



FULL COUNCIL MEETING MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2024

Dear Councillor,

You are hereby **summoned** to attend the meeting of Barnard Castle Town Council to be held in the **Dawson Room, Woodleigh on Monday 18 November 2024 at 6.00 p.m.** The meeting will consider the items of business listed below.

***Public Participation 6.00 – 6.15pm**

Members of the public are invited to speak on any matters contained within the agenda*. Following this period members of the public can remain but cannot speak further on any agenda item unless invited by the Chair.

TOWN CLERK
13 November 2024

AGENDA

47. ACCEPTANCE OR OTHERWISE OF APOLOGIES
48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
49. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS
50. COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 18 SEPTEMBER 2024
51. EN BLOC ITEMS
52. UPDATES & REFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES
53. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES
54. 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF TEESDALE AVIATION DAY (SEPTEMBER 2025)
55. DEED OF VARIATION TO LOWER DEMESNES LEASE
56. HALF YEARLY INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS
57. ROYAL GARDEN PARTY 2025

* Questions must be submitted in writing to the Clerk prior to the meeting and must refer to items on the published agenda. The Public Participation policy can be found on the council website: <https://barnardcastletowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BCTC-Public-Participation-Procedure.pdf>

¹ Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, recording of the meeting by any person is permitted. Those filming or otherwise recording the meeting should respect the rights of other members of the public attending and should not disrupt the meeting.

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
FULL COUNCIL
18 NOVEMBER 2024**

DAWSON ROOM, WOODLEIGH

6:00 P.M.

DETAILED AGENDA

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD - 6.00pm to 6.15pm

47. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE OF APOLOGIES

Cllr Thompson has submitted his apologies.

Recommendation – That the submitted apologies be approved.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Code of Conduct (Minute 10/May/19 refers), Members will be asked whether they have any personal, pecuniary, or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members are reminded that a declaration can be given later in the meeting if a need arises during discussion.

49. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

50. COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES (ENCLOSED)

16 September 2024

Recommendation – That the minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record.

51. EN BLOC ITEMS

This is a report arising from the decision at Minute 72/Aug/04 to amalgamate a number of agenda items so that the accompanying recommendations can be moved 'en bloc'. Any Member has a right to speak on any of the listed items, but it is hoped that discussion can be kept to a minimum.

The items included in the report are as follows:

- (1) Partnership Committee – 21 October 2024 – (Draft)**
- (2) Services Committee – 07 October 2024 (draft)**
- (3) Resources Committee – 04 November 2024 (draft)**
- (4) Town Mayor Activities**

Since the Council meeting on the 16 September 2024, the Town Mayor accompanied by Consort, Mrs Sue Ing has attended the following:

24th September - Teesdale Aviation Day

10th October - Aviation Memorial unveiling (Stainton

1st November - Town Bonfire Event

6th November - St Mary's Church – windows for the king

8th November - Deerbolt Remembrance Service

10th November – St Mary's Church/Bowes Remembrance Sunday/wreath laying

11th November - Armistice Day wreath laying

Recommendation – That the draft committee meeting minutes, and Mayoral activity is received and noted.

52. UPDATES AND REFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES

From the meetings outlined above at item 51 the following updates are noted:

(1) Partnership Committee

No referrals.

(2) Services Committee

No referrals

(3) Resources Committee

No referrals

53. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES

The Councils representative on each relevant body can make a verbal update at the meeting.

- (1) Teesdale Residents' and Travellers' Forum - (Cllr Turnbull)**
- (2) Larger Local Councils Forum – (Clerk & Cllr Foote-Wood)**
- (3) The Witham Hall Ltd (Cllr Ing as Town Mayor)**
- (4) Dawson Cottages Trust (Cllrs Ewart & McLean)**
- (5) St Mary's Barnard Castle Hall Association (Cllr Connelly)**
- (6) Cultura Trust/Raby (Cllr Drew)**

Recommendation – That the information be received.

54. 30th ANNIVERSARY OF TEESDALE AVIATION DAY (SEPTEMBER 2025)

Submitted – Report.

Mr Chris Galley will be in attendance to discuss plans to mark this event.

55. DEED OF VARIATION TO LOWER DEMESNES LEASE

Durham County Council have said that they believe the unadopted road fronting Ivy Cottage by the Lower Demesnes was incorrectly omitted from the original lease and plan. They are proposing that DCC and the town council agree to enter into a Deed of Variation. This would be to vary our current lease to include the road edged red on the attached draft plan into our demise to give the council control over the road.

This has come about following the request received to install a security gate or bollard at the entrance to this road. Any variation to the current lease would have the effect of the request falling to the town council rather than Durham to consider.

The variation can only happen with the agreement of the town council.

Recommendation - I am therefore recommending that the town council does not agree to this variation on the basis that it would become responsible for the upkeep of the road, including requests already put forward for the security bollard or gate which would amount to a significant additional cost to this council.

56. HALF YEARLY INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS (ENCLOSED)

To receive the half year Internal Audit reports (Creditors & Budgetary) compiled by Mr Gordon Fletcher, Internal Auditor, and conclusion the council has sound systems of control in place and those controls are consistently applied and are fully effective (Full Assurance).

Recommendation – (a) That the information be noted; and
(b) the council extends its thanks to Mr Fletcher.

57. ROYAL GARDEN PARTY 2025

Nominations to be put into the draw for a Royal Garden Party 2025. Note: Previous attendees cannot apply.

All nominees will be entered into a draw from which a random selection will be made.

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**

21 OCTOBER 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Chatterjee, Foote-Wood, Turnbull & Connelly, Vicky Sturrs (Bowes Museum), Jonathan Wallis (BCCL), & Rachel Tweddle (TCR), Amy Hughes (Witham) & Martyn Maughan (Meet)

Officers: Mr M. Clark (Town Clerk)

Others: Teesdale Mercury

14. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted by Cllr's Thompson, Ewart & Ing (Town Mayor ex-officio). No apologies were received from Cllr Bigge.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

in accordance with this Council's adopted Constitution (Members' Code of Conduct) (Minute 10/May/19 refers), Members will be asked whether they have any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members are reminded that a declaration can be given later in the meeting if a need arises during discussion.

16. PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING – 01 JULY 2024 – MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes be approved as an accurate record.

17. THE BOWES MUSEUM UPDATE

A busy summer has bucked the trend of many of our national peers, many of which have had much lower-than-expected visitor numbers. The *Kith and Kinship: Norman Cornish and L.S. Lowry* exhibition is undoubtedly a draw, but so is the reputation of our award-winning café, our new galleries and displays, and a growing public programme that is helping us achieve our objective of 'always something great to do'.

Our visitor welcome is being regularly positively mentioned in reviews, and our increasingly diverse volunteer community is superbly supporting and shaping our work. The restoration of the swan proves that the 'swan effect' is as powerful as ever; at some points in the summer, we had several hundred people at each viewing.

1500 visitors came for Heritage Open Day in September with an offer of talks, workshops, spotlight tours and handling sessions across the museum. Over 100 memberships were purchased.

At the end of September, we are running 2% ahead of our visitor number target and 24% ahead of the same time last year.

