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Conserving our Past: Building Our Future

Chair Cllr. Harvey Neve

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held

Wednesday 8 July 2026 at 6.30pm

Location: Bishop Middleham Village Hall

Present: Cllr. M. MacCallam (Vice Chair - in the Chair), Cllr. A. Anderson, Cllr. J. Brownlee, Cllr. V. Cooke, Cllr. G. Jacobs and Cllr. E. Sparks.

Parish Clerk: Mrs. A. Hall

County Councillor: None present

PCSO: PCSO Jo Walbey

Members of the Public: 11 in total across the meeting

1. [Notice of Meeting](#) - Public Notice of the Meeting has been given in accordance with Schedule 12 paragraph 10(2) of the LGA 1982. The Vice Chair, Cllr. M. MacCallam, welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened proceedings at **6.30pm**.
2. [Apologies](#) - Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr. H. Neve**.

Resolved: To approve the reason for absence.

3. [Declarations of Interest](#) To notify of any items that appear in the agenda in which you may have an interest, including those that have previously been recorded in the Members Register of Interests. (Members are reminded of the need to declare any interest prejudicial or personal in accordance with the Code of Conduct as agreed by Council). No declarations of interest were made.
4. [Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 10 June 2026](#) - The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on **10 June 2026** were considered.

Resolved: That the minutes be approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Vice Chair.

5. [Public Participation](#)

The Vice Chair welcomed the **11 members of the public** in attendance and thanked them for taking the time to participate in the meeting. Members agreed that those arriving later in the session would also be given the opportunity to speak.

The majority of representations related to the **County Durham Local Plan Scoping Consultation**, particularly the **Call for Sites** submissions affecting Bishop Middleham. Residents expressed a range of views and concerns, including:

- The potential scale and location of future housing development.
- The impact of any development on local infrastructure, including highways, school places, GP services and drainage.
- Protection of the village's rural character, green spaces and surrounding landscape.
- The importance of ensuring that local residents are fully consulted before any future planning proposals are brought forward.
- The need for the Parish Council to actively encourage residents to participate in the current consultation.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Members thanked residents for their constructive contributions and confirmed that the comments raised would be considered later in the meeting under the relevant agenda item.

6. County Councillor Report

A written report was received from **Cllr. Chris Lines**, which is available on request.

Members noted the following matters of particular relevance to **Bishop Middleham and Mainsforth**:

- Public consultation on the **County Durham Local Plan** is now underway. Members noted the inclusion of a number of **Call for Sites** submissions affecting Bishop Middleham and encouraged residents to participate in the consultation before the closing date of **17 August 2026**.
- An update was provided on the **Active Travel Project**, including continued work to promote walking routes across the ward and the development of future initiatives to encourage walking and cycling.
- It was noted that **Cllr. Lines** had contacted **Knotty Hill Golf Club** regarding the proposed footpath improvement project. The Golf Club is liaising with its land agent and will make further contact to enable the project to progress.
- Members noted concerns regarding changes to **Durham County Council's grass cutting regime**, which has resulted in increased overgrowth in some areas.
- Members welcomed the continued success of the **Five Churches Walk** and noted Cllr. Lines' attendance at the **Bishop Middleham Blooms & Crafts Festival**.

Resolved: To receive the County Councillor's written report.

7. PCSO Report

PCSO Jo Walbey attended the meeting and presented an update on policing matters within the parish. Members were pleased to note that crime levels within the parish remain low. The report included updates on recent incidents, anti-social behaviour, speeding concerns and ongoing neighbourhood policing activity.

PCSO Walbey also suggested that the Parish Council consider establishing a **PACT (Police and Communities Together)** meeting to strengthen engagement between residents, the Parish Council and Durham Constabulary.

Resolved:

- To receive the PCSO report.
- The Parish Clerk to liaise with PCSO Walbey regarding the establishment of a local PACT meeting.

8. Finance

a) Payments

Members considered the schedule of payments made since the previous meeting.

Resolved: To approve the payments as detailed in Appendix 1.

