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Conserving our Past: Building Our Future

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 9 September 2026 at 6.30pm

Bishop Middleham Village Hall

Present: Cllr Harvey Neve (Chair), Cllr A Anderson, Cllr J Brownlee, Cllr V Cooke, Cllr G Jacobs, Cllr E Sparks
Parish Clerk: Mrs A. Hall
County Councillor: Cllr I Catchpole
PCSO: Not in attendance

Members of the Public: 5

1. Notice of Meeting

Public Notice of the Meeting had been given in accordance with Schedule 12 paragraph 10(2) of the Local Government Act 1982. The Chair welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 6.30pm.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M MacCallam and the reason for absence was noted.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded to declare any interests in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct. No declarations of interest were recorded.

4. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 8 July 2026

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 8 July 2026 were considered.

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

5. Public Participation

Members of the public raised concerns regarding increased quarry blasting, traffic, dust and vibration.

The Chair advised that the Council would continue liaison with the quarry operator regarding blasting, monitoring and traffic movements.

Reports of quarry wagons travelling through the village would also be raised with the operator in relation to relevant planning conditions.

6. County Councillor Report

County Councillor Catchpole provided an update on local planning, infrastructure and grant funding opportunities.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Potential funding through Point North (£5,000-£10,000) was discussed for community projects, including the Mainsforth Christmas tree electrical connection and Wildlife Garden improvements.

The possible use of Section 106 funding for changing room improvements was also discussed. Cllr Catchpole offered assistance with a business case and potential application.

Resolved: To receive the County Councillor's report and to investigate the funding opportunities discussed.

7. PCSO Report

No PCSO was in attendance at the meeting.

Members discussed the recent PACT meeting, attended by six residents, where speeding, parking, anti-social behaviour, e-scooters and other policing concerns were raised.

Residents had welcomed the opportunity to meet with the police and there was interest in further PACT meetings.

Concerns around Castle Lake were also noted, together with the importance of continued liaison with the police.

Resolved: To note the update and continue engagement with the local policing team and PACT arrangements.

8. Finance

a) Payments from July 2026

The Parish Clerk advised that the July and August accounts were not yet fully completed. The Chair and Clerk would meet to review the accounts and budget position, with usual signing-off arrangements continuing.

b) Community Grant - Glee Club

Members considered the Glee Club community grant. The Council had previously agreed to purchase and gift trophies to the group, with the final cost lower than anticipated.

Resolved: To formally approve the expenditure previously committed for the Glee Club trophies.

c) Completion of 2025/26 Audit

The Parish Clerk advised that the 2025/26 audit had been completed. A minor error had been corrected and the audit resubmitted, with no further matters arising. An additional charge of £40 had been incurred.

Resolved: To approve the completed 2025/26 audit and publish the required completion documentation on the Parish Council website.

d) Parish Clerk Pay Award

The Parish Clerk advised that the national pay award had been announced at 3.3%. Members noted the Council's established practice of following the relevant pay guidance.

Resolved: To approve implementation of the 3.3% pay award for the Parish Clerk.

e) Risk Register Review

Members considered Section 1 of the Risk Register, including the risk of acting outside the Council's legal powers.

Members were reminded of the importance of understanding statutory powers and making decisions within them.

Members were encouraged to undertake Good Councillor Guide training and familiarise themselves with Standing Orders, the Code of Conduct and relevant statutory powers.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

The full Risk Register review would continue at a future meetings.

9. Events and Outdoor Activities

a) Michaelmas Fair

Members received an update on the Michaelmas Fair. Arrangements for rides, the dog show, inflatables, health and safety, security and photography were reported to be in place.

Site access and equipment arrangements for Saturday morning were also discussed.

b) Fireworks Display

Members received an update on the Fireworks Display. The main arrangements, including fireworks, catering and event facilities, were in place, with remaining paperwork and Safety Advisory Group requirements being progressed.

The event was expected to attract more than 800 people. An updated risk assessment was required and arrangements would be reviewed again in October.

c) Park Signage

The larger entrance sign and play area signage were being progressed, with positioning discussed to ensure good visibility.

d) Coronation Garden

Work on the Coronation Garden was continuing, including landscaping and maintenance, although recent weather had affected progress and required additional watering.

Members noted progress and would continue to monitor the work.

e) Recycling Bin

The Clerk reported that the recycling bin supplier had not responded despite repeated contact. A further request had been submitted seeking information on an alternative design.