We envisage our new exhibition; *Framing Fashion; Art and Inspiration from a Private Collection of Vivienne Westwood*, will be an equally positive footfall-driver. Having opening with a Members Private View event on 18 October, *Framing Fashion* explores the wide-ranging and playful inspiration Westwood took from artists and their techniques across her career. From brush strokes to palette, gilded frames to inlaid furniture, even artists' names found their way into her work. Westwood also took ideas from alternative forms of creative expression, including sculpture, theatre, film, photography and social movements. The displayed ensembles represent a timeline of inspiration from the Greco-Roman period to the Punk movement of the late 1970s – dressing nearly 3000 years of history in undisputable Westwood style. They are accompanied by objects from The Bowes

Museum's collection exploring Westwood's imaginative re-use of designs and techniques through the centuries.

Our LGBTQAI+ programme 'BE YOU at Bowes' is going well, and we've been present at Pride events across the region. Our Young Volunteers programme across the summer was such an excellent programme and both the young people involved and Teesdale School have given some fantastic feedback – we're looking forward to building on this and continuing the growth of the Young Curators programme for people aged 16-25.

Alongside this, we're nearing the completion of the MEND project with final snagging work underway on lighting and EV charger installation.

We successfully secured Museum Accreditation; the UK industry standard for museums that ensures we are sustainable, focused and trusted, inspiring the confidence of the public and governing and public funding bodies. We received no queries or questions from the panel. Receiving this, with a new mission and revised route map for our museum practices, is a testament to the confidence that Arts Council England and our peers who judge this have in us.

A new accessible tour of the museum launched on the website and was made possible through a regional scheme. It significantly increases the quality of our access information. Feedback from our Access Forum on this and the MEND improvements has been extremely positive.

The Durham Creative Community Fellows (DCCF) Programme has launched with a call out for applications. This is part of the Into The Light County Durham Place Partnership Project and is a free one-year learning experience for leaders driving positive change in County Durham through arts and culture projects. The Bowes Museum is the leading partner alongside Derby Museum's and US-based NAS. To get a flavour of this programme, watch the UK Creative Community Fellows House Experience video from this summer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuuT9iWZFwk>. You can find out more about DCCF here <https://thebowesmuseum.org.uk/durham-creative-community-fellows/>

Our ever popular Winter Market planning is in full flow - targets are on track to ensure local artist, designers and makers have appropriate representation at the market - currently projected 52% of traders will be an artist, designer or maker. We're expecting over 100 traders, a fun fair and choirs with stalls inside and outside the building. The event runs 13 – 15 December, 10:00-16:00 each day and entry costs £6.50 for adults, under 18s free and includes entry to the museum.

Parkland gates will be locked from 11 December to allow for set up and security and should be open again on 16 December.

You can find out more and book tickets in advance here <https://thebowesmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/winter-market/>

Resolved – That the update be received, and the information noted.

18. THE WITHAM UPDATE

Amy Hughes from the Witham gave a verbal report:

A lot has been happening at the Witham over the last few months

We have received a grant from TAP and Neighbourhood funds to turn the current gallery into a bar, this will be in the style of a dispensary, keeping with the history of the building. This will allow us to alleviate large queues for busy gigs and generate more secondary income to contribute to financial sustainability.

We have successfully secured capital funding from CDCF which allows us to carry out vital refurbishment of our Velux windows that are leaking and causing damage to the internal structure. Additionally we will use the money to carry out essential roof repairs.

We have received a £157,000 grant from ACE – this will allow for : LED lighting throughout the building, Solar panels on the roof – these will bring our core costs down saving on energy bills and contribute to a greener environment. We have input our own internet access (we were piggy backing on DCC at a charge) and upgraded all of the ports and access throughout the building. A glass front entrance door, digital advertisement boards at the front and rear of the building, new technical equipment such as, laptops, screens, projectors, interactive meeting board. Bike stores to be converted into storage, a garden pergola providing outside space with heated lamps for the colder months. Rear floodlighting. All of these will allow us to run more efficiently, cut costs and sweat our assets.

With the addition of a new Social Media content creator we have seen our engagement triple, this has generated more ticket sales which has seen our public programme steam ahead of target.

We have secured funding to keep this position for a further 6 months from Jan 25.

Our youth theatre is now part of the National Theatre connections programme which allows us to take our show to the Newcastle Theatre Royal, thus giving the children more opportunity.

Looking at how to improve the tourist information point.

Resolved – That the update be received, and the information noted.

19. THE TCR HUB UPDATE

Rachel Tweddle referred to her report:

Example Current Footfall Data:

- BF group: 27 (half of these are babies)
- Creative Coffee: 8
- Tea and Tots: 22
- Family Social Club: 17
- Music Space last week: 14
- Menopause Group: 6

In addition we are delivering food to over 25 households a week with a further 20 receiving food by visiting the pantry and engaging with volunteers.

Youth Work sessions are delivered 4 days a week, include Social Action, LGBTQ+, Gaming and DoE.

Expanded the popular Family Social Club to three nights a week from November to include a Special Needs Group and a group in Evenwood.

Smoking Cessation Project running until March 2025. Terri@tcrhub.co.uk

Food Provision Enquiries Katie@tcrhub.co.uk

Youth Work Kelly@tcrhub.co.uk

Family Activities Sarah@tcrhub.co.uk

Currently housing the Quinn's Retreat Speak Their Name Quilt - Invitation Only Launch tomorrow night - Tuesday 22nd 6:30pm.

Full Halloween Activity Programme Saturday 26th October to Thursday 31st October.

Christmas Plans are also now public including a Santa's Grotto, Liz Million Workshops, Christmas Party, Christmas Day Lunch and Gift Tree.

Light Up Barnard Castle Plans are well underway in partnership with the Town Council, English Heritage, The Witham, Barnard Castle Lights Committee, Teesdale Lions and many more. Event is on Friday 29th November. Parade from The Witham into the Castle. Approx. 200 participants. Will include a Choir, Light Show, Light Installations, SnowGlobe.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

20. BARNARD CASTLE CHRISTMAS LIGHT (BCCL)

Jonathan Wallis spoke to his report.

Fundraising by BCCL

- October 2nd – Wine and Cheese Evening at Andalucía. Raised £500 for Barnard Castle Christmas Lights. Thanks go to Christine Taylour and her team for organising and hosting the event.
- A curry night had been planned for November, but this has been postponed to the new year to avoid a clash with another charity night being held in November at Bengal Merchant.
- November 1st - Bonfire Night, Upper Demesnes. Final planning taking place. The event will include a Rock Choir, atmospheric lighting down Parson's Lonnen, a special guest lighting the bonfire and Guy Fawkes in attendance. Tickets on sale via the Witham Hall and at the Teesdale Mercury and Galgate News.

2024 Display

- Final stages of planning underway.
- Christmas Plus have already started work on this year's display including installing some of the new lights for this year.
- Remaining installations will take place later this month and throughout early November to ensure everything is ready for the switch on event on 29th November.
- We will not give all the details away on this year's display as we don't want to ruin the enjoyment of seeing the lights!
- We are already looking ahead for the 2025/2026 display and as always welcome ideas for new lights and displays.

Barnard Castle Town Council (BCTC) and Barnard Castle Christmas Lights Committee (BCCL)

- BCCL closely with BCTC to continue improving and investing in the annual display for the benefit of the town.
- It goes without saying that we are grateful to everyone that supports us, and the Christmas lights would not exist without this help and the generous financial donations given.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

21. BARNARD CASTLE MEET

Martyn Maughan from the Meet gave a verbal report:

The Sunday this year was a complete washout due to the weather. Thankfully all we lost over the weekend was £2,000 and still have a healthy bank balance.