Bishop Middleham Parish Council - 12.6.26 - 8.6.26		
Who To	What For	Cost
Clear Insurance	26/27 Insurance	£1,701.28
Amazon	CCTV Signs	£6.00
Amazon	Tung Oil for Noticeboard	£14.99
BMVH	Hall Hire -Mtnng 10 June 2026	£24.00
Phoenix	M'soft Business May-Jun 2026	£10.63
BMVH	Youth Club Rm Hire (June 2026)	£75.00
Gordon Fletcher	Internal Audit	£200.00
Baccanalia	Michaelmas Fair Production	£7,374.00
Anglian Water	Water 22/2 - 21/5/2026	£45.57
EON	Elec - May 2026	£73.36
O2	Mobile Phone	£22.22

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Unity Trust Bank	BACS Charges	£16.75
Unity Trust Bank	Monthly Charge	£7.00
Wages		£586.23
PAYE, Pension, NI	PAYE	£146.60
	EE Pension	£42.65
	ERS Pension	£118.65
	ERS NI	£53.77
Income	What For	
Garage 1	Rent June	£25.00
Garage 2	Rent June	£25.00
Garage 3	Rent June	£25.00
WC Miners	Football Fees	£26.00
BM Football Club	Football Fees	£312.00
Unity Trust Bank	Interest Acc End 7263	£117.49
Unity Trust Bank	Interest Acc End 7250	£145.99

b) Community Grant Application - Rotary Club of Great Aycliffe

Members considered an application from the **Rotary Club of Great Aycliffe** requesting financial assistance towards the **Model Railway Exhibition** to be held at Bishop Middleham Village Hall on **17 October 2026**.

Resolved: To award a community grant of **£100**.

9. Events and Outdoor Activities

- a) **Michaelmas Fair** - Members received an update on preparations for the 2026 Michaelmas Fair. It was noted that Bacchanalia had commenced preparations for the event. The Parish Clerk presented the draft event poster for consideration.

Resolved: To approve the Michaelmas Fair promotional poster.

- b) **Fireworks Display** - Members received an update on preparations for the 2026 Fireworks Display. It was noted that arrangements for catering, the mobile bar and fairground rides had all been confirmed. The draft promotional poster was also presented for approval.

Resolved:

- To approve the Fireworks Display promotional poster.
- To note the progress made with event arrangements.

- c) **Park Signage** - Members considered proposals for new signage within the park, including play area signs and a larger entrance sign.

Following discussion, Members agreed that only the larger play area sign and the entrance sign should be purchased at this stage.

Members also discussed the provision of fencing around the play areas and agreed that further quotations should be obtained before any decision is made.

Resolved:

- To approve the purchase of the larger entrance sign and large play area sign.
- The Parish Clerk to obtain quotations for fencing around the play areas, including both timber and metal options.
- To hold a Members' site meeting on **Wednesday 22 July 2026 at 6.30pm** to consider fencing options and inspect the Wildlife Garden boardwalks.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

d) **Coronation Garden** - Members received an update on the Coronation Garden project.

Members noted the positive update on the work to complete the Coronation Garden and were looking forward to seeing it continue. It was noted that, due to the current stage of the project and the need to complete outstanding works, the official opening event would be arranged once the project had been completed.

Resolved: To defer arrangements for the official opening until the project has been completed.

e) **Recycling Bin** - Members considered a quotation received from **Durham County Council** for the supply and installation of a new recycling bin within the park at a cost of **£1,530**, together with an annual emptying charge of **£282**.

Whilst Members considered the ongoing emptying costs to be reasonable, they felt that an alternative style of bin may be more appropriate for the location.

Resolved:

- To note the quotation received.
- The Parish Clerk to contact Durham County Council to establish whether alternative styles of recycling bin are available before a final decision is made.

f) **Changing Rooms** - Members considered a quotation for improvements to the changing rooms at a cost of **£7,450**.

It was noted that the contractor had offered to undertake the work on a **materials-only basis**, representing exceptional value for money. Members acknowledged that, whilst the Council's Financial Regulations would normally require three quotations for works of this value, the unique nature of the offer justified an exception in this instance.

