



Barnard Castle Town Council

Town Clerk: Martin Clark
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Barnard Castle
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COUNCIL MEETING MONDAY 19 JANUARY 2026

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 19 January 2026 at 5:30 p.m.** The meeting will consider the items of business listed below.

***Public Participation 5:30 – 5:45pm**

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
14 January 2026

AGENDA

- 57. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE OF APOLOGIES**
- 58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 59. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- 60. COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – 17 NOVEMBER & 01 DECEMBER 2025**
- 61. EN BLOC ITEMS**
- 62. UPDATES & REFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES**
- 63. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES**
- 64. EAST WARD VACANCIES**
- 65. ROYAL GARDEN PARTIES 2026**
- 66. HALF YEARLY INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS**
- 67. THE MEET 2026**
- 68. APPROVAL OF 2026/27 BUDGET**

* 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>

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
FULL COUNCIL
19 JANUARY 2026**

DAWSON ROOM, WOODLEIGH

5:30 P.M.

DETAILED AGENDA

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD – 5:30-5:45pm

57. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE OF APOLOGIES

Recommendation – That the submitted apologies be approved.

58. 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.

59. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

60. COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES (ENCLOSED)

(1) 17 November 2025

(2) 01 December 2025 (Extraordinary)

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

61. 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) Services Committee – 01 December 2025 – Draft minutes

(2) Partnership Committee – 15 December 2025 – Draft minutes

(3) Resources Committee – 05 January 2026 - Draft Minutes

(4) Town Mayor Activities

Since the Council meeting on the 17 November 2025, the Town Mayor accompanied by Consort, Ellie Walker Ing, has attended the following:

28 November 2025 – Christmas Lights Switch on.

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

62. UPDATES AND REFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES

From the meetings outlined above at item 61 the following updates are noted:

(1) Services Committee

No referrals to full council.

Budgetary bids for 2026/27 were referred to Resources Committee meeting held on 5 January 2026.

(2) Partnership Committee

No referrals to full council.

Budgetary bids for 2026/27 were referred to Resources Committee meeting held on 5 January 2026.

(3) Resources Committee

Further to the meeting of the Resources Committee meeting, it was resolved that:

The budget for 2026/27, and precept request be referred to full council (item 68).

63. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES

- (1) Teesdale Residents' and Travellers' Forum - (Clerk & Stenson)**
- (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)**
- (5) St Mary's Barnard Castle Hall Association (Cllr Foote-Wood)**
- (6) Cultura Trust/Raby (Cllr Turnbull)**

64. EAST WARD VACANCIES

Following the resignations of Malcom Colledge and Caroline Nilsson vacancies were posted in the prescribed manner. Fourteen days following the separate Notice, the Council were notified that an election had not been called. Members are now asked to consider co-option to fill the vacancy.

65. ROYAL GARDEN PARTIES 2026

Two tickets for the Royal Garden Parties in 2026 will be offered to the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC).

Should any member who has previously not attended a Garden Party wish to be entered into the draw they should give their names to the Clerk at this meeting.

66. HALF YEARLY INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS (SUBMITTED)

To receive the half year Internal Audit reports (Creditors & Income) 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.

67. THE MEET 2026

Barnard Castle Meet are seeking permission from the council to use the Demesnes over the bank holiday weekend of 22nd to 26th May 2026.

Recommendation – That the Barnard Castle Meet be granted permission to use the Lower Demesnes for their showground.

68. APPROVAL OF 2026/27 BUDGET

Further to the meeting of Resources Committee on 05 January 2026 (minute 29/January/26 refers), the 2026/27 budget is recommended to the council. (Appendix A).

Recommendation – (a) That the 2026/27 budget be set as detailed in Appendix A, with gross expenditure of £249,673; and
(b) That the 2026/27 precept be therefore set as detailed below, at £221,121 – an increase of 11% (+96p pm) on 2025/26. £116.47 pa (Band D property).

Cost Centre	Budget 2025/26 £	Budget 2026/27 £
101 Council Administration	12,396	11,480
102 Central Support Svcs	131,153	136,533
101 Mayoral Allowances	NIL	NIL
104 Elections	1,000	1,000
105 Chains of Office	50	50
106 Woodleigh operational	27,476	27,873
110 Defibrillator	225	225
201 Allotments	4,027	4,042
211 Mini Golf	11,000	11,000
221 Christmas Lights	8,475	8,475
231 Play Areas	2,995	2,995
291 Wednesday Market	8,000	8,000
311 Ground Maintenance	22,660	23,344
321 Castle & Market Floodlighting	636	500
331 War Memorials	NIL	NIL
342 Bede Road Bus Shelter	50	50
354 Community Events	9,100	7,220
404 Wayfinding Units	NIL	NIL
501 Market Place Public Toilets	6,200	6,386
321 Dog Fouling	500	500
Total	245,943	249,673
Income		

1.Fees and charges (recreation)	15,127	15,142
2. Fees and charges (other)	8,850	8,850
3. Woodleigh Rental	9,880	1,560
4. Bank interest	3,000	3,000
5. Precept	209,086	221,121
6. LCTRS	NIL	NIL
	245,983	249,673

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

17 NOVEMBER 2025

PRESENT: Councillors Ing (Town Mayor), Ewart, Turnbull, Kirkbride, Chatterjee, Thompson, Rowell & Foote-Wood

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

Others: Mr Marc Cole & Mr Roger Peal

43. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE OF APOLOGIES

Cllr Colledge submitted his apologies.

Resolved – That the submitted apologies be approved.

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved - No declarations were made.

45. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Ing referred to the tragic loss of life of a young woman kayaker on the river Tees over the weekend.

As a mark of respect, the council held a minute's silence.

46. COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

15 September 2025

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

47. 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 were as follows:

1) Services Committee – 06 October 2025 – Draft minutes

(2) Partnership Committee – 27 October 2025 – Draft minutes

(3) Resources Committee – 03 November 2025 - Draft Minutes

(4) Town Mayor Activities

Since the Council meeting on the 15 September 2025, the Town Mayor accompanied by Consort, David Walker, has attended the following:

20th September 30th Anniversary Teesdale Aviation Day

11th October Inaugural Demesnes parkrun

22nd October Barnard Castle Bowls Club (David Walker)

7th November Deerbolt Remembrance Service

7th November Barnard Castle Firework display

Cllr Chatterjee, as Deputy Mayor attended the Remembrance Service and Parade on 9th November

Resolved – That the draft committee meeting minutes, and Mayoral activity be received and noted.

48. UPDATES, AND REFERRALS FROM COMMITTEES

From the meetings outlined above at item 47 the following updates are noted:

No referrals to full council from committees.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

At this point it was agreed by all those present to hear agenda item 50 – West Ward Vacancy

49. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES

(1) Teesdale Residents' and Travellers' Forum - (Clerk & Cllr Stenson)

Meeting held post Appleby to plan for 2026.