Members also discussed the regularly overflowing County Council recycling bin outside the Post Office and the possibility of an additional bin.

The damaged dog bin near the changing rooms was also noted, with budget provision available for minor maintenance.

Resolved: The Clerk to continue pursuing the recycling bin quotation and alternative options, and to progress replacement of the damaged dog bin as appropriate.

f) Changing Rooms Renovation

The changing room works were awaiting final contractor paperwork and were expected to begin within one to two weeks.

Works would include new showers, flooring and electrical improvements. The changing rooms would be unavailable while work was underway.

g) Lighting Columns - Stress Testing

The Clerk confirmed that lighting column stress testing had been completed and reports received, including tests on additional columns.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

This would allow more Christmas light decorations to be installed, subject to operational checks before installation.

h) Christmas Lights - Mainsforth

Members discussed the proposed mains electricity supply for the Mainsforth Christmas tree. The estimated total cost was approximately £15,060, including connection, excavation and associated works.

External funding opportunities were discussed, including a possible Point North application for up to £10,000.

Discussions were also taking place with Local Networks regarding neighbourhood funding. The Council would continue to investigate external funding before committing the full cost from Parish Council funds.

i) Wildlife Garden

Members received an update on the Wildlife Garden. Planned replacement boards remained outstanding and the Clerk would follow this up. Longer-term redevelopment options included reducing boardwalks, retaining an accessible route, creating a pond-dipping area and considering longer-lasting recycled materials and an outdoor classroom area. External funding, including Section 106 or grant funding, would be required.

Durham Wildlife Trust had shown interest and may be able to assist with future development.

j) Playpark Fencing

A quotation for playpark fencing was awaited. Alternative fencing options and sources would also be investigated.

Resolved: To await the quotation and investigate alternative options before making a decision.

k) Update regarding Footpath

Members received an update on the footpath through Knotty Hill Golf Club. The Golf Club had completed work within its boundary and had a maintenance plan in place.

A repeatedly vandalised gate and concerns regarding bike and motorbike access were discussed, together with alternative pedestrian access arrangements.

The Parish Council remained willing to assist financially if required to achieve a suitable long-term solution.

Resolved: Parish Clerk to contact the golf club to discuss further.

l) Noticeboard - Mainsforth

Members were advised that the new Mainsforth noticeboard had been installed, was in good condition and operational, and a key had been obtained.

Resolved: To note the completion of the Mainsforth noticeboard installation.

10. Planning – County Durham Plan Scoping Consultation

Members discussed the County Durham Plan process and the benefits of a joined-up response with neighbouring communities.

Discussions had taken place with Fishburn and Sedgfield, with potential to share advice and work together on future consultations and planning matters.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Members also discussed undertaking a new village survey, noting that the previous survey had provided useful information for Council strategy.

An updated survey could establish residents' current views on planning, housing, schools, services, safety and other local issues.

It was agreed to locate and review the previous survey before considering an updated version.

Resolved:

- To continue discussions with Fishburn, Sedgfield and other neighbouring communities regarding a joined-up approach to County Durham Plan matters.
- To locate and review the previous village survey.
- To consider the preparation of an updated village survey to establish current residents' views and help inform future planning work.

11. Councillors – Co-option

Members discussed the councillor vacancy. No applications had been received and Members agreed that residents across the parish should continue to be encouraged to apply.

The vacancy would continue to be publicised.

Resolved: To continue promoting the councillor vacancy and encourage suitable residents to consider applying.

12. Correspondence

Members considered correspondence and updates received since the previous meeting.

- a) Savills was progressing a tree assessment and considering the Council's licence arrangements for maintaining certain areas of land. Outstanding vegetation and tree matters would continue to be followed up.
- b) Reports of quarry wagons travelling through the village would be raised with the quarry operator, noting relevant planning conditions.

The Council noted that it could not prevent other lawful articulated vehicle movements through the village.

13. Member Sharing

Members raised matters for follow-up including traffic and speeding, outstanding highway reports, the village sign, possible hedgehog signs, Wildlife Garden camera locations and replacement planting at the Mainsforth entrance.

The Clerk would continue to pursue outstanding highway matters and report appropriate issues to Durham County Council.

Suitable positions for wildlife cameras would also be considered to reduce unnecessary activation by vegetation.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 14 October 2026 at 6.30pm, Bishop Middleham Village Hall**

Meeting concluded at approximately 8.30pm.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____