Members noted that **£5,000** had been allocated within the Council's **Earmarked Reserves**, with approval required for an additional **£2,450** from General Reserves.

Resolved:

- To approve the quotation in the sum of **£7,450**.
- To approve the use of **£5,000** from the Earmarked Reserve and **£2,450** from General Reserves.
- To approve an exception to the Council's normal quotation requirements in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, in recognition of the specialist nature and exceptional value of the quotation received.
- The Parish Clerk to progress the necessary contractual documentation prior to the commencement of the works.

g) **Lighting Columns** - Members considered quotations for the **stress testing of lighting columns** used for the installation of the village Christmas lights.

The Parish Clerk reported that, although an alternative contractor had previously provided a competitive quotation through a joint arrangement with another council, this was no longer available due to the small number of columns requiring testing within Bishop Middleham. As a result, the quotation received from Durham County Council represented the only practical option if the Christmas lights were to be installed this year. Members also noted that the stress testing is required every three years, enabling future costs to be budgeted accordingly.

It was further noted that the Parish Clerk had asked Durham County Council to investigate whether neighbouring parish councils requiring stress testing at the same time could be grouped together in future years to help reduce costs.

Resolved:

- To approve the quotation from **Durham County Council** for the stress testing of the lighting columns.
- The Parish Clerk to liaise with Durham County Council regarding opportunities to combine future testing with neighbouring parish councils where possible to achieve cost savings.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

h) Wildlife Garden

Members considered an updated quotation for the replacement of the Wildlife Garden boardwalks. It was noted that the quotation of approximately £28,000 related to the supply of materials only and did not include installation costs. Members discussed potential sources of external funding and the need to establish the full extent of the works required before progressing the project.

Members also discussed whether all three boardwalks required replacement and agreed that a site inspection would assist in determining the most appropriate long-term solution, together with the condition of the existing structures and surrounding area.

Resolved:

- To note the updated quotation for the supply of replacement boardwalk materials.
- To continue investigating external funding opportunities to support the project.
- To hold a Members' site meeting on Wednesday 22 July 2026 at 6.30pm to inspect the boardwalks, consider future options for the layout and review the condition of the surrounding area.

i) **Footpath Update** - The Parish Clerk provided an update on the proposed footpath improvements through Knotty Hill Golf Club.

Members noted that County Councillor Chris Lines had contacted the Golf Club following the previous meeting. The Golf Club is now liaising with its land agent regarding the proposal and will make contact to enable discussions to progress directly with the Parish Council.

Resolved: To note the update and await further contact from Knotty Hill Golf Club and its land agent.

j) **Mainsforth Noticeboard** - Members considered the purchase of a replacement noticeboard for Mainsforth.

The Parish Clerk presented an outdoor weatherproof, wood-effect noticeboard capable of displaying 12 A4 notices, together with details of its dimensions and proposed fixing arrangements. It was noted that the existing noticeboard had deteriorated and the proposed replacement would provide significantly greater display capacity.

Resolved: To approve the purchase and installation of the proposed noticeboard.

10. Planning

a) County Durham Plan - Scoping Consultation

Members considered the **County Durham Plan Scoping Consultation**, including the associated **Call for Sites** submissions affecting Bishop Middleham.

Members acknowledged the significant public interest in the consultation and encouraged all residents to familiarise themselves with the consultation documents and submit their own views before the closing date of **17 August 2026**. It was recognised that the **Call for Sites** process does not allocate land for development, but identifies sites submitted for consideration as part of the wider County Durham Plan process. Members also agreed that further information should be provided to help residents understand the distinction between the Call for Sites process and the County Durham Plan consultation.

Resolved:

- The Parish Clerk to prepare a publicity campaign to raise awareness of the consultation, including information for the Council's website, social media platforms and parish noticeboards, encouraging residents to participate.
- To consider whether additional publicity could be provided to reach residents who do not regularly access digital media.
- The Parish Clerk to prepare a draft response to the County Durham Plan Scoping Consultation for circulation to Members prior to submission.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

- The Council's response should include reference to the **Call for Sites** process and request that any future site-specific proposals affecting Bishop Middleham are subject to full public consultation before any decisions are made.