(2) Larger Local Councils Forum – (Clerk & Cllr Foote-Wood)

No meetings.

(3) The Witham Hall Ltd (Cllr Ing as Town Mayor)

No meetings.

(4) Dawson Cottages Trust (Cllrs Ewart)

Cllr Ewart informed members the 2 vacant properties had been refurbished and tenanted. The Trust were looking for a new Trustee with financial and possibly legal knowledge. They were sorting relevant policies to ensure they were compliant with the Charity Commission.

(5) St Mary's Barnard Castle Hall Association (vacant)

Still looking for a member to come forward to represent the council.

(6) Cultura Trust/Raby (Cllr Turnbull)

Cllr Turnbull referred to a recent meeting held at the former Nat West bank; had a tour of the building and discussions took place on building plans. Communications with the town need to be improved – DCC to assist with key messages. Links with local schools will be established. An expression of interest will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund by February 2026, once DCC have signed up to support.

50. WEST WARD VACANCY

Received - a report covering the process for co-option and details of the applications received.

The two candidates for co-option presented on why they wished to join the town council, followed by questions from members.

A secret ballot was called, and the candidates left the room.

Resolved – (a) That Roger Peat be co-opted onto Barnard Castle Town Council West Ward; (b) that their Declarations of Office were signed, and Cllr Peat joined the meeting; and (c) That Marc Cole was thanked for his application.

51. NOTICE OF MOTION

Cllr's Rowell & Colledge have submitted the following written motion in the form of a report (received)

We, I think, we would all agree that Barnard Castle is a great place to live and for people to visit and has been publicised as such in various places. We as town councillors have a duty to maintain this and improve the offering to locals and visitors alike. Conversations with Councillor Rowell who, is herself a business owner within the town, about how businesses are doing reveals many are struggling financially even though footfall appears good.

However, we have also been made aware through Barnard Castle Official Facebook pages that both residents and retailers feel we are not very visible or consulting them and getting their views on how things might be improved. Consequently, it seems appropriate that we canvas views and develop from that plans of action that we as councillors can undertake to achieve the objective of making Barny a town where all can benefit.

Resolved - Cllr Rowell referred to not realising her item was on the agenda and requested the item be deferred.

52. CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

St Mary's Barnard Castle Christmas Tree Festival is being held from Wednesday 3rd to Sunday 7th December. The theme for decoration this year is 'Christmas and Travel'. The Town Council has sponsored a tree which will need to be decorated on the evening of 1st December or during the day on the 2nd or 3rd.

Resolved – (a) That the information is received and noted; and (b) That Cllr Thompson assists with decorating the tree.

53. EAST WARD VACANCY

Following the resignation of Cllr Caroline Nilsson the Notice of Vacancy for the East Ward was posted on the 14 November 2025. If no poll is called for by Thursday 4th December, the council would be able to consider the co-option process.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING**

01 DECEMBER 2025

PRESENT: Councillors Ing (Town Mayor), Ewart, Turnbull, Kirkbride, Chatterjee, Thompson, Foote-Wood & Peat

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

53. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE OF APOLOGIES

No apologies were received from Cllr Rowell.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved - No declarations were made.

55. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IN RESPECT OF ITEM 56)

Resolved – That, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 §1(2), the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to at item 56 below, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

At this point the Mayor informed Cllr Foote-Wood of legal advice received that he should declare a conflict of interest being a dual role councillor and given the subject matter to be discussed.

Cllr Foote Wood excused himself from the meeting.

56. WOODLEIGH OFFICES – GROUND FLOOR ACCOMMODATION

Resolved – (a) That the council approve a new tenant on the ground floor of Woodleigh; (b) that the Clerk, as manager of Woodleigh, and the RFO continue to manage the processes/discussions, reporting back to full council as and when appropriate; and (c) That the Clerk on behalf of the council engage BHP Law, its solicitors, to oversee the Heads of Terms proposed and establish the lease.

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

01 DECEMBER 2025

PRESENT: Councillors: Turnbull, Ewart, Ing, Foote-Wood & Peat

Officers: Mr Clark (Town Clerk)

23. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

No apologies were received from Cllr Rowell.

Resolved – That the submitted apologies be approved.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved – No declarations were made.

25. SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING – 06 OCTOBER 2025

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

26. ALLOTMENTS

General Update

Since the Services Committee meeting in October, no further residents have been added to the waiting list. The waiting list remains at 25.

The water on all allotments will be switched off for the winter on 4 December 2025.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

27. PLAY AREAS

There are no outstanding issues across the play areas.

28. MINI GOLF

The mini golf has had a successful year. The end of year full financial report will be available to members at the February meeting.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

29. WEDNESDAY MARKET

In the weeks from 1 October to 12 November 2025 inclusive, total rental receipts have been £1,144.00, an average of £163.00 per week. 5 charity pitches have been utilised, and trading opportunities are being offered to those on the waiting list to cover regular trader absences.

Currently there are 16 market traders considered regular attendees, with 4 traders brought in as casual when possible. The market is weather dependant at various times of the year. Traders are advised to contact the Market Supervisor in good time if not attending to allow him the opportunity to bring a casual onto the market.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

30. FLORAL AND OPEN SPACES

The winter bedding is in place.

Members asked if the tubs by the Gateway could be looked at with a view to improving.

The council have been informed by Durham County Council of a section of wall adjacent to Bede Kirk village green that requires repair. We are at present awaiting a further inspection of the area of concern with a view to be given costs for repair.

In the meantime, we have placed barriers on the footpath to identify the hazard.



It was agreed the Cllr Peat have a look at the damaged wall in order to ascertain what repairs could be carried out.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

31. 2026/27 BUDGETARY BIDS (REPORT RECEIVED- APPENDIX A)

Resolved - (a) That the Play Areas budget remain at £2,995 To cover inspections and general small items of maintenance/spares;

(b) That any underspend at the end of the year is vired to Play Area Repairs and Future Maintenance EMR

(c) That the ground maintenance budget (grass cutting & Floral) be set for 2026/27 at £23,344.

(d) That any underspend in the 2025/26 Grounds Maintenance budget be vired into the Grounds Maintenance Ear Marked Reserve;

(e) That the contracts for CE & CM Walker and One3One be extended to 2026;

(f) That the Play Areas 2026/27 Income budget (Tens Field Rental) be £100 (no change);

(g) That the Play Areas Repairs and Future Provision earmarked reserve continues;

(h) That the play areas inspection contract awarded to Park Lane Playgrounds be extended for the 2026/27 financial year;

(i) That Wednesday Market expenditure is set at £8,000 and Income at £8,000 for 2026/27.

