



14th October 2026

Dear Councillor,

I Hereby Summon You to attend a **Meeting of Ferryhill Town Council** following the Extraordinary Council meeting on **Wednesday, 21st October 2026**, which will be held at **Ferryhill Town Hall, Chapel Terrace, Ferryhill, Co Durham, DL17 8JL**

Elizabeth Gildersleeves
Acting Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

To invite members to declare any interest they may have.

3. Members' Dispensation

To consider written requests for dispensations from members who have declared interests under Disclosable or Non-Disclosable Pecuniary Interests – Section 33 of the 2011 Localism Act.

4. Public Participation (Subject to Public Participation Policy)

Members of the public are permitted to make representations, ask questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda. Questions will not be received by the Council which are in furtherance of a person's individual circumstances or which are about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, a tribunal or government minister. A question will not be received by the Council where the issue it concerns has been the subject of a decision of the Council in the last six months.

5. Minutes

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of:-

- a. Corporate Governance on 8th September 2026
- b. Full Council held on 9th September 2026
- c. Extraordinary Council held on 30th September 2026

6. Completion Of Audit

To consider the attached report



- 7. Nomination to DCC LN Stakeholder Panel**
To consider the attached report
- 8. Bedding Plants**
To consider the attached report
- 9. Perennial Plants**
To consider the attached report
- 10. Christmas Closure**
To consider the attached report
- 11. Projects Update Report**
To consider the attached report
- 12. DCC Annual Budget (27/28) & Medium Term Financial Plan (2027-2031) Consultation**
To consider the attached report
- 13. Exclusion of Press and Public**
Members are requested to move the following motion:
“That in accordance with the provision of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council do now exclude the public and press for the remaining items on the Agenda by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted since publicity would be prejudicial to public interest.”
- 14. Members Initiative Fund Applications**
To consider the attached report
- 15. Minutes**
To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of:-
 - a. Disciplinary & Grievance Appeals Committee held on 20th July 2026
 - b. HR Committee held on 20th July 2026
 - c. Extraordinary Council held on 7th October 2026
- 16. Confidential Correspondence**
A verbal update will be given at the meeting

Subject: Accounts 2025-26 – Completion of Audit
Report of: Acting Town Clerk
Committee: Council Meeting
Date: 21 October 2026

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to set out for approval the external auditor's report and certificate in respect of the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the 2025/26 financial year.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At the Council meeting held on 17th June 2026 the accounts for 2025-2026 were considered and Members approved the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year. The accounts were then submitted to the Council's external auditors, Forvis Mazars LLP, to enable them to undertake their audit.
- 2.2 Confirmation has now been received that the audit is complete. The completion letter from Forvis Mazars and the audited, signed AGAR are attached.

3.0 2025/26 EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT AND CERTIFICATE

- 3.1 I am pleased to report that Forvis Mazars have issued an unqualified opinion on the accounts, which represents a clean bill of health for the Council in relation to its accounting statements and governance arrangements for the 2025/26 financial year.
- 3.2 The auditors confirm that there are no matters which came to their attention which require the issue of a separate issues arising report. Part 2 of Section 3 of the Annual Return on page 6 confirms this conclusion (attached as Appendix 1).
- 3.3 There are also no issues identified under the heading "Minor Scope for Improvement", which is confirmed on page 2 of the Completion of Audit letter (attached as Appendix 2).
- 3.4 It is important to note that the Council's external auditors have examined the annual accounts and have, in effect, confirmed that:
 - they have been prepared in accordance with proper practices,
 - no other matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislative and regulatory requirements have not been met,
 - they accurately reflect the Council's financial position,
 - the Council's governance, internal control and internal audit arrangements are satisfactory and,
 - both the Council's Members and the general public should be reassured about the Council's finances.

4.0 NOTICE OF COMPLETION OF AUDIT

- 4.1 The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 require the Notice of Completion of Audit, and the audited AGAR, to be displayed in a conspicuous place, including the Council's website, for a reasonable period. This was required to be completed as soon as practical after the conclusion of the audit, and before 30 September 2026, therefore in order to comply with this statutory duty, notices were placed on the Council's website and noticeboards on 11th September 2026. The notices will be available until 6th November 2026.
- 3.2 The Notice of Completion of Audit informs the public that they can inspect the accounts by appointment at the Town Hall. Copies of the AGAR may also be requested, and the Council is allowed to charge a reasonable sum. Normal practice is that a charge of £1.00 including VAT would be made if anyone wished to take a copy of the accounts.
- 3.3 The council must also ensure copies of an AGAR are available for public access for a period of not less than five years from the date it was first published. Previous years' AGARs are available on the council's website.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members:
- i) Approve and accept the audited AGAR and ensure that such approval and acceptance is recorded in the minutes of the meeting;
 - ii) Confirm acceptance of the arrangements made by the Acting Town Clerk for the Notice of Completion of Audit and the AGAR to be displayed on notice boards within and outside of the Town Hall, and on the website, from 11th September until 6th November 2026 with the charge of £1.00 for a copy of the relevant information.