Even with the bad weather people still turned out to support the events.

In 2025 the theme of the Meet will be 'Transport' to link in with the Railway anniversary.

A change is planned for the Saturday of the Meet where we hope to showcase youth and have local bands performing.

Looking at making improvements to the trail run.

A big thank you to everyone that helps and support the event.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

22. REMEMBRANCE EVENTS

(i) Merchant Navy Day

A small ceremony took place on Friday 01 September in the Galgate Gardens of Remembrance to commemorate Merchant Navy Day. Rev Canon Alec Harding undertook a blessing of the Red Ensign, and the Town Mayor raised the flag..

Wreaths were laid by the Town Council, South Tees Seafarers, and members of the public. Ian Kirkbride read the Ode of Remembrance, Andrew Nicholson played the Last Post and Reveille. Visitors were invited for refreshments in the Dawson Room.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted;

(b) That thanks be given to Rev Canon Alec Harding, Cllr Paul Ing (Town Mayor), Mr Ian Kirkbride, and Mr Andrew Nicholson.

(c) That the date to commemorate Merchant Navy Day be agreed as Wednesday 03 September 2025, and to be programmed into the events budget for 2025/26 with a small budgetary allocation.

(ii) Teesdale Aviation Day

The 29th Teesdale Aviation Day Service took place on Tuesday 26 September in the Galgate Gardens of Remembrance. The event was organised with the support of Christopher Galley.

Claire Earl, the daughter of one of the co-founders (Tony Galley), made the opening address and introduced the Town Mayor along with four members of the Barnard School Cadet force to read spotlights on air accidents from the region. Rev Graham Cutler conducted the Service of Commemoration and Act of Commitment.

Representatives from RAF Leeming, Wing Commander Emma Watkins, Station Warrant Officer, Stewart Thorpe, Mr Allan Jones RAFA, Lt Colonel Caroline Connor, Commanding Officer, Barnard Castle School Combined Cadet Force, Mr Alan Cresswell, Headteacher, Barnard Castle School, laid wreaths alongside the Town Mayor.

The event was also supported by a contingent of cadets from Barnard Castle School Cadet Force, Bishop Auckland RAF Amateur Radio Club, Veterans from SSAFA, Mr Andrew Nicholson, councillors, and members of the public. Visitors were invited for refreshments in the Dawson Room following the event.

2025 will be the 30th Anniversary of Teesdale Aviation Day with planning for this milestone being organised. The event is planned to take place on Saturday 20th September 2025. A separate budgetary bid report will be presented at the December 2024 Partnership Committee meeting.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted;
(b) That thanks be given to Claire Earl, Christopher Galley, Rev Graham Cutler, RAF Leeming, RAFA, Barnard Castle School and Combined Cadet Force, Mr Andrew Nicholson; and (c) That the date for 30th Anniversary of Teesdale Aviation Day 2025 be **Saturday 20th September** and to be programmed into the events budget for 2025/26. A separate budgetary report will be presented at the December 2024 Partnership meeting.

(iii) Remembrance Sunday & Armistice Day

Preparations for the Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade on Sunday 10 November are ongoing. Members will receive an email with the detailed arrangements nearer the time.

The Town Mayor will lay a wreath and observe a two-minute silence at 11:00am at the Galgate Gardens of Remembrance on Monday 11 November to mark Armistice Day.

Resolved - That the information is received and noted.

23. 200TH ANNIVERSARY STOCKTON & DARLINGTON RAILWAY

Cllr Foote-Wood informed the meeting of ongoing preparations locally to celebrate the anniversary in August and September 2025:

A specially built model railway exhibition

A book called 'Ticket to Teesdale' will be available to purchase at the exhibitions

A guided walk – 4 miles in a figure of eight loop. Volunteers will lead the walk

Will have use of the Crossing Keepers cottage (nr Glaxo) during the events. It is still to be finalised but it is hoped to have a railway signal pole and information board next door to the cottage.

Now formally known as the 'Teesdale Railway History Group'

A programme of events across the North East is available online, managed by the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway for people to see all that is happening during the anniversary celebrations. <https://www.sdr200.co.uk/>

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

04 NOVEMBER 2024

PRESENT: Cllrs Drew, Ing, Foote-Wood, Blake

Officers: Mr Clark (Town Clerk), Ms Atkinson (RFO)

Others: Teesdale Mercury

18. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE OF APOLOGIES

Cllr's Thompson & McLean submitted their apologies.

Resolved – That the submitted apologies be accepted.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Constitution (Members' Code of Conduct) (Minute 10/May/19 refers), Members will be asked whether they have any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members are reminded that a declaration can be given later in the meeting if a need arises during discussion.

Resolved – None declared.

20. RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING – 02 SEPTEMBER 2024 – MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting on the 02 September 2024 be approved as a true record.

21. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS

Received – Reports on the income and expenditure activity from 01 April to 31 July 2024.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

22. BUDGET 2025/2026 – COST CENTRE REPORT (APPENDIX A)

Received - A report based upon initial consideration of the principles underpinning the 2025/26 budget, to consider individual budgetary headings, including Fees and Charges.

Resolutions within report at Appendix A –

23. 2024/25 PAY AGREEMENT

Agreement has been reached on the pay award for local government services (Green Book) employees, covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The award an increase of £1,290 (pro rata for part time employees) which equates to an increase of between 2.84% and 4.33% depending on the spine point of the employee.

Resolved – (a) That the information be noted; and (b) That the arrears of pay be paid in the November salaries.

24. WOODLEIGH

The replacement boiler was successfully installed by Blackwell Heating over 3 days from 22nd-24th October. It was recommended that the outside drains are professionally jet washed.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

APPENDIX A

BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 04 NOVEMBER 2024

BUDGET 2025/26 - COST CENTRE REPORT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following initial consideration of the principles underpinning the 2025/26 budget carried out at the Resources Committee meeting on 02 September 2024, this report considers individual budgetary headings, including Fees and Charges. This is the next stage in the process of putting together the 2025/26 budget.

2. Outcomes from Previous Meeting

- 2.1 It was resolved by this Committee on 02 September that a non-pay inflation of 5% be assumed and that, in addition, pay inflation of 4% be modelled (minute 16 (b)(c)/September 24/refs).

3. Consideration of Budget Headings

- 3.1 The expenditure items are listed below for consideration at this meeting. For ease of reference, the cost centre number is shown in brackets.
- 3.2 Cost Centre Code's 101 is Council Administration and 106 is Woodleigh Operational.

Mayoral Allowance (101)

The Mayoral Allowances for 2022/23 & 2023/24 were removed from the budget due to reduced Mayoral functions given the financial climate. I recommend this remain for 2025/26.

Resolved – NIL

Training (101)

This allocation covers training for Members and Staff. This includes both councillors, staff training, and the purchase of guides and administration tools required.

With elections due in May 2025 and potentially new councillors joining I am recommending keeping the budget for 2025/26 the same as 2023/24.

Resolved – £200 – No change

Audit Fees (101)

This allocation covers both the internal and external audit fee.

The external audit fee increases in line with threshold levels of income and expenditure.