(j) That War Memorials 2026/27 budgetary allocation be £NIL;

(k) That the Floodlighting budget be £500;

(l) That Lowfield Gardens be requested to carry out the 2026 floral displays watering service;

(m) That the Mini Golf Income be £11,000 and Expenditure be £11,000; and surplus funds from the season placed in Mini Golf EMR

(n) That the 2026 fees and charges be as follows (no change):

£3.00 per round for all users (£2.50+20% VAT);

£9.00 group ticket (up to 4 players – saving £3.00) (£7.50+20% VAT);

£15.00 loyalty ticket (7 rounds in advance – saving £6.00) (£12.00+20% VAT);

£1.00 lost ball (83p+20% VAT);

£6.00 damaged club (£5.00+20% VAT);

(o) That the 2026/27 Allotments Expenditure be £4,042 and Income be £4,042;

(p) That the allotment rental for 2027/28 for a full plot remains at £48.00.

(q) That the allotment rental for a half plot for 2027/28 is £30.

(r) That the dog agility fee for 2026/27 increases to £40.00

(s) That the Wednesday Market standard pitch fee for 2026 remains at £12, large pitch £18, and additional metre (or part) beyond 10m £2. Charity pitch remains at £0

32. OUTDOOR GYM EQUIPMENT (DAWSON ROAD)

Section 106 application submitted, awaiting response.

Appendix A

BUDGETARY BIDS 2026/27

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is to consider budgetary bids, including fees and charges where applicable, for Play Areas, Wednesday Market, War Memorials, Floodlighting, Grounds Maintenance (grass cutting/Floral displays), Mini Golf, and Allotments, for inclusion in the overall Town Council budget for 2026/27.

2. Outcomes from Previous Meetings

- 2.1 It was resolved by Resources Committee on 01 September 2025 (minute 14(b)/September 25/refers) that non-pay inflation of 3% be assumed.

3. Play Areas

- 3.1 The town council currently manages seven play areas; Green Lane, Dawson Road, Kalafat, Marwood Drive, Bouch Way, Sear Top and The Lower Demesnes.
- 3.2 The Play Areas expenditure budget covers the costs of annual minor general maintenance and quarterly play area inspections. Quarterly inspections across all sites is currently £720.00 pa (net). The remainder of the budget is used for the cost of minor repairs/spare parts.
- 3.3 The Play Area inspection budget is recommended to remain at £2,995 for 2026/27 due to an underspend on minor repairs.
- 3.4 Park Lane Playgrounds have been carrying out quarterly play areas inspections in 2025/26. They offer good value for money, providing comprehensive reports and advice and have carried out play area repairs quickly and efficiently, when required to do so. It is proposed that their contract be extended for 2026/27.

4. Wednesday Market (self financing)

- 4.1 The anticipated out-turn income for the Wednesday market is expected to be in the region this year of £8,000. Expenditure is similarly anticipated to be approximately £8,000. This relates primarily to the costs associated with setting out the market

(salaries). Any surplus income is transferred at year end to the Wednesday Market Ear Marked Reserve.

4.2 Current pitch fees: Standard Pitch (0-6m) £12.00, Large Pitch (6-10m) £18.00, Additional metre (or part) beyond 10m £2 and Charity Pitch £0.

4.3 No change is proposed to the 2026/27 fees and charges for the Wednesday Market

5. War Memorials

5.1 Annual Inspections of each Memorial, and its immediate surrounds are carried out each year by the Chair of Services and a member of staff (spring). Any issues identified at those inspections are referred to the committee.

5.2 There is currently £1,500 in the War Memorial Earmarked Reserve.

5.3 In 2025/26, the War Memorials budget was approved as NIL. In 2026/27 the recommendation is for no change and is continually reviewed annually.

6. Floodlighting

6.1 This Council continues to be responsible for the electricity and maintenance costs of the Castle floodlights and has an associated budgetary allocation. The electricity costs are recharged to this council by Durham County Council on an annual basis. From 2015, following installation of external floodlighting to the Market Cross, the revenue costs, including electricity, of this lighting scheme are now met by the town council on the same basis.

6.2 The recharge for this financial year amounted to £470 (net). Given this was under budget the recommendation for 2026/27 is to reduce this budget element to £500.

7. Grounds Maintenance (grass cutting/floral displays)

7.1 Currently the grass cutting contract carried out by CE & CM Walker is currently valued at £14,060 the floral displays by One3One at £5,400, and the watering services by Lowfield Gardens at £3,200.

7.2 The grass cutting, floral displays and watering elements of the overall Ground maintenance budget are recommended to rise by the agreed non pay inflation figure of 3% - £14,482, £5,562 & £3,300 total £23,344

7.2 The contract for CE & CM Walker, Lowfield Gardens, and One3One be extended to 2027. This offers greater value and give consistency of works.

8. Mini Golf

8.1 Mini golf is a classed as a totally 'self-funding service', with no demand on the precept.

8.2 The 2025 income and expenditure will be reported in the review of the 2025 season. It is recommended that the estimate income and expenditure for 2026 remains at £11,000.

8.3 It is proposed that ticket prices remain unchanged for the 2026 season.

- 8.4 The mini golf attendants are employed on a seasonal basis and are included on the council's payroll and subject to the appropriate PAYE and National Insurance contributions. Expenditure in respect of employer National Insurance contributions also needs to be taken into account. It is proposed the attendants hourly rate remains at the present £10.18ph.
- 8.5 Since the 2013/14 budgetary cycle, Fees and Charges have been on a 'per season' basis to avoid changes in ticket prices should the season commence prior to 31 March (which would be the case if ticket prices were on a financial year basis).

9. Allotments (self financing)

- 9.1 The Allotments are an entirely self-funding service. After all expenditure relating to the service has been made in each year, any remaining underspend is transferred into the Allotments Improvement Earmarked Reserve.
- 9.2 The Allotments Earmarked Reserve was set up in December 2010 to facilitate essential capital projects i.e., upkeep and refurbishment of paths, boundary repairs, tree works, fencing and standpipe repairs etc.
- 9.3 The Allotment Improvements Ear Marked Reserves stands at £8,031.00.
- 9.4 For 2026/27 there are 84 active plots – 74 full and 10 half.
- 9.5 The plot rental for 2025/26 has already been determined at £48.00 because 12 months' notice must be given to tenants. It was also approved to reduce the fee for a half plot to £30 from 2025 (min 15(vi)/April/24 refers) . This would result in a 2025/26 budgetary allocation of £4,042 for both expenditure and income which includes the additional income from the sub-station of £150 and the recommended increase in the Dog Agility licence to £40.00 (from £25). This fee has not increased since 2019
- 9.6 With the allotments being self-funding and generating sufficient funding to cover costs I recommend no increase in allotment rental for 2027/28

10. Conclusion

Budgetary bids agreed at this meeting will be considered *en bloc* at the meeting of Resources Committee scheduled for 05 January 2026.

