencies, route withdrawals and inconsistencies across the network. In 2024/25, approximately 115 million bus journeys were made across the region, highlighting the continuing importance of bus services to residents.

What is Bus Franchising?

Under the proposed model, the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority would:

- Set routes and timetables.
- Determine fares and ticketing arrangements.
- Establish minimum service standards.
- Procure bus operators through contracts to deliver services on its behalf. [northeast-ca.gov.uk]

Bus operators would continue to run services but would do so under contracts managed by the Authority rather than determining services themselves. [northeast-ca.gov.uk]

Potential Benefits

The consultation assessment suggests that franchising could provide:

- Simpler and more affordable ticketing.
- Better integration between services and transport modes.
- More stable and consistent routes and timetables.
- Improved safety standards.
- A unified network identity.

- Better passenger information.
- Increased public accountability and local influence over services.

Key Considerations

The proposal would also transfer greater financial responsibility and risk to the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, requiring effective financial management and ongoing investment to ensure service sustainability.

Relevance to Bishop Auckland

Reliable and affordable bus services remain essential for many residents in Bishop Auckland and the surrounding villages, particularly:

- Older people.
- Young people accessing education and training.
- Residents without access to a private vehicle.
- Commuters travelling to work.
- Individuals attending healthcare appointments.
- Residents in rural and outlying communities.

Improvements to service reliability, affordability and connectivity could support wider priorities around economic growth, social inclusion, health and wellbeing, and access to services.

Draft Consultation Response – from Bishop Auckland Town Council

Bishop Auckland Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Bus Franchising Scheme being consulted upon by the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority.

The Town Council is broadly supportive of the principle of bus franchising and recognises the potential benefits that a more coordinated and publicly accountable transport network could bring to communities across the North East.

Simpler and More Affordable Travel

The Council supports proposals that would simplify fares and ticketing arrangements. Residents frequently report that current ticketing options can be confusing and inconsistent between operators. A simplified and integrated system could encourage greater bus use and improve accessibility for passengers. [northeast-ca.gov.uk]

Improved Reliability and Connectivity

The Council welcomes proposals to provide greater control over routes, timetables and service standards. Reliable public transport is essential to enable residents to access employment, education, healthcare, leisure opportunities and town centre services.

Particular consideration should be given to maintaining and enhancing connections between market towns, surrounding villages and key service centres, ensuring that residents are not disadvantaged by geographical location.

Supporting Economic Growth

Effective public transport is vital to supporting economic regeneration and growth. Bishop Auckland continues to benefit from significant investment and visitor growth, and bus services have an important role in ensuring residents, employees and visitors can access opportunities across the region.

The Council would encourage the Authority to ensure that future network planning recognises the importance of market towns as employment, education, retail and visitor destinations.

Accessibility and Inclusion

The Council supports measures aimed at improving accessibility and passenger experience. Consideration should be given to:

- Accessible vehicles and infrastructure.
- Clear and consistent passenger information.
- Safety and security measures.
- Digital and non-digital methods of accessing travel information.
- Affordable fares for young people, older people and vulnerable residents.

Rural Connectivity

The Town Council believes that franchising should deliver tangible improvements for communities that have experienced service reductions in recent years.

The Authority should ensure that rural and semi-rural communities receive appropriate levels of service and that transport planning supports social inclusion and access to essential services.

Partnership Working

The Council would welcome ongoing engagement with town and parish councils as the proposals develop. Local councils possess valuable knowledge regarding travel patterns, community needs and local priorities and can assist in identifying gaps and opportunities within the network.

Conclusion

Bishop Auckland Town Council supports the objectives of the proposed Bus Franchising Scheme and welcomes the opportunity to create a more integrated, reliable and accountable bus network across the North East.