The correct procedure for internal and external audit fees is that they are accrued at the year-end so that each year's accounts include the fees for that year. This procedure has been adopted since 2009.

Resolved – £1,550 – No change

Bank Charges (101)

Based on the range of variable charges applied to cash, cheque and electronic banking, the scale of these charges was revised in 2017/18.

Resolved – £400 – no change

Replacement IT & Software (101)

This budget has been in place since the purchase of equipment in 2013. Each year, it is used for replacement software renewed in year with the balance returning to the earmarked reserve.

Any underspend at year end is vired to the EMR for Replacement IT & Software (346). The EMR currently stands at £1,700, which will increase to £2,550 if no renewals by the end of 2024/25. It is anticipated that a laptop replacement may be required in 2025.

Resolved - £650 – reduction of £200.

Insurance (101)

The council are in a long term agreement with Zurich Municipal that runs until April 2026. Insurance premiums have significantly increased recently. The actual cost of the council insurance for 2024/25 was £2,689.

Resolved – £2,824 - non pay inflation increase of 5% £135

Professional Fees & Charges (101)

Peninsula HR support contract price is fixed over the period of the 5 years
The contract with Peninsula runs until February 2025.

Following discussions with Durham County Council, the Town Council can now procure HR services from them under a Service Level Agreement.

The charge for their HR Advisory Service would consist of a joining fee of £125 which includes 2 hours HR work. In addition to this charge any further HR work after the first 2 hours has been used, would be charged at £75.00 per hour.

The significant advantage, apart from costs, would be being able to deal with a service that understands how council's operate.

I am recommending that the contract with Peninsula is not renewed, and the town council enter into a Service Level Agreement for 2025/26 with Durham County Council HR Advisory Service.

Resolved – That the item be deferred until 6 January 2025 for further comparisons to be made.

Co Durham Association of Local Councils/NALC/SLCC Subscriptions (101)

This allocation covers membership of the County Durham Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils.

The membership fee for each element is set each year and multiplied by the most recent electoral figures available.

2023 electoral figures are announced in December which will enable the correct figure to be calculated for the January final budget meeting.

In October 2024 at the CDALC AGM it was referred to that the NALC subscription fees would rise from 7.94p to 8.34 per elector. CDALC would be increasing subscription fees from 12p to 15p elector, this has yet to be ratified.

The SLCC figure for 2025/26 is known and will be £360

Resolved – This item be deferred until the meeting scheduled for 6 January 2025 when the correct figure for the electors is known for calculations.

Accounts Software Package (101)

This allocation relates to the annual subscription (RIALTAS) for updates to the software and access to the cloud, support desk, management reports, allotments database and helpline (RBS).

Resolved – £1,397 - non pay increase of £85

Travel Allowance (101)

This heading covers approved travel for members and officers other than for training events.

Resolved – Nil – no change

Stationary/ Office Goods (101)

Efforts are constantly being made on efficiency savings when purchasing stationary and office goods. Actual spend in previous 12 months was £291.

Resolved - £300.00 – reduction of £50.00

Consumables (101)

Actual spent in previous 12 months £115.

Resolved - £120 – non pay increase of £5

IT & Maintenance Support (101)

This covers Comtek computer support (including Microsoft 365 fees), photo copier leasing, Document Solutions & website hosting.

Resolved - £2,042 – increase of £162

Postage/Publications/Eye tests (101)

Resolved - £130 – no change

Financial Donations (101)

This policy and budget was reintroduced for 2024/25 after being dormant for a number of years. To date within 2024/25 only one application has been received and approved (£400).

Any underspend in 2024/25 to be placed in General Reserves with a recommended reduction for 2025/26.

Resolved - £500 – a reduction of £1000

Central Support Services (102)

Resolved – This item is deferred until the meeting on the 06 January 2025 due to matters yet to be resolved.

Elections (104)

This heading covers an annual allocation to cover the billed costs of elections, approved by Council in January 2017. Ear marked reserves for elections is currently £5434.00, reduced following the £5,565 recharge payment made to Durham

following the May 2021 elections. It is prudent to keep the amount as is to avoid similar or increased costs for elections in 2025, or any called from casual vacancies.

Resolved – £1,000 – No change

Chains of Office (105)

The standard allocation of £50 has been used for engraving work to keep the chains up to date.

Resolved – £50 – no change

Office Rent (106) (Woodleigh)

This sum was fixed under the terms of the Woodleigh lease until September 2025.

Resolved – £9,102 – No change

Water Rates/Business Rates (106)

The council office is nil rated for business rates, with Woodleigh tenants responsible for paying their own.

Water bills in the last full year available were £920

Resolved – £960 – increase of £40

Electricity/Gas (106)

For 2023/24 the council increased the budget for gas and electricity to £8,369 in the light of the large increases in unit prices. In 2024/25 it increased this figure to £8,788.

In the last 12 months the spend on gas and electricity for Woodleigh has amounted to £10,488.

Resolved - £11,000 – increase of £2,212 on 2024/25

Repairs/Maintenance General (Woodleigh) (106)

Resolved - £421 –non pay inflation increase of £21

Planned/Preventative Maintenance (106)

This is to cover future anticipated costs for electrical, drains, roofing etc that the council is responsible for at Woodleigh.

This year the boiler was replaced with the EMR now fully spent. It is prudent to begin to build these reserves up again to cover future eventualities.

Resolved - £1,200 – reduction of £530

Telephone/Broadband (106)

Work within the year to negotiate a reduction in the monthly/yearly amount paid was successful.

Resolved - £871 – Decrease from 2023/24 of £263

Service Level Agreement (SLA) (106)

An SLA is a contract with the lease holder and Durham County Council (landlord) to provide building compliance servicing. This includes, Asbestos Management, emergency lighting, fire alarm servicing, fire extinguisher checks, intruder alarm annual servicing and monitoring.

Resolved - £2,142 – No change

Building Cleaning (106)

Resolved - £1,630 – No change.

Supplies and Consumables (106)

Actual spend in previous 12 months £141.

Resolved – £150 – no change

Defibrillator (110)

Council approved this budget in 2019/20 to meet the costs of replacement batteries, and other consumables in the defibrillator located on Newgate, and now at Woodleigh. In 2025/26 two of the 'Pads' will need replacing at 75.00 each.

Resolved - £225 – increase of £75

- Allotments (201) – self financing
- Mini Golf (211) – self financing
- Play Areas (231)
- Wednesday Market (291) – self financing
- Grounds Maintenance (floral & grass cuts) (311)
- War Memorials (331)

Partnership Committee will meet on 16 December to determine the budgetary bids for **Christmas Lights (221)** and **Community Events (354)**. Services Committee will meet on 2 December to determine the budgetary bids for the Cost Centres as above. The bids will be referred to Resources at the meeting of 6 January 2025, and then to full council on the 13 January 2025.

Bede Road Bus Shelter (342)

This allocation covers the annual rental payable to the resident of Bede Road as the bus shelter is sited within their garden. There is also a small allocation to cover any minor repairs which may occur during the year.

Resolved - £50 – no change

Wayfinding Units (404)

This allocation is to cover incidentals and general maintenance such as stone cleaning.

The excess on any insurance claim is £100 therefore this allocation continues to be satisfactory for a normal year.