Recommendations – (a) That the Play Areas budget remain at £2,995 To cover inspections and general small items of maintenance/spares;

(b) That any underspend at the end of the year is vired to Play Area Repairs and Future Maintenance EMR

(c) That the ground maintenance budget (grass cutting & Floral) be set for 2026/27 at £23,344.

(d) That any underspend in the 2025/26 Grounds Maintenance budget be vired into the Grounds Maintenance Ear Marked Reserve;

(e) That the contracts for CE & CM Walker and One3One be extended to 2026;

(f) That the Play Areas 2026/27 Income budget (Tens Field Rental) be £100 (no change);

(g) That the Play Areas Repairs and Future Provision earmarked reserve continues;

(h) That the play areas inspection contract awarded to Park Lane Playgrounds be extended for the 2026/27 financial year;

- (i) That Wednesday Market expenditure is set at £8,000 and Income at £8,000 for 2026/27.
- (j) That War Memorials 2026/27 budgetary allocation be £NIL;
- (k) That the Floodlighting budget be £500;
- (l) That Lowfield Gardens be requested to carry out the 2026 floral displays watering service;
- (m) That the Mini Golf Income be £11,000 and Expenditure be £11,000; and surplus funds from the season placed in Mini Golf EMR
- (n) That the 2026 fees and charges be as follows (no change):
- £3.00 per round for all users (£2.50+20% VAT);
 - £9.00 group ticket (up to 4 players – saving £3.00) (£7.50+20% VAT);
 - £15.00 loyalty ticket (7 rounds in advance – saving £6.00) (£12.00+20% VAT);
 - £1.00 lost ball (83p+20% VAT);
 - £6.00 damaged club (£5.00+20% VAT);
- (o) That the 2026/27 Allotments Expenditure be £4,042 and Income be £4,042;
- (p) That the allotment rental for 2027/28 for a full plot remains at £48.00.
- (q) That the allotment rental for a half plot for 2027/28 is £30.
- (r) That the dog agility fee for 2026/27 increases to £40.00
- (s) That the Wednesday Market standard pitch fee for 2026 remains at £12, large pitch £18, and additional metre (or part) beyond 10m £2. Charity pitch remains at £0

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**

15 DECEMBER 2025

PRESENT: Councillors Kirkbride, Peat, Ewart & Foote-Wood, & Sarah Gent (TCR Hub), Duncan Barker (Bowes Museum), Liz Bromley (Witham)

Officers: Mr M. Clark (Town Clerk).

Others: Teesdale Mercury

22. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES

Cllr's Turnbull, Chatterjee & Ing (ex officio) submitted their apologies. No apologies from the Meet.

Resolved – That the submitted apologies be approved.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved – No declarations were made.

24. PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING – 27 OCTOBER 2025 – MINUTES

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

25. THE BOWES MUSEUM UPDATE

Duncan Barker gave those members present an update on the work of the museum.

- Exhibitions: Nathan Coley's installation looks wonderful as winter evenings highlight the lit work; discussions for a loan extension are underway. Martin Smith's *Kinetic Arboretum* is under consideration for an extended display period. Artist Meg Fletcher has been commissioned to produce a new flag series aligned with the forthcoming Vivienne Westwood exhibition. The Young Curators have completed *Remaking Memories Together*, an optique-inspired community art project opening in The Hive in December.
- Commercial: The Autumn/Winter concert programme has performed extremely well, with five out of nine shows sold out. Catering performance is robust, with November's average transaction value the highest in four years, supported by concert traffic and strong cost control.
- Winter Market 2025: Advance sales exceeded the previous year, and festive café bookings are strong. With over 110 traders, the market welcomed 4,798 people across the three days with 2,254 visitors on the Saturday; a record! 90 new members signed up to the museum. 1,358 visitors were served in Cafe Bowes and 780 transactions made in the shop. There was also a significant increase in social media presence and positive, supportive comments from visitors and traders
- Loans: Short-term loans continue at venues in London and Leicester. Negotiations are underway with the V&A to develop an international tour featuring items loaned from the Marie Antoinette display.
- Learning & Civic Engagement: Co-production work with HMP Deerbolt, UTASS and Weardale Together continues, with exhibitions progressing both onsite and offsite. Deerbolt learners have curated an exhibition of Bowes objects at

the prison which opened last week and will be celebrated at the Museum in January.

- Fundraising: The Museum's fundraising appeal as part of The Big Give Christmas Challenge: 'Light Up the Museum' raised £7,570 from over 140 donors, helping us take an important step towards transitioning to energy-efficient LED lighting across the Museum. This will improve the visitor experience, better protect our collection, and reduce our energy use for years to come.
- Forward Look: *Vivienne Westwood: Rebel, Storyteller, Visionary* and *Impressions of Light 2026* exhibitions development advancing. Both shows will have national/international impact.

Dates for your diary:

Vivienne Westwood: Rebel, Storyteller, Visionary opens 28 March 2026.

Resolved – That the update be received.

26. THE WITHAM UPDATE

Liz Bromley gave those members present an update on the work of the Witham.

Bar & Café

Henry's bar has successfully opened and is already seeing strong community support and an increase in income on events and non-event nights. We are currently reassessing opening hours and offers in preparation for the New Year. Exploring event hire opportunities to increase usage and income. There is an opportunity to secure funding to revamp the café, with a focus on:

- Improving the customer experience
- Increasing secondary spend

Funding & Financial Planning

Arts Council England (ACE) project funding will conclude by February, delivering next:

- Solar installation & LED lighting upgrades
- The final round of DCC funding is expected in Q1 2026.
- We are developing fundraising strategies to help bridge the funding gap beyond this point.
- Building Levy is now compulsory at £1 per transaction on all ticket sales.

Programme & Events

Next year's programme has been revised to present fewer shows, with:

- Increased quality, stronger delivery, clear alignment with our long-term strategy.
- The strategy will increasingly incorporate heritage-based events.

Key Programme Highlights (December & Beyond)

Spoken Word:

Teesdale to the Top of the World – a live spoken word piece walking audiences through Callum Mathews' Everest expedition.

- Music & Community Fundraising:
- Dukes of Scarth – Ukulele Christmas Sessions
 - All proceeds donated to The Witham
 - Ticket sales need a final push – please help spread the word

- Theatre:
 - Next year's pantomime (Snow White) is already on sale
 - Partnership members could help promote ticket sales and:
 - Encourage group bookings
 - Engage schools early for 2026 bookings

Education & Community Projects

A home-educated children's project launching in the New Year, combining: Outdoor learning, creative arts activity & visual Arts & Gallery.

Current Exhibition

- Suzanne Williams – mixed media exploring land and sea
- Running until end of December
- Features affordable artwork, encouraging first-time buyers

Gallery Programme

The gallery is fully booked for 2026, featuring artists from across the North of England. June 2026 will host a major exhibition with 50 artists, raising funds for Cystic Fibrosis & the Witham.