Subject: Ferryhill Town Council Nomination for DCC Local Network Stakeholder Panel

Report of: Acting Town Clerk

Committee: Council

Date: 21 October 2026

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

For Council to consider and agree one nominee to be put forward as a town council representative on the Stakeholder Panel for Coxhoe, Ferryhill and Spennymoor Local Network Areas.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Local Networks (LN) are being established, which replace the Area Action Partnerships. They are Durham County Council's formal community engagement structures and bring together local people, councillors, businesses, and partner organisations to improve community life through working together.
- 2.2 From the bottom upwards, each Local Network's structure is made up of:
 - a **Local Network Community Forum** - made up of people who live, work, volunteer or study in the area, and who wish to be involved in supporting local improvement and development;
 - a **Stakeholder Panel** - made up of representatives from DCC's partner organisations (housing, health, police, fire, and town/parish councils).
 - an **Elected Member Board** - made up of DCC councillors from that area. They make the decisions for the LN, taking advice from the Stakeholder Panel and from information gathered at Local Network Community Forums.
- 2.3 County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) has agreed to deal with the appointment of parish and town council representatives to the LN Local Stakeholder Panels and will co-ordinate any necessary elections.
- 2.4 Stakeholder Panels will be an information sharing network which will give shape to and provide oversight of development of Local Network Action Plans. They will also function as an advisory panel to the Local Elected Member Board, making recommendations on priorities and funding proposals.
- 2.5 **One Parish Council and one Town Council seat have been allocated to each LN Stakeholder Panel** with some adjustments, including where there aren't any Town Councils (the Parish Councils can take that seat).

The Coxhoe, Ferryhill and Spennymoor Areas LN (9) includes 3 Town Councils, Chilton, Ferryhill and Spennymoor, and 6 parishes (**see attached table as Appendix 1 for details**).

2.6 Expectations of representatives are:

- Attend up to 4 meetings per year.
- Contribute to the development and delivery of Local Networks Plans for the full LN area.
- Actively promote the work of the Local Network.
- Be committed to improving their local area
- Have knowledge of local community issues
- Be committed to the values of equality and diversity
- Be able to communicate effectively

2.7 Nominations for a town councillor to be on the LN Stakeholder Panel for Coxhoe, Ferryhill and Spennymoor Areas, should be submitted to CDALC, by the closing date of Tues 17th Nov 2026 at 9am:

- The Town Clerk will complete an online form to confirm the council's nomination
- **The nominee must submit an online form including a 200 word statement, which will be used if an election is necessary:** [Nominee's Statement for Parish/Town Councillor position on DCC Local Networks – Fill in form](#)

2.8 After Tues 17th Nov 2026, the following will take place:

Where there is only one candidate nominated for the LN area:

The candidate will be put forward to DCC as the relevant town or parish council rep.

- **Where there is more than one candidate nominated:**

An election will take place. CDALC will set up electronic voting arrangements to send out w/c 23rd Nov 2026 with a closing date for councils of 31st Jan 2027.

- **Voting:**

All councils in each LN area will be eligible to one vote, for whichever elections ensue ie a parish council can vote for the town council reps, and vice versa. So in the case of our LN area, if there is more than one town council candidate put forward, all 6 parish councils and 3 town councils will each have a vote. The candidate with the most votes wins. If there is a tie, it will be decided by lot and CDALC will arrange for this to take place in person, at which the candidates can attend.

2.9 Important information about nominations:

- Positions will be for 2 years and with the first tranche to start work early in 2027 and be in post till the May 2029 elections
- Only one nomination permitted per council
- Town and Parish Councillors may only be on a Stakeholder Panel for one LN at any one time (this would be the scenario where a councillor sits on two councils in different LNs)
- Any Parish or Town Council member who is a County Councillor cannot stand for the Stakeholder Panel. They already have a seat on the Elected Member Panel.
- Town and Parish representatives are not permitted to send a substitute representative if they are unable to attend a LN meeting.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1. That members consider the information and agree one nominee to be put forward as a town council representative on the Stakeholder Panel for the Coxhoe, Ferryhill and Spennymoor Local Network Areas.

REPORT:	Annual Bedding plant Contract
AUTHOR:	Neighbourhood Manager
COMMITTEE:	Full Council
DATE:	21st October 2026

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the appointment of a supplier for the annual bedding plants and hanging baskets contract, commencing summer 2027.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The current 2-year contract for the supply of annual bedding plants and hanging baskets, which commenced in 2025, was awarded to Windlestone Nurseries.
- 2.2 This contract is now due to be renewed for the supply of plants commencing in summer 2027.

3.0 SPECIFICATION

- 3.1 The outline specification for the quality and quantity of plants to be provided is that all bedding plants supplied by the contractor will be as follows:
- Pest and disease free
 - True to type
 - Floriferous (where appropriate)
 - The foliage shall be free of all surface blemishes
 - The plants will have a well-developed root system which is in balance to the container in which they are to be delivered
 - Plants supplied will be vigorous
 - The hanging baskets are to be full of plants and in full colour.