Resolved – £Nil

Dog Fouling (281)

This item was established as part of the 2022/23 budget following the council's approval of an anti-dog fouling project with a budget of £500. I propose to retain this budget and leave unchanged for 2025/26.

Resolved - £500 – No change

Market Place Public Toilets (501)

The base budget is the fee paid to Durham County Council in respect of half the maintenance costs of the Market Place public toilets. Actual figure for 2024 was £5,905

Resolved – £6,200 – non pay inflation increase £295

Review of Dawson Room Hire Arrangements

Since 01 April 2016, charges for hire of the Dawson Room have remained unchanged as follows:

Rate	Cost 2024/25	Minimum Hire	Recommended 2025/26
Community Rate	£12.50 per hour	2 hours	No change
Discounted Community Rate Block Bookings	£10.00 per hour	2 hours	No change
Commercial Rate	£20.00 per hour	2 hours	No change
Refreshments (tea/ coffee/biscuits)	£1.20 per head	(inc VAT)	No change

Members should note that exclusive room hire is exempt from VAT, but that any refreshments are chargeable at the standard rate VAT item and, hence, are included separately in the above charges. No charge is made for hot water.

Members are asked to review the existing charges for hire of the Dawson Room and to recommend costs for 2025/26, to be presented to Council for approval.

Resolved – No change

Growth Items

All Members were contacted by letter on 1 August 2024 to indicate any projects they wished to put forward for 2025/26 and to be considered as part of the normal budgetary process. No responses were received by the deadline of Friday 4 October 2024.

Budget items relevant to Partnership, and Services will be considered at their meetings in December.

Conclusion

This report contains recommendations to known costs to reduce those issues to be considered at the Committee meeting scheduled for 6 January 2025 when the final budget will be reviewed. Cost centres agreed at this meeting will be considered *en bloc* at that meeting.

Martin Clark
Clerk

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

07 OCTOBER 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Turnbull, Ewart, Blake, Chatterjee, Foote-Wood & Connelly

Also in attendance: Cllr Paul Ing (Town Mayor ex officio), Teesdale Mercury

Officers: Mr Clark (Town Clerk)

17. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

No apologies were received from Cllr Bigge.

Resolved – That the submitted apologies be approved.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with this Council's adopted Constitution (Members' Code of Conduct) (Minute 10/May/19 refers), Members will be asked whether they have any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members are reminded that a declaration can be given later in the meeting if a need arises during discussion.

19. SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING – 15 JULY 2024

Resolved – That the minutes be approved as a true record.

20. ALLOTMENTS

(i) General Update

Since the Services Committee meeting in July 2024 five residents have been added to the Parishioner waiting list. The waiting list stands at 21 Parishioners and the non-parishioner list stands at 9.

(ii) Harmire Road Allotment site

3 of the 4 vacant plots have been re-tenanted.

(iii) Raby Avenue

The vacant plot has been re-tenanted.

(iv) Demesnes

No issues. No vacant gardens

(v) Crook Lane & Town Head

No issues.

(vi) Allotment Land

Following enquiries with William Smith with regards the waste land behind their factory for potential allotment plots. They have advised that they are unable to consider the request due to their own potential plans for the land.

Resolved – (a) That the information is received and noted.

21. PLAY AREAS

(i) Following the meeting on the 24th June an application was made to Durham County Council for S106 monies for additional funding to carry out further identified

repairs/renewals at Scar Top, Green Lane, Kalafat and Marwood play areas . On 19th September the council were notified the application had been successful with an award of £12,524.25.

Following the award notification work has begun to set up a schedule of repairs/improvements.

Resolved – That the update be received and noted.

22. MINI GOLF – 2024 SEASON

The 2024 Season opened on 29 March 2024, to date takings are approximately £12,066.00 (Net), including one private hire. The course will close for the 2024 Season on Sunday 3 November 2024. A full review of the Season will be provided at the first Services meeting following completion of the season.

It is anticipated that any minor repairs will be carried out by our Maintenance Supervisor during the winter closure period.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

23. WEDNESDAY MARKET

In the weeks from 10 July to 18 September 2024 inclusive, total rental receipts have been £2,130, an average of £193.63 per week. 4 charity pitches have been utilised, and trading opportunities are being offered to those on the waiting list to cover regular trader absences. The waiting list currently stands at 4.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

24. FLORAL AND OPEN SPACES

The summer bedding has been replaced with winter plants.

The battle with Chickweed at the Gateway continues.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

25. WAR MEMORIALS

(i) Work to improve access to the memorial at Galgate has been completed (attached) by our maintenance supervisor.

(ii) Enquiries are ongoing on the possibilities of moving the flag pole position at the Galgate memorial.

(iii) A clean up of the area around the Bowes memorial will take place before Remembrance Sunday on 10th November.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

26. DOG FOUL PROJECT

At the full council meeting on the 16 September (Minute 45/Sept/24) a Dog Fouling Working Group and terms of reference was approved (attached).

Cllr Turnbull referred to a planned first meeting of the Working Group on the 8th October, and the continued work to reduce dog fouling in the town.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

27. BLUE PLAQUE – DEMESNES CORN MILL

Minutes 61/May/22, 23/Oct/23, & 16/July/24 refer.

The Listed Building consent to Durham County has been submitted. The application was at no cost.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

DRAFT

BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL 18 NOVEMBER 2024

30th Anniversary Teesdale Aviation Day

1. Introduction

Tony Galley along with John Yarker (Former Councillor, and twice Mayor) developed Teesdale Aviation Day as an event back in 1995 and throughout these years gave talks, ran trips, provided educational insight into the Teesdale Gap history and the various losses. He developed news articles and researched stories about lost Aviators and lost aircraft in Teesdale and into the Pennines.

Both were instrumental in obtaining the memorial stones, and when they could no longer be located on Deerbolt Bank they found a way, through the work of the town council to bring them under its purview, and to the Galgate Memorial Gardens, which is where they lay now.

2025 marks the 30th anniversary of this annual event. The date set is Saturday 20th September.

2. The Proposed Event Plan

2.1 The proposal is for a day long event to be held on Saturday 20th September 2025 from around 10am through to 6pm.

2.2 The service on the Galgate Memorial gardens will essentially be the same as always, but will be increased in scale to include a grand march past through the town from the RAF, and RAF Cadet Units from around the area (including Barnard Castle School). In addition requests have been made to have an RAF band attend. A further request has also been made to have the Kings Colour Squadron attend.

2.3 The salute will be taken by one of a number of formally invited VIP's:

- A formal Invite has been sent to **HRH Prince of Wales**. Protocol is this will be responded to with 3 month's notice.
- The **Chief of Air Staff Sir Richard Knighton** has been invited, and is in his diary, but is subject to confirmation near the time.
- **The H.M. Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham, Mrs Sue Snowden** has confirmed her attendance.

2.4 The service is also hoped to be enhanced by a fly past. An application has been made to Battle of Britain Memorial Flight for a fly over of 2 aircraft to signify the 3 decades of work by Teesdale Aviation Day. (This will have 2 month's notice of acceptance and timings).

2.5 The rest of the day is proposed to include talks, demonstrations, exhibitions on the Lower Demesnes by RAF, RAF Cadets, and other exhibitors. It is proposed to include some

highly respected aviation authors to a book shop in town, or possibly the Witham Hall depending on scale to encourage the town businesses to dress windows and schools to be involved in dressing the memorial gardens.