Gallery Improvements

Secure funding in place to upgrade gallery furniture, creating:
A more relaxed welcoming visitor experience to compliment Henry's bar and increase secondary Spend.

Outdoor & Seasonal activity

Saturday Summer session planning is underway with line ups to be announced in Q1 of 2026- we will see a bigger and better organised event with the additional outdoor space and bar.

Resolved – That the update be received and noted.

27. THE TCR HUB UPDATE

Sarah Gent gave those members present an update on the work of the TCR Hub:

A busy time at TCR with lots of Christmas delivery and supporting people in need in our community. Jonny and Sarah continue to deliver as joint Operations Managers making sure this community charity and centre gives local people a warm friendly place to be, helps people access food and support where needed. This includes:

TCR CHRISTMAS

- Grotto weekend 13/14 December with over 200 children, both families in our community and also GSK Christmas party.
- Volunteer Celebration to recognise what people have given in 2025 on 19th December as a big thank you to our amazing team.
- The Christmas Gift Tree - working with people who need support, we have gathered gift requests, put labels on the gift tree and people have collected these to buy specific presents for those who need them. These will be delivered on 22nd December by TCR's team of staff and volunteer elves.
- Care Packages to be delivered on 22nd December to over fifty households in Teesdale, including fresh meat, veg and extra special treats for Christmas time.

- Christmas lunch for on 25th December from 12 - 2pm, with Rachel Tweddle and a team of volunteers.

YOUTH UPDATE

- Ice Skating trip for over 70 local teens on Friday 5th December to Newcastle with the Youth Print Partnership, including teens from UTASS, AYCC and YMCA Cockfield.
- Creative, Youth-Led Wellbeing Activities at TCR include:

Trashion Club – Repurposing clothes to explore identity and creativity; ran their own fashion show.

Music Space – Writing and producing music as emotional expression; peer mentoring emerging.

Just Cook – Shared cooking and meals offer a relaxed, supportive check-in space.

Social Action – Young people design and lead projects like care packages for the community.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH

- TCR worked with a record number of young people this year. Both Bronze and Silver had 30+ young people taking part and a record 8 young people for Gold (normally 3 or 4). Volunteer support is still strong. Utilising 10 volunteers which help drive the group, shadow them and support them on an evening with food and tent support and general wellbeing.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- TCR Family Social Plus - weekly in term time on Thursdays 4 - 6pm, funded by SENDIAC for up to 15 people (adults and kids).
- TCR Family Social Club funded by North Star Housing at the Randolph centre every Wednesday in termtime from 4 - 6pm with 17 accessing these weekly.
- TCR Toy library has been running for a year. Great feedback from parents who are very happy to have access to this community service.
- Children's Winter clothing exchange at TCR - preloved coats, hats and scarves for babies and children
- School Gate run continues weekly to Evenwood, Cockfield and Green lane schools with volunteers taking food, books and clothing to share. This reduces waste and also acts as outreach for those who need support but aren't accessing it.
- Looking forward to the second stage of the Street Cosmos partnership with Durham University, Blackhall Community Centre and AYCC, bringing exciting family events in 2026 to TCR Hub.

OUTSIDE SPACE

TCR have been working with H2O riders recently in order to facilitate the construction of a new sauna adjacent to the Hub Lake. This is to provide the opportunity for people to do a "Drip and a sauna" throughout Winter, which fits in well with our offer of wellbeing services, and makes use of the lake during a consistently quiet period on our lake. We have helped facilitate a retreat that H2O riders are hosting using practitioners that already provide services at the Hub, such as Yoga, Sound bath and holistic therapies.

FOOD PROVISION

Our 'Food Support Coffee Mornings' continue to provide a window in the week for people who need to access food support as well as advice and information to signpost to other support services. People accessing food have been referred to further support including: Durham Carers, Citizens Advice, Council housing support, NHS, Social Prescribing Team, UTASS.

Community Lunch, which originated as a funded project at TCR, now runs with a contribution from the participants to help ensure it is sustainable. This has not impacted on the numbers who attend with 16 coming last week to enjoy our Community Cook Louisa's tasty two course meal, with volunteer drivers enabling people to attend.

We are seeking more volunteer drivers to support projects like this and to help collect the food from a variety of organisations and locations; such as Newton Aycliffe and Catterick.

Events

- TCR Elves worked hard on the Light Up Night to provide local kids with the chance to craft whilst they waited to see Santa. It was wonderful to see the Barnard Castle Christmas Tree Light Up event we have supported with DCC funding to develop over recent years and hats off to the Lights Committee amongst many others for their part in this.
- TCR hosted the GSK Christmas Party as well as 3 staff team days in November. Feedback was very positive and we look forward to welcoming GSK again for future events in 2026.
- Working in partnership with Babul's, we are looking forward to hosting an acoustic music night with curry on Friday 6th February 2026.
- As part of No More Nowt's Cultural Partnership, TCR Hub are welcoming Timb A Dash theatre company in February half term with some exciting accessible storytelling sessions, funded by the Arts Council. TCR are also accessing the Go and See It Grant, through No More Nowt to bring members of the Community Lunch to the pantomime at The Witham on Saturday 20th December.

Resolved – That the update be received.

28. BARNARD CASTLE CHRISTMAS LIGHT (BCCL)

Jonathan Wallis referred to his submitted report -

Fundraising by BCCL

- Bonfire Night – Largest audience that has ever attended, weather was favourable and the evening was a huge success. Gratitude for this event must go to the efforts of Roger Peat and the Clique in their organisation and running of the event and to Andrew Nicholson and Affinity Choir for the entertainment.
- Quiz Night at Capri on 12th November – Very well attended and another enjoyable evening for our many supporters who attended. Thanks to Capri, Andrew Nicholson for the quiz and entertainment, and all the businesses and individuals that gave raffle prizes and made donations.

2025 Display

- All lights are up and switched on.
- There have been problems with power sockets and timers which has meant some lights have not been coming on but this is all being addressed by Christmas Plus and electrician contractors.
- Very positive feedback has been received on this year's display.

Switch on Event – 28th November 2025

- Barnard Castle Christmas Lights worked in partnership with Barnard Castle Town Council in the organisation and delivery of this year's switch on event on 28th November.
- Other groups within the community who were involved included The Witham Hall, The Hub, Barnard Castle Meet Committee, Barnard Castle Methodist Church and the Teesdale Lions.

- Our thanks go to everyone that was involved in the organisation and running of the event including the above groups, Andrew Nicholson, the Town Crier, David Harper, Paul Allison, participants in the procession and our special guests on the evening.
- The majority of those involved were doing so on a goodwill and voluntary basis giving up time and/or offering benefits in kind.
- The event would have been impossible without the sponsorship and donations from many local businesses and special thanks go to McGarry & Co for kindly being principal sponsors.
- Whilst the feedback has been extremely positive with a very large crowd turning out for the switch on, like with all new events there were a few technical problems and mistakes which can be easily improved for future years.

