Bishop Middleham & Mainsforth

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Conserving our Past: Building Our Future

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 26 October 2026 at 6.30pm
Bishop Middleham Village Hall

Present: Cllr Harvey Neve (Chair), Cllr J Brownlee, Cllr V Cooke, Cllr G Jacobs,
Parish Clerk: Mrs A. Hall

Members of the Public: 8

1. Notice of Meeting
The Chair welcomed those present and opened the meeting. Public notice of the meeting had been given.

2. Apologies
The Chair welcomed those present and opened the meeting. Public notice of the meeting had been given.

3. Declarations of Interest
Members were invited to declare any interests in the items on the agenda. No declarations of interest were recorded.

4. Public Participation
Members of the public attended to discuss the proposed sale of land north of High Road.

Residents expressed concern about the potential impact of development on the character of the village, the countryside and wildlife. Other concerns included additional traffic, pressure on local roads and services, and the proximity of the land to the quarry.

Residents also referred to the connection between the Surtees family and Bishop Middleham, and the fact that nearby residents had not been directly notified of the proposed sale.

Possible approaches to the trustees, Durham Cathedral and Durham Wildlife Trust were discussed, together with the possibility of the land remaining in agricultural use.

The Chair thanked residents for attending and for providing information and views to assist the Council.

5. Land North of High Road
Members considered the advertised sale of land north of High Road, correspondence from residents and the planning information received from Durham County Council.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

The Clerk reported that Durham County Council had advised that no recent planning application had been received for the land. The site had been submitted through the call for sites process and would be assessed alongside other sites, including consideration of its proximity to the quarry. Members noted that the sale of the land was not itself a planning application.

Sealed bids for the land were due by 18 November 2026.

Members discussed the concerns raised by residents and the importance of seeking the views of the wider community before establishing a formal parish position. The connection between Virginia Surtees, the village and the trust was discussed, alongside draft letters prepared to the trustees and Durham Cathedral.

Members supported preparing a short, balanced survey to seek residents' views. The survey could include an opportunity for comments and allow responses to be returned on paper or by email.

Cllr Neve advised that he was a trustee of Durham Wildlife Trust and agreed to discuss the situation with the Trust, although he did not think it was likely to want to become involved.

Agreed: To seek residents' views and contact the trustees and Durham Cathedral about the proposed sale and the concerns raised.
Action: Chair and Clerk to prepare a short, neutral survey for residents.
Action: Chair and Clerk to review the draft letters, incorporate points raised at the meeting and seek to send a response before 18 November.
Action: Chair and Clerk to arrange an update on the Council website and share information through local community channels.
Action: Cllr Neve to discuss the land with Durham Wildlife Trust.

6. Joint Working on Planning Matters

The Clerk reported on the multi-parish meeting concerning development at Wynyard and the draft Statement of Common Purpose. Members discussed the potential cumulative effect of development across the Durham, Stockton and Hartlepool planning areas, particularly on schools, roads and other services used by neighbouring communities.

The Council recognised the importance of housing development being accompanied by appropriate infrastructure. Members discussed supporting the collaboration while acknowledging the limited resources available to the Parish Council.

The Clerk advised that any request for a financial contribution would need to be brought back to Council for consideration. Members also discussed the benefit of councillors attending future meetings to share the work involved.

Resolved: To support and participate in the Wynyard planning collaboration in principle, within the resources available to the Council. Any request for a financial contribution would be considered separately by Council.
Action: Clerk and Chair to prepare a response confirming the Council's support in principle and its limited resources, and to seek further information about any future commitments.
The Clerk reported that clarification was being sought from John Robinson at Fishburn Parish Council regarding the separately discussed collaborative working with Fishburn and Sedgefield on the County Durham Plan. A response was awaited.
Action: Clerk to update the Council when a response is received from John Robinson.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

7. Fireworks Event

The Council reviewed arrangements for the forthcoming fireworks event.

The Clerk confirmed that the Safety Advisory Group process and Temporary Event Notice had been completed and that the relevant paperwork had been received from the event providers. Two first aiders were booked.

Members discussed ticket sales and the existing limit of 1,000 tickets. Approximately 750 tickets had been supplied for sale at the time of the meeting. The possibility of people entering the open site without tickets was discussed, together with the difficulty of monitoring every access point.
The Clerk would ask the insurer whether cover could be extended above 1,000 people as a contingency. The intention remained to issue no more than 1,000 tickets.

Members discussed security arrangements, including awareness of suspicious behaviour, packages and vehicles, emergency access, stewarding and communication. A message about parking and keeping access clear for emergency vehicles had already been issued.

Action: Clerk to ask the insurer whether cover could be extended above 1,000 people to allow for additional people entering the site.
Action: A further public reminder to be issued in the week before the event about parking, expected attendance and keeping emergency access clear.
Action: Volunteers to meet at 12 noon on the day of the event to put up fencing and establish the fireworks exclusion zone.
Action: Confirm stewarding and gate duties, including cover if the Chair is unavailable.
Action: Clerk to charge the walkie-talkies and prepare the event equipment, including the clicker, torch, high-visibility jackets and accident book.
Action: Ask Geoff Turner whether a PA system can be borrowed for use in an emergency.
Action: Clerk to prepare an event pack and ensure those helping know where equipment is located and are familiar with the risk assessment and emergency arrangements.
Action: Ensure the required keys are available and the toilets are open. One clicker to be used at a time at the gate to avoid counting people twice.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting will be held on **Wednesday 11 November 2026 at 6.30pm** at Bishop Middleham Village Hall.
Meeting closed at: 8.10pm

Signed: _____ Dated: _____