2.6 As it won't be confirmed until nearer the anniversary if certain invited VIP's guests will be attending, the plans still require putting in place, especially the road closure and salute.

3. Digital Museum (interactive screen)

3.1 To mark the anniversary a proposal/request has been put forward to install a weatherproof outdoor interactive screen designed for public use located in the Galgate Memorial Garden. This would be funded from grant applications and possible sponsorship.

3.2 Mr Galley will be present at the meeting to answer members questions on this and on any of the other plans for the day.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The proposed event to celebrate the anniversary will require careful planning, and will be carried out 'in house', and in partnership with Mr Chris Galley.

4.2 The 30th Anniversary of Teesdale Aviation Day is a unique opportunity for Barnard Castle to celebrate its heritage, engage with the local and wider community, and boost tourism. Council support will be invaluable in ensuring the success and impact of this event, leaving a positive and enduring mark on Barnard Castle's cultural landscape.

Martin Clark
Town Clerk

Variation .

Item 55



Title: Durham County Council - CPAL GIS

Scale: 1:1250

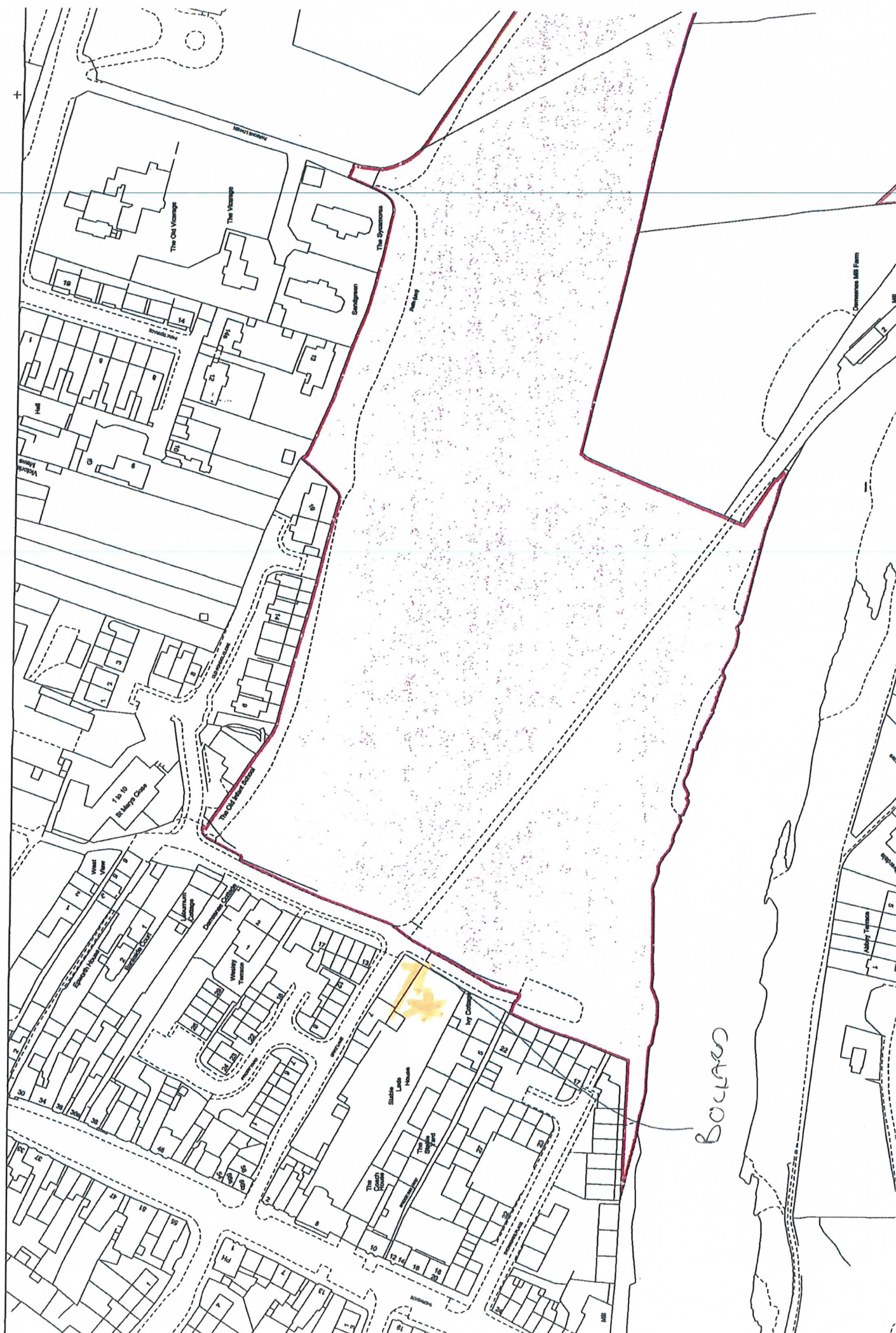
Date: 1/10/2024

Plan Reference: Road fronting Ivy Cottage, Barnard Castle

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Corporate Property and Land
County Hall,
Durham,
DH1 5UL



INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Barnard Castle Town Council Income Collection and Banking Arrangements

Assurance level:	Full Assurance
Report status:	Report
Date:	3rd November 2024
Prepared by:	Gordon Fletcher, Internal Auditor
Issued to:	Martin Clark, Town Clerk
Copied to:	Claire Atkinson, Finance Officer and RFO

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the agreed Internal audit plan, I have carried out a review of Barnard Castle Town Council, Income Collection and Banking arrangements. The review involved working from home on the 1st and 2nd November 2024
2. In carrying out the audit, the time and assistance afforded by the Finance Officer (RFO) was greatly appreciated, especially with regard to bringing me the files.

OBJECTIVES

3. The overall objective of our reviews is to provide a risk based assessment of the systems in place in order to form an opinion as to whether they are robust and provide an adequate basis for effective control.

The detailed objectives for this audit, were to ensure that;

- The Income collection and banking arrangements achieves objectives in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Council.
- There is compliance with internal and external regulations, legislation and guidance notes.
- Information used to monitor and manage Income collection and banking arrangement is reliable and accurate.
- There is economic and efficient use of resources.
- All assets are safeguarded.

4. **The Key risks for this audit are that:**

- Income and Banking is not administered in line with Council policy.
- Incorrect fees and charges are applied resulting in lost revenue to the Council.
- Income is misappropriated or impossible to trace.
- Income is misappropriated due to inefficient cash control or banking procedures.
- Fraudulent transactions are covered up.
- Income is stolen due to inadequate security measures.

SCOPE

4. The scope of the audit involved examining systems and procedures in place for the collection and banking of income between April 2024 to September 2024, with substantial testing carried out.
6. The report is intended to present to management the observations and conclusions of the audit. Wherever possible the observations and recommendations have been discussed with members of staff and their views considered.

SUMMARY OF WORK CARRIED OUT

7. **That the Income collection and banking arrangements achieves the objectives in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Council.**
- 7.1. All income collected and banked was found to be administered in line with Council policy and procedures, and all charges for 2024/25 were discussed at the Resources meeting and agreed by the Council meeting (Final Budget Report) as part of budget setting process and had been correctly applied.
- 7.2. All the receipts recorded on the "cash book 1" report detailing all income for April to September 2024 (Months 1 to 6) was examined to confirm that all income had been recorded in the accounts.