2026 Display

- Plans are underway and we are working closely with Barnard Castle Town Council to continue improving and investing in the annual display for the benefit of the town.
- It is likely significant and immediate investment is going to be needed on the power sources and electricity supplies, together with repair and maintenance of the existing infrastructure. Whilst this does not provide any "face value" to the public, it is all part of the ongoing investment needed to maintain the lights, and which all adds cost.
- 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 – (a) That the update be received; and (b) That the 2026 switch on event to be on Friday 27th November.

29. BARNARD CASTLE MEET

No updates available.

30. ARMISTICE DAY & REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

- (i) A small ceremony took place to mark Armistice Day on 11 November at Galgate Greens Remembrance Gardens. The Union Jack flag was flown, and a two-minute silence observed at 11:00 followed by the laying of a wreath.
- (ii) Remembrance Sunday took place on 09 November. The event was extremely well supported by all sectors of the community. Rev Canon Alec Harding led the service at the Parish Church. Barnard Castle Band provided a marching band which was led along Newgate with the rest of those parading led by Parade Marshall, Ben Harbottle. Andrew Nicholson played the Last Post and Reveille.
- (ii) Particular thanks are extended to: Deputy Lieutenant Mr Neville Fairclough, Deputy Town Mayor (Cllr Rima Chatterjee), Rev Canon Alec Harding, Church Wardens of St Mary's Parish Church, the Combined Cadet Force and staff of Barnard Castle School, Ben Harbottle, the Standard Bearers, members of Barnard Castle Band, Andrew Nicholson, Town Councillors, and all residents that attended.

Resolved – (a) That the information be received and noted; (b) That thanks be given to all businesses, organisations and individuals who played a part; and (c) Thanks to the council staff for organising the events.

31. BUDGETERY BIDS 2026/27

(i) Community Events (Received- Appendix A)

Resolved - (a) That any underspend from the Community Events budget in 2025/26 is placed in General Reserves;
(b) That the budgetary bid for Community Events in 2026/27 be £7,220;
(c) That the fee to commercial organisations for use of the performance area and to book the Scar Top banner frame should continue to be £50; and
(d) That the recommendations are referred for final consideration by Resources Committee on the 05 January 2026, and full council on the 19 January 2026.

(ii) Christmas Lights

The Town Council's commitment to Christmas Lighting remains strong. For the financial year 2026/27 I am recommending the budget remains at £8,475 which remains above the contract amount with Christmas Plus and allows flexibility with any repairs/improvements that may be required.

Resolved – a) That the Christmas Lights Budgetary bid from the Partnership Committee for 2026/27 be £8,475.
(b) That the recommendations are referred for final consideration to the Resources Committee meeting to be held on the 05 January 2026, and full Council on the 19 January 2026.

Appendix A

COMMUNITY EVENTS: 2026/27 BUDGETARY BID

Introduction

This report provides a review of the known events programme to date and considers a budgetary bid for Community Events for inclusion in the overall Town Council's 2026/27 budget.

Background to the Report

The Community Event budget in 2025/26 was set at £9,100 covering Remembrance events, Christmas and for the 30th anniversary of Teesdale Aviation Day.

below:

Event	Budget
Remembrance Events	£2,100
Christmas Event	£2,000
30 th Teesdale Aviation Day	£5,000
Total	£9,100

At its meeting in September, Resources Committee set a baseline of 3% for non-pay inflation in building the 2026/27 budget (Minute 14(b)/Sept/25 refers).

In August all councillors were asked to indicate any projects they wish to put forward for

consideration in the 2026/27 budget. One idea was put forward for consideration and that is to have a Colour Run in summer 2026. The last Colour Run held in 2022 was a huge success.

For 2026/27 the proposal is increase the Remembrance and Christmas event budgets by the approved non pay inflation figure of 3%.

I am including the projected costs of a Colour Run, anticipated at £2,100 within the budget recommendations under 'other events'.

Any underspend on the 2025/26 Community Events budget will be placed in General Reserves.

Event Proposed Expenditure

Remembrance Events	£2,160
Christmas Light Switch on (2026)	£2,060
Other Events (inc Colour Run)	£3,000
Total	£7,220

Event Management

Woodleigh Performance Area - It has been previously agreed (Minute 52(iii)/Nov/17 refers) that use of the power supply should be recharged to any group, based on metered use at the prevailing unit rate that the town council is charged. Council has also resolved that any commercial hire, i.e. where the user was not a community, voluntary or not-for-profit group, should be charged an administration fee of £50, to cover the costs of processing a booking and ensuring appropriate insurance and approvals are in place, replicating the 'licence fee' currently levied by Durham County Council. It is proposed that these fees are unchanged for 2026/27.

Banner Frame - Since its installation in 2018, the town council has also administered access to the Banner Frame on the corner of Scar Top. It was agreed that, again, for bookings made where the user was not a community, voluntary or not-for-profit group, an administration fee of £50 should be charged (64(e)/Feb/18). These charges form part of the 'fees and charges' to be approved by Council as part of the budget determination. It is proposed that these fees are unchanged for 2026/27.

Conclusion

It is recognised that community events benefit the town in supporting the local businesses with increased footfall, but also importantly these events are seen as beneficial for the wellbeing of our residents.

Recommended – (a) That any underspend from the Community Events budget in 2025/26 is placed in General Reserves;

(b) That the budgetary bid for Community Events in 2026/27 be £7,220;

(c) That the fee to commercial organisations for use of the performance area and to book the Scar Top banner frame should continue to be £50; and

(d) That the recommendations are referred for final consideration by Resources Committee on the 05 January 2026, and full council on the 19 January 2026.

DRAFT

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

05 JANUARY 2026

PRESENT: Cllrs, Kirkbride, Thompson, Foote-Wood & Chatterjee

Officers: Mr Clark (Town Clerk) & Miss Atkinson (RFO)

25. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE OF APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted by Cllr Ing. No apologies were received from Cllr Stenson.

Resolved – That the submitted apologies be accepted.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved – None declared.

27. RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING – 03 NOVEMBER 2025 – MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting on the 03 November 2025 be approved as a true record.

28. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS

Received – Reports on the income and expenditure activity of the Council from 01 October to 30 November 2025.

Resolved – That the information be received and noted.

29. BUDGET 2026-27 – FINAL REPORT

Received – Final Budget recommendations 2026/27 (Appendix A)

Resolved – (a) That the information is received and noted; (b) That the overall budget and consequent precept recommendation be made to Full Council meeting on 19 January 2026; and (c) That any budgetary alterations post this meeting will be referred at full council

30. WOODLEIGH

- The emergency lighting across the building has been repaired.
- The work on the windows on the ground floor has been carried out.
- Work has begun with DCC to extend the councils lease to 2040.