The Council considers that successful implementation should place particular emphasis on affordability, reliability, accessibility, rural connectivity and support for economic growth. Continued engagement with local communities and councils will be essential to ensuring the network delivers meaningful benefits for residents across County Durham and the wider region. [northeast-ca.gov.uk]

Recommended:

Members note the consultation on the proposed North East Bus Franchising Scheme and agree to submit the attached response in support of the principle of bus franchising, whilst highlighting the importance of affordability, improved rural connectivity, support for market towns and continued engagement with town and parish councils.

Item 13b

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Consultations

Briefing Note for Members: Durham County Council Interim HMO Policy

Background

Durham County Council consulted on a new interim planning policy to help manage the growth of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) outside the existing Durham City Article 4 areas. This follows strong public support (around 80% of respondents) for the introduction of a new Article 4 Direction, which removes certain permitted development rights and requires planning permission for changes from a family dwelling to an HMO in affected areas. The Article 4 Direction was agreed in November 2025 and came into effect on 17 August 2026.

Purpose of the Policy

The interim policy aims to:

- Prevent excessive concentrations of HMOs.
- Protect mixed and balanced communities.
- Ensure high standards of accommodation for HMO residents.
- Protect the amenity and living conditions of neighbouring properties.
- Provide a clear framework for determining HMO planning applications until a new County Durham Plan is adopted.

Original Draft Policy Proposals

The consultation draft stated that HMOs should not:

- Result in three or more of the ten nearest properties being HMOs.
- Create a situation where a dwelling is "sandwiched" between two HMOs, or between an HMO and a non-residential property.

Consultation Results

A total of 172 responses were received:

- 50% agreed with the draft policy.
- 39% disagreed.
- 11% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Key themes raised included:

- Concerns about the impact of HMOs on communities.
- Support for stronger controls on HMO numbers.
- Support for improving accommodation standards.
- Debate over whether the proposed thresholds were strong enough.
- Concerns about relying solely on licensing data to identify HMOs.
- Requests from some organisations and residents for the policy to also apply within the Durham City Article 4 areas.

Changes Made Following Consultation

Following feedback, the policy was strengthened by:

- Introducing a new criterion preventing HMOs where they would exceed **10% of all residential properties within a 100-metre radius** of the application site.
- Tightening the threshold so that proposals will not be permitted if **any of the ten nearest properties are already HMOs**.
- Expanding the data sources used to identify HMOs to include council tax records, planning data, licensing data and, when available, the emerging National Landlord Database.

Adoption of the Policy

The Interim HMO Policy was approved by Cabinet and formally adopted by Full Council on **15 July 2026**. It applies to areas outside the existing Durham City HMO policy area and will remain in place until HMO policies are reviewed through the development of the new County Durham Plan.

Recommended:

That members may wish to note that the policy represents a more proactive approach by Durham County Council to managing HMO concentrations across the wider county. The strengthened thresholds demonstrate a clear intention to protect residential communities while still recognising the role HMOs can play in meeting housing need. The future review as part of the new County Durham Plan will provide further opportunity for local councils and residents to influence the long-term approach to HMO management

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.
- Potential pressure on parish and town councils to fill service gaps arising from future service changes.

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.

Suggested 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 2027/28 to 2030/31.

The Town Council recognises the significant financial challenges facing local government and appreciates the need for Durham County Council to identify efficiencies and develop sustainable financial plans.

The Council supports measures that improve efficiency, reduce duplication and modernise service delivery. However, the Council would urge Durham County Council to ensure that any savings proposals do not disproportionately impact frontline services relied upon by residents and communities.

The Town Council is particularly concerned that reductions to community, environmental, neighbourhood and preventative services could result in increased demand upon parish and town councils, many of which operate with limited staffing and financial resources.

Bishop Auckland Town Council would therefore encourage Durham County Council to:

1. Prioritise the protection of frontline services wherever possible.
2. Continue investing in preventative services that reduce long-term costs and improve outcomes for residents.
3. Work closely with parish and town councils where service changes are proposed.
4. Ensure any transfer of responsibilities to local councils is accompanied by appropriate funding and support.
5. 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.