8. There is compliance with internal and external regulations, legislation and guidance

- 8.1. Income collection and banking arrangements were found to be administered in line with Financial Regulations and Council procedures.

9. Information used to monitor and manage Income and Banking is reliable and accurate.

- 9.1. Most of the Council's (non -precept) income comes from mini golf, allotment rents, and market rents and these were examined in detail.

Mini Golf

- 9.2. During 2024, there were various attendants working in rota. A shift rota is in place, (2 shifts per day in high season) and each attendant completes and signs a Daily Record Sheet showing details of the money collected from a till.

The Daily Record Sheet completed by each attendant shows the money collected and this is reconciled to the Z reading from the till. The Daily Record Sheet is signed by the attendant who confirms the cash collected for the day. Any income from lost balls or damaged clubs is also recorded. There is no separation of duties on reconciling the cash taken as the attendant prints off the Z reading and records the takings on the Sheet. There is no evidence of income collected and not banked.

I understand that the money is placed in a plastic cash bag which is handed over to the Main Office. Procedures are in place for cash handling and submission, which have been confirmed as working adequately.

- 9.3. At the Civic Offices the money is checked by the Finance Officer (RFO) Officer and reconciled to the Daily Record Sheets and held in a safe until banked. The sheets are initialled by the Finance Officer (RFO) when reconciling the money to the sheets.
- 9.4. Testing was carried out on the Daily Record Sheets and till readings between the start of the season - April 2024 to October 2024
- 9.5. The amounts on the Daily record Sheets were confirmed to the paying in books which were checked to the Cash book 1 receipts reports for months 1 to 6 (April to September) which showed that all income collected was recorded correctly into the Council's financial system and shown in the Council's bank statements.
- 9.6. During the day there are no independent checks to ensure that all players have been given tickets although this risk is accepted and is considered to be very low.
- 9.7. A review of each season is carried out by the Services Committee after the season has ended.
- 9.8. Attendants' payroll records were examined, and correct payments had been made.

Allotments Rents

- 9.9. There are 5 allotment sites containing plots and every March a new tenancy form with paying in slip is sent to all allotment holders requesting payment. All allotments income

is receipted in an allotments receipt book by the Town Clerk, either when the person comes in to pay or through the post. A record of the name of the allotment holders is shown on the bank paying in slip when the banking is made. The paying in book totals were confirmed to the Cash Book1 report (Receipts).

All allotments are recorded on the RBS system (Allotment fees paid report), which shows all plots in site order (ref no.) with details of the tenant and when paid. It was confirmed that for 2024/25 all income has been properly receipted and paid in and recorded in the Council's accounts.

Market Rents

- 9.10. From March 2016 Barnard Castle Town Council runs the Wednesday Market previously operated by Durham Council. The Town Council has continued with the system of collecting rents, with an officer of the Council collecting the rents each Wednesday and issuing receipts from a Markets receipt book.
- 9.11. A weekly list of traders is compiled on an attendance sheet by the Market and Maintenance Supervisor where a receipt is issued, and a total collected is recorded. On examining the sheet to the receipt books from April to September 2024 all were collected and banked. The amounts are paid in weekly on a paying in book and the totals were confirmed to the Cash Book 1 report (Receipts) and were shown in the bank statements.

VAT Claim

- 9.12. VAT returns are completed every 3 months from the Finance system which produces an end date assessment report. Last claim (Qu4) for 2023/24 was paid direct into the bank on 21st May 2024. First claim (Qu1) for 2024/25 was paid directly into the Council's bank account on 31st July 2024.

Other

- 9.13. Any other income received through the post at the Council Offices is recorded in a post book and banked on a paying in slip. The relevant paperwork is held on an income file showing the receipt of the cheque or if paid direct to the bank account.

10. There is economic and efficient use of resources.

- 10.1. All income is properly reconciled, and any receipt books and cash are held securely, and the issue is well controlled.
- 10.2. Income is reconciled between the bank statement and cash book on a monthly basis. The review of the months April to September 2024 demonstrated that this process is operating properly.
- 10.3. The Mini Golf is self funding with any surplus put into a holding account for future investment.

11. All assets are safeguarded.

- 11.1. All cash is held in a locked cash box within a locked cabinet within the Civic Offices.
- 11.2. Floats were issued to all attendants at the beginning of the season and are handed in at the end of the season. Floats are kept with the attendants overnight when working.

OBSERVATIONS, RISKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12. My observations together with the associated risks are detailed in the action plan accompanying this report. For each area where an observation is made, a recommendation and priority for action is attached. No concerns were found.
13. I have categorised the importance of my recommendations as follows:
- Critical – A control weakness that may have a significant impact upon the achievement of, not only the system objectives, but also the organisation's objectives
 - High – A control weakness that may have a significant impact upon the achievement of the system objectives
 - Medium – A control weakness that may have an impact upon the achievement of the system objectives
 - Low – A control weakness that does not impact upon the achievement of the system objectives, however, the implementation of which would improve control

AUDIT ASSURANCE LEVEL

15. Based upon the number and potential impact of the observations made, I can still provide **Full Assurance**. This level of assurance is one of five possible levels which are shown in the table below.

Level of Assurance	Definition
Full Assurance	There is a sound system of controls in place & those controls are consistently applied & are fully effective. Control objectives are fully met.
Substantial Assurance	There is a sound system of control in place but some of the controls are not consistently applied or fully effective. Control objectives are largely achieved.
Moderate Assurance	There is basically a sound system of control in place, but there are weaknesses and evidence of non-compliance with or ineffective controls. Control objectives are often achieved.
Limited Assurance	The system of control is weak & there is evidence of non-compliance with controls that do exist. Control objectives are sometimes achieved.
No Assurance	There is no system of control in place and control objectives are rarely or never achieved.



Gordon Fletcher
Auditor to the Council
Date: 3rd November 2024

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Barnard Castle Town Council Accounts Payable (Creditors)

Assurance level:	Full Assurance
Report status:	Report
Date:	3rd November 2024
Prepared by:	Gordon Fletcher, Internal Auditor
Issued to:	Martin Clark, Town Clerk
Copied to:	Claire Atkinson, Finance Officer and RFO

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the agreed Internal Audit Plan, I have carried out a detailed review of Barnard Castle Town Council, Accounts Payable (Creditors) system. The review involved home working on 2nd and 3rd November 2024. Many thanks to the Finance Officer (RFO) for bringing the files to me.
2. In carrying out the audit, the time and assistance afforded by the Finance Officer was appreciated.

OBJECTIVES OF THE AUDIT

3. The overall objective of my review is to provide a risk based assessment of the systems in place in order to form an opinion as to whether they are robust and provide an adequate basis for effective control.
4. **The detailed objectives for this audit, are to ensure that;**
 - Compliance with internal and external regulations, legislation and guidance
 - Information used to monitor and manage the creditors' payments is reliable and accurate.
 - Uses of resources are efficient or economical.
 - All assets are safeguarded
5. **The Key risks for this audit are that:**
 - Payment is made for goods not required, received or for personal gain.
 - Payment is made for incorrect, defective or undelivered goods.
 - Fines for non compliance with Customs & Excise requirements.
 - Inappropriate payments are made.
 - Errors, frauds and processing errors are undetected.
 - Poor value for money in payment processing.
 - Poor use of resources.
 - Inefficient and ineffective payment methods.
 - 'Ghost' suppliers are created to receive fraudulent payments.
 - Data is processed that is incomplete, inaccurate, out of date, or duplicated.
 - Fraud or theft.