Resolved – That the information is received and noted.

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 5 JANUARY 2026**

BUDGET 2026/27 – FINAL REPORT

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Following consideration of the draft 2026/27 budget carried out at the Resources Committee meeting on 03 November, Services Committee on 01 December and Partnership Committee on 15 December 2025, this report considers the 2026/27 budget as a whole to enable recommendations to be formulated at this meeting, including the recommended precept figure, and presented to the full Council meeting scheduled for 19 January 2026.

2. Items Deferred from Previous Meetings

- 2.1** Due to confirmation of information being awaited, the following items were deferred for consideration at this meeting.

Co Durham Association/SLCC/NALC (101)

- This allocation covers membership of the County Durham Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils. Both subscriptions are intertwined, and one cannot be paid without the other.
- The membership fee for each element is set each year and multiplied by the most recent electoral figures available.
- The 2026/27 fee is 24.1p per elector made up of 15.5p for CDALC and 8.6p for NALC.
- 2019 electoral figure of 4,416 has been used to calculate the fee.
- The SLCC annual figure for 2025/26 is £360

Resolved – £1,064 (CDALC/NALC) & £360 (SLCC) Total- £1,424 (increase of £46)

- 3. The following items have been resolved by the Services and Partnership Committees, at their meetings on 01 & 15 December for recommendation to Resources and full council.**

Community Events (354)

That the budgetary bid for community events be £7,220

Christmas Lighting (221)

That the Christmas Lighting budget be set at £8,475

Play Areas (231)

That the Play Area budget be set at £2,995 and will incorporate only the costs of the regular play area inspections, and an amount for small maintenance costs.

Grounds Maintenance (311)

That the Grounds Maintenance budget be set at £23,344 which will include grass cutting, floral displays (summer/winter) improvements to current areas & watering/weeding services.

3. 4 Income – Fees and Charges

4. 4.1 The following income items are set by existing agreements or proposed by the relevant committees:

Play Areas

- (a) Tens Field - £100 – no change; and
- (b) Gate Licence Fee - zero – no change.

Allotments (per plot)

- (a) 2026/27 – the allotment plot rental already determined - £48/£30 – no change;
- (b) 2027/28 - £48/£30– No increase; and
- (c) Gross income 2026/27 - £4,042

Mini Golf – 2026 season

- (a) £3 per round for all users – no change;
- (b) £9 group ticket (up to four players – saving £3) – no change;
- (c) £15 loyalty ticket (7 rounds bought in advance) – no change;
- (d) £1 lost ball – no change;
- (e) £6 damaged club – no change; and
- (f) Gross income - £11,000

Woodleigh Charges - Dawson Room Hire Charges (per hour – min 2 hours)

- (a) Community - £12.50 – no change;
- (b) Repeat Community - £10 – no change;
- (c) Commercial - £20 – no change;
- (d) Commercial Refreshments £1.20 per head (Inc. VAT) – new charge; and
- (d) Gross income - £600.

Woodleigh, Scar Top & Demesnes Charges

- (a) Electricity (performance area) charged at the prevailing metered rate (New);
- (b) Commercial use (other than by a community, voluntary or not-for-profit group) - £50; and
- (c) Scar Top Banner Frame commercial booking (other than by a community, voluntary or not-for-profit group) £50.
- (d) Gross income - £250 *pro tem*.
- (e) Dog Agility licence - £40

Wednesday Market

- (a) Standard Pitch (0-6m) - £12 – no change;
- (b) Large Pitch (6-10m) - £18 – no change;
- (c) Additional metre (or part) beyond 10m - £2 – no change;
- (d) Charity Pitch - £0 – no change; and
- (e) Gross income - £8,000.

5. Budget Proposal Summary

A budgetary schedule is attached as **Appendix A** to this report and details the 2026/27 recommendations compared to a base of 2025/26. Set out in the table below is a more detailed breakdown.

Cost Centre	Recommendation
Council Administration (101)	See below
Training (101)	£200
Audit Fees (101)	£1,550
Bank Charges (101)	£400
Replacement IT & Software (101)	£650
Insurance (101)	£2,843
Subscriptions (101) SLCC/CDALC	£1,424
Stationary & Office Goods inc consumables (101)	£420
Accounts Software Packages (101)	£1,439
IT & Maintenance support (101)	£2,104
Postage/publications/eye tests (101)	£100
Professional fees & Charges (101)	£350
Financial Donations	£nil
Total	£11,480
Central Support Svcs	£136,533
Woodleigh Operational Expenditure (106)	See below
Office Rent (106)	£9,102
Business Rates/Water Rates (106)	£988
Electricity/Gas (106)	£11,330
Repairs/maintenance (106)	£434
Planned/preventative maintenance (106)	£1,200
Telephone/broadband (106)	£897
Service Level Agreement (106)	£2,142
Cleaning (106)	£1,630
Supplies (106)	£150
Total	£27,873
Elections (104)	£1,000
Chairs of Office (105)	£50
Castle & Market floodlighting (321)	£500
Defibrillator (110)	£225
Allotments (201) (self-financing)	£4,042
Mini Golf (211) (self-financing)	£11,000
Wednesday Market (self-financing)	£8,000
Christmas Lights (221)	£8,475
Play Areas (231)	£2,995

Cost Centre	Recommendation
Grounds Maintenance (311)	£23,344
Dog Fouling	£500
Bede Road Bus Shelter (342)	£50
Community Events (354)	£7,220
Market Place Public Toilets (501)	£ 6,386

5. 6. Factors taken into Consideration

6. 6.1 To date, there is £39,749 in the earmarked reserve funds (**Appendix B**).

6.2 The council tax base upon which the precept is calculated is 1898.6 for 2026/27, an increase of 3.9 on the 2025/26 tax base. The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant payable to the council for the 2026/27 financial year will be NIL due to the council tax base increase. It is expected that the LCTRS grant payments to town and parish councils will cease entirely in 2026/27 in order to assist Durham County Council in meeting significant budget challenges.

7. Conclusion

Savings have been made in the areas that can be controlled by the council through good financial management. The increases in utilities, insurance and contracted services have been made in line with the non-pay inflation 3% approved in November.

7. The council Central Support Services costs have increased in line with the agreed 4%.

8. As can be seen from **Appendix A**, if all the budgetary items are approved as shown, the total 2026/27 demand on Durham County Council would be **£221,121** being the Precept. This would result in an increase of 11% on 2025/26 and amounting to **£9.70p** a month on a Band D property (+96p on 25/26). The increase is due largely to the loss of rental income.

9. All recommendations from this meeting, including the recommended Precept and overall budget, are for onward transmission to the Council meeting scheduled for 19 January 2026. Durham County Council has confirmed that the Precept Notification Date is Friday 23 January 2026.