11. Councillors

a) Co-option

Members considered the draft co-option publicity poster prepared by the Parish Clerk.

The poster was reviewed and Members agreed that it would be used to promote the current councillor vacancy. It was further agreed that the publicity should be shared widely to encourage applications from across the parish.

Resolved:

- To approve the co-option publicity poster.
- The Parish Clerk to publicise the vacancy through the Council's noticeboards, website and social media channels and investigate the distribution of publicity to households where appropriate.

12. Correspondence

a) Sedgefield Charities Board of Trustees

Members considered a request to nominate a representative to serve on the Sedgefield Charities Board of Trustees.

Resolved:

- To appoint Cllr. G. Jacobs as the Parish Council's representative.
- The Parish Clerk to forward the relevant information and contact details to Cllr. Jacobs.

b) Bishop Middleham Blooms & Crafts Festival

Members received a letter from the organisers of the **Bishop Middleham Blooms & Crafts Festival** thanking the Parish Council for its continued support in helping to deliver another successful community event.

Members were pleased to note the positive feedback received and congratulated the organisers and volunteers on the success of the festival.

Resolved: To receive the letter and record the Council's appreciation to the organisers and all volunteers for their contribution to another successful community event.

c) Letter from Bishop Middleham WI

Members considered a letter from Bishop Middleham WI requesting that the Parish Council give further consideration to the provision of public conveniences within the village.

Members reaffirmed the Council's previously agreed position that, at the present time, the provision of public toilets is not considered feasible due to the significant financial, maintenance and management implications. It was noted, however, that the Parish Clerk will be attending specialist training in **November** to gain a greater understanding of the options available, associated costs and emerging technologies relating to public convenience provision.

Resolved:

- To receive the letter.
- To note that the Parish Clerk will attend training on public convenience provision and report back to a future meeting.

d) Letter from a Resident

Members considered correspondence from a resident raising several matters of concern, including the condition of the Wildlife Garden boardwalks, overgrown vegetation at the bottom of the steps from Bank Top, trees affecting neighbouring properties and nuisance caused by jackdaws.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Members noted that concerns regarding the Wildlife Garden boardwalks had already been considered earlier in the meeting.

The Parish Clerk confirmed that the overgrown vegetation at the bottom of the steps had been reported to **Savills**, acting on behalf of the **Church Commissioners**, as the land is outside the Parish Council's ownership. Residents experiencing issues relating to trees on this land should report them directly to Savills, and the Parish Clerk will provide the appropriate contact details on request.

Members also noted the concerns regarding jackdaws but recognised that there were no practical actions available to the Parish Council at the present time.

Resolved:

- To receive the correspondence.
- To note the action already taken in reporting the overgrown vegetation to Savills.
- The Parish Clerk to provide Savills' contact details to residents wishing to report issues relating to trees on land owned by the Church Commissioners.

13. Member Sharing

The following matters were raised for the Parish Clerk to progress:

- Concerns regarding speeding on **High Road**.
- Vegetation obscuring the **30mph signs on the approach into Bishop Middleham from Ferryhill**, together with other overgrown vegetation within the parish requiring attention.
- The overgrown hedge affecting the footpath towards **Mainsforth**, which had already been reported to Durham County Council.
- Visibility concerns when exiting **Bishops Court** due to overgrown vegetation. It was noted that photographs had been received and the matter would be reported to the appropriate authority.
- The Council's programme of tree inspections.

Resolved:

- To note the matters raised.
- The Parish Clerk to arrange the Council's programme of tree inspections in accordance with the Council's Tree Management Policy.
- The Parish Clerk to progress the remaining matters with the appropriate authority where required.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is due to be held on Wednesday 9 September 2026 at 6.30pm.

Meeting concluded at 8.35pm

Signed: _____

Dated: _____