SCOPE OF THE AUDIT

6. All the invoices paid, between April 2024 to September 2024 (months 1 to 6) were examined.
7. The report is intended to present to management the observations and conclusions of the audit. Wherever possible the observations and recommendations have been discussed with members of staff and their views considered.

SUMMARY OF THE WORK CARRIED OUT

8. **Creditor payments comply with internal and external regulations, legislation and guidance.**
- 8.1. Barnard Castle Town Council follow Financial Regulations and Standing Orders which are shown in the Councils Constitution.
- 8.2. A previous review of concurrent functions was dated by the Governance Task and Finish Group, and adopted May 2016 covering the payment of accounts and the ordering for works, goods and service, and still applies. There are also procedure notes for ordering goods, payment of creditors and petty cash which are still fit for purpose, and all found to be adequate and satisfactory for the size of the Council.
- 8.3. There are also system notes on the OMEGA software which show how to carry out bank reconciliations, printing trial balances and various financial monthly reports.

9. **Information used to monitor and manage the creditors' payment is reliable and accurate.**

- 9.1. Purchase orders are completed and authorised for providing goods and services, where applicable, with the name of the budget to be charged recorded. When the goods are received, they are checked to the purchase order. When the invoice is received, a copy is attached to the purchase order.
- 9.2. Purchase orders were examined from April 2024 (number 1084) to September 2024 (number 1114). Some copy orders were awaiting payment, but these were not considered to be outstanding. All purchase orders were found on file and were properly completed with copy invoices attached.
- 9.3. The Council had previously moved from cheque payments to electronic payments (Online payments), which includes salaries, some Direct Debit payments are made for utilities. With a few payments being made by debit card. Petty cash top ups are made by cheque.
- 9.4. When the invoice is received it is date stamped, the details are checked by the Town Clerk and is then ready for payment. A coding grid is stamped on the invoice which shows the cost centre and account code where it is posted onto the finance system and the coding grid is initialled by the Finance Officer, who processes all the electronic payments. This procedure was found to be properly completed.
- 9.5. The Council has a list of cost centres and nominal codes and this was used to check the coding of the invoices to ensure that expenditure was coded correctly.
- 9.6. All electronic payments are made in accordance with financial regulations and are authorised by 2 Councillors on an electronic payment schedule showing the Payment reference number, which is recorded on the invoice, with all Councillors having the opportunity to examine all invoices. The payments are processed by the Finance Officer (RFO) who signs the electronic payment schedule. This was confirmed.
- 9.7. Due to the Pandemic, safe arrangements were put in place to ensure the Council's accounts were paid, this involved the Finance Officer working from home where she pays the invoices and completes a payment schedule which is e.mailed to two Members who are authorised signatories. They approve the invoices by e.mail back to the Finance Officer. This has continued during 2024/25
- 9.8. All expenditure is reported to the Resources Committee through quarterly budget monitoring reports which include the cash book 1 reports, where all Members are given the opportunity to raise questions regarding the payments made.
- 9.9. Salaries payments are paid online with the other payments. These were found to be properly approved. (More detailed salaries check is carried out during the payroll audit).
10. TESTING
- 10.1. All the payments recorded on the "cash book 1" payments report detailing all expenditure from April to September 2024 were examined to ensure procedures were followed, and these were all found to be properly recorded and paid correctly.
- 10.2. A periodical payments register was found to be maintained showing readings for electricity, photocopier and water for allotments. The readings were confirmed from the invoices in the period checked.
- 10.3. Petty cash records were examined between April 2024 to September 2024. There was 1 reimbursements in this period, and this was found to be completed correctly with appropriate receipts obtained. Members confirm the balance when reconciling the bank statements.

10.4. VAT was properly recorded in the finance system, with a vat report produce which identifies all VAT, and is claimed back every 3 months. (See Income collection audit report)

10.5. Journal reports (to correct codes made in error) had been properly completed, with the reason for the journal shown.

10.6 During the previous year the Council had set up a procedure (included in Financial Regulations) to use a Debit card for internet purchases. The card is kept in a safe and used when required by the Town Clerk after approval by Councillors when available. Use of the card is recorded on a debit card payment schedule which shows the Purchase order number and has the invoice attached. I understand that the procedure was reviewed as it was difficult to obtain approval due to the availability of Councillors. It was agreed that the same procedure as the payment schedules be carried out by emailing 2 signatories for authorisation. This will be examined in detail during the annual audit in May 2025.

10.7. Due to the volume of creditor payment transactions and the simplicity of the system, reconciliation takes place as part of the payments process which is verified between the nominal ledger (income/expenditure reports) and the trial balance at the end of the month. There is a further confirmation of payments with the bank statements once they are received.

10.8. All payments examined were confirmed to the bank statement.

10.9 At the end of the month bank reconciliation reports are produced for all bank accounts and petty cash. These were examined and all reconciled.

10.10 Financial Regulations 3.4. state that a Member can carry out the bank reconciliations, and signs as evidence of the check.

11. **Use of Resources is efficient or economical.**

11.1 Considering the size of the Council, resources are currently deployed efficiently and economically, with satisfactorily internal controls in place.

11.2. The Council now makes payments electronically, which enables the Council to operate more efficiently, and procedure notes have been completed to implement this. Good Internal controls have been implemented within the Office with overall checks carried out by Members through the payment reports.

12. **All assets are safeguarded**

12.1. As I was working from home, I was unable to confirm that petty cash was stored securely at the Town Council, and any cheques are locked away securely. I am not aware of any issues arising between April and September.

OBSERVATIONS, RISKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

13. My observations together with the associated risks are detailed in an action plan (if required), accompanying this report, if required. For each area where an observation is made, a recommendation and priority for action is attached.

14. I have categorised the importance of our recommendations as follows:

- Critical – A control weakness that may have a significant impact upon the achievement of, not only the system objectives, but also the organisation's objectives
- High – A control weakness that may have a significant impact upon the achievement of the system objectives
- Medium – A control weakness that may have an impact upon the achievement of the system objectives
- Low – A control weakness that does not impact upon the achievement of the system

objectives, however, the implementation of which would improve overall control

15. My review has highlighted 0 issues considered for inclusion within this report and no action plan is required.

AUDIT ASSURANCE LEVEL

- 16.. Based upon the number and very low potential impact of the observation made, I have still provided **Full Assurance** for this audit. This level of assurance is one of five possible levels which are shown in the table below.

Level of Assurance	Definition
Full Assurance	There is a sound system of controls in place & those controls are consistently applied & are fully effective. Control objectives are fully met.
Substantial Assurance	There is a sound system of control in place but some of the controls are not consistently applied or fully effective. Control objectives are largely achieved.
Moderate Assurance	There is basically a sound system of control in place, but there are weaknesses and evidence of non-compliance with or ineffective controls. Control objectives are often achieved.
Limited Assurance	The system of control is weak & there is evidence of non-compliance with controls that do exist. Control objectives are sometimes achieved.
No Assurance	There is no system of control in place and control objectives are rarely or never achieved.



Gordon Fletcher, Auditor to the Council

Date: 3rd November 2024