10. Recommendation – Members' views are requested on all of the above, such that an overall budget and consequent precept recommendation may be made to Full Council meeting on 19 January 2026.

Appendix A

Cost Centre	Budget 2025/26 £	Budget 2026/27 £
101 Council Administration	12,396	11,480
102 Central Support Svcs	131,153	136,533
101 Mayoral Allowances	NIL	NIL
104 Elections	1,000	1,000
105 Chains of Office	50	50
106 Woodleigh operational	27,476	27,873
110 Defibrillator	225	225

201	Allotments	4,027	4,042
211	Mini Golf	11,000	11,000
221	Christmas Lights	8,475	8,475
231	Play Areas	2,995	2,995
291	Wednesday Market	8,000	8,000
311	Ground Maintenance	22,660	23,344
321	Castle & Market Floodlighting	636	500
331	War Memorials	NIL	NIL
342	Bede Road Bus Shelter	50	50
354	Community Events	9,100	7,220
404	Wayfinding Units	NIL	NIL
501	Market Place Public Toilets	6,200	6,386
321	Dog Fouling	500	500
Total		245,943	249,673
Income			
1. Fees and charges (recreation)		15,127	15,142
2. Fees and charges (other)		8,850	8,850
3. Woodleigh Rental		9,880	1,560
4. Bank interest		3,000	3,000
5. Precept		209,086	221,121
6. LCTRS		NIL	NIL
		245,983	249,673

Ear Marked Reserves

War Memorials	1500.00
Bouch Way PA	10863.29
Allotment Improvements	8031.00
PA Future Repair & Future Provision	1235.00
BC Playing Fields	900.00
Mini Golf	3312.00
Elections	6434.61
Grounds Maintenance	5123.00
Replacement of IT & Software	1700.00
Total	39749.70

DRAFT

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**Barnard Castle Town Council
Income Collection and Banking Arrangements**

Assurance level:	Full Assurance
Report status:	Report
Date:	26th November 2025
Prepared by:	Gordon Fletcher, Internal Auditor
Issued to:	Martin Clark, Town Clerk
Copied to:	Claire Atkinson, Finance Officer and RFO

CONFIDENTIAL

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 22nd 23rd and 25th November
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.
- Poor use of Council's resources.

SCOPE

4. The scope of the audit involved examining systems and procedures in place for the collection and banking of income between April 2025 to September 2025, 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 2025/26 are 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 (as shown in the Resources committee agendas) detailing all income for April to September 2025 (Months 1 to 6) was examined to confirm that all income collected 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.
- 8.2. Cash till instructions are provided, along with operating instructions for the leaf blower.

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, market rents and the hire of the Dawson Room, and these were examined in detail.

Mini Golf

- 9.2. During 2025 , there were 2 attendants working in rota, 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 daily 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.

The money is placed in a plastic cash bag which is handed into 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. However, the sheets are not initialled by the Finance Officer (RFO) when reconciling the money to the sheets to confirm the monies collected.

Banking can be made by the Town Clerk, Finance Officer or Markets and Maintenance Officer who sign the paying in slip.

- 9.4. Testing was carried out on the Daily Record Sheets and till readings between the start of the season - April 2025 to October 2025.
- 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 considered to be very low.

- 9.7. A review of each season is carried out by the Services Committee after the season has ended, usually in December
- 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. However, not all were recorded on the bank paying slip, so as to make a complete audit trail of rent paid, I can confirm that all rent had been collected and banked, 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 produced, which shows all plots in site order (ref no.) but no details of the tenant. This audit check had to go by the paying in date to the allotment record, which was difficult to reconcile as some were paid on the same date.

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.

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 all were collected and banked. The amounts are paid in weekly on a paying in book and the totals were confirmed in the Cash Book 1 report (Receipts) and were shown in the bank statements.

Hire of Dawson Room

- 9.11. When the Town Council moved premises to Woodleigh, it included a room (Dawson Room) which can be hired out. Charges for room hire were confirmed at the Resources meeting as part of the budget setting process.

Anyone wanting to book the room contacts the Council where a Diary is checked to determine if the room is available and is then recorded in the Diary. Regular bookings pay on the day and a receipt is given. Hire agreement repeat booking forms are completed by the hirer every 3 months.

If not a regular booking (Casual) then a booking form is completed by an Officer within the Civic Office, which gives details of the room requirements and is attached to the page in the diary. Payment is either made in person at the Civic Office where a receipt is given, or an invoice is sent out. Details of the payment is recorded on the booking form and in the diary. Since the Pandemic room bookings have reduced and there was only 1 booking between April to September who paid direct to bank.

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 2024/25 was paid direct into the bank on 23rd April 2025. First claim (Qu1) for 2025/26 was paid directly into the Council's bank account on 4th August 2025

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.
- 9.14. It has been agreed by Council that no charge for rent on organisations occupying rooms in Woodleigh.

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 2025 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.
13. I have categorised the importance of my recommendations as follows:
- i. 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
 - ii. High – A control weakness that may have a significant impact upon the achievement of the system objectives
 - iii. Medium – A control weakness that may have an impact upon the achievement of the system objectives
 - iv. Low – A control weakness that does not impact upon the achievement of the system objectives, however, the implementation of which would improve overall control
14. Although no problems were found, and I am convinced that all income had been collected and banked, however, internal controls could be improved and my review has

highlighted 2 issues:

Better audit trail showing payment of Allotment rents to the paying in slip and cash book 1 reports

Mini golf attendants sheets should be initialled by the Finance Officer to confirm all cash had been collected and reconciled

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: 26th November 2025

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Barnard Castle Town Council Accounts Payable (Creditors)

Assurance level:	Full Assurance
Report status:	Report
Date:	26th November 2025
Prepared by:	Gordon Fletcher, Internal Auditor
Issued to:	Martin Clark, Town Clerk
Copied to:	Claire Atkinson, Finance Officer and RFO

CONFIDENTIAL

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the agreed Internal Audit Plan, dated 3rd June 2025, I have carried out a detailed review of Barnard Castle Town Council, Accounts Payable (Creditors) system. The review involved home working on 22nd and 23rd November 2025. 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 2025 to September 2025 (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 has Financial Regulations and Standing Orders which are reviewed every year and 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. 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.
- 9.3. 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 initialised by the Finance Officer, who processes all the electronic payments. This procedure was found to be properly completed.
- 9.4. 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.
- 9.5. 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.
- 9.6. 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 2025/26.
- 9.7. 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.
- 9.8. 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 2025 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 is maintained showing readings for electricity, photocopier and water for allotments. This will be examined during the annual audit.
- 10.3. Petty cash records were examined between April 2025 to September 2025. There was 1 reimbursement 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.
- 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 if available. The same procedure as for the payment schedules is being used by emailing 2 signatories for authorisation.
- 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.
112. 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.
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Gordon Fletcher,
Auditor to the Council
Date: 26th November 2025