4.0 QUOTATIONS RECEIVED

- 4.1 Despite best efforts to source three written quotations for the supply of summer and winter bedding plants and hanging baskets, only one company has submitted quotations by the deadline date issued. Three companies, who have previously supplied plants to the Town Council or have been recommended by other Councils were directly invited to submit quotations for the contract, which was also advertised in the public domain. Quotations were requested for both a one year and a two-year contract.
- 4.2 Financial Regulations allow for a contract to be awarded where only one quotation has been received, when three or more quotes have been requested, with a common specification being provided to all suppliers.
- 4.3 As the quotations received have been published and the deadline for receiving quotes has passed, Officers are not advised to source additional quotations at this stage, as competitors will know what price they need to beat. This could lead to a legal challenge from the company who submitted the original quotations. Members could halt the process and re-advertise the Contract, also inviting the original

contractor to re-quote, but this is not best practice and could jeopardise the good relationship already built up with the company submitting the original quotation, who have held this contract for the last three years.

4.4 Quotations received for a one-year contract are as follows:

Contractor (Alphabetical Order)

- A. Durham County Council – Unable to be Competitive
- B. Leamside Nursery – No reply received
- C. Windlestone Nursery

Quotation (Numerical Order)

- A. £11,426.25
- B. –
- C. –

4.5 Quotations received for a two-year contract are as follows

Contractor (Alphabetical Order)

- A. Durham County Council – Unable to be Competitive
- B. Leamside Nursery – No reply received
- C. Windlestone Nursery

Quotation (Numerical Order)

- A. Year one - £11,426.25 / Year two - £11,426.25
- B. –
- C. –

4.6 The quotation covers the provision of summer and winter bedding plants for the Town Hall garden, Duncombe Cemetery, Darlington Road, Dean Road, Chapel Corner, and multiple planters around the town. The quote also includes hanging baskets for the Town Hall garden.

4.7 Summer bedding plants include geraniums, begonias non-stop, begonias semperflorens, alongside feature plants including cannas, cordylines and antirrhinum. Winter bedding plants include pansies, polyanthus and bellis.

4.8 If Members agree to accept the quotation received from Windlestone Nursery it is worth noting that the company are also willing to deliver the plants on a date that is convenient to the Town Council. This will assist Town Council staff in terms of travelling time and fuel costs.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Based on the cost of the quotation provided, and the fact that the Town Council has used Windlestone Nursery for the past three years and been happy with the service received and the quality of the plants provided, it is recommended that the Council awards a two-year contract for the supply of Summer and Winter bedding plants and hanging baskets to Windlestone Nursery, to commence in Summer 2027.

REPORT:	Perennial Plants
AUTHOR:	Neighbourhood Manager
COMMITTEE:	Full Council
DATE:	21st October 2026

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the appointment of the supplier for perennial plants.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At a meeting of Full Council on 9th September 2026, members decided, in a review of the council's flower beds, to replace annual bedding with perennial plants in some of the beds in 2027/2028 (Minute No: 51.26-27 refers).
- 2.2 It was decided that Dean Bank Park, Mainsforth Sports Complex, Broom Road planters, Manor Farm and King George Recreation Ground should be planted with perennial plants. In total this will amount to 1400 plants.

3.0 SPECIFICATION

- 3.1 The specification which was sent out to potential suppliers was as follows:

General

- Plants shall be herbaceous perennials, true to species and cultivar.
- Plants shall be healthy, vigorous, well-rooted, and free from pests, diseases, weeds, and physical damage.
- Plants shall be nursery-grown and supplied in accordance with recognised horticultural standards.

Plant Size and Quality

- Minimum container size: 2L
- Root system shall be well-developed and not root-bound.
- Plants supplied which are found to be root bound on inspection will be rejected and no payment will be made.
- Plants shall have strong growth with good crown development.
- Foliage shall exhibit typical colour and form for the species/cultivar.

4.0 QUOTATIONS RECEIVED

- 4.1 Despite best efforts to source three written quotations for the supply of perennial plants, only one company has submitted a quotation within the deadline specified. Three companies, who have either previously supplied plants to the Town Council, or have been recommended by other Councils, were directly invited to submit quotations for the contract, which was also advertised in the public domain.

- 4.2 Financial Regulations allow for a situation where only one quote is received when three or more have been requested. These quotations are based on a common specification being provided to the suppliers.

Contractor (Alphabetical Order)

- A. Durham County Council
- B. Leamside Nursery
- C. Windlestone Nursery

Quotation (Numerical Order)

- A. £6,132.00
- B. –
- C. –

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Given that the council has used Windlestone Nursery for the supply of bedding plants for the last three years, and been happy with the service received and the quality of the plants, it is recommended that members approve the quotation provided by Windlestone Nursery for the supply of perennial plants for 2027/28.

Subject: Christmas Closure
Report of: Acting Town Clerk
Committee: Council
Date: 21 October 2026

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider Christmas closures for 2026.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 It has been normal practice for many years to close the office for a period covering the Christmas and New Year holidays. Many local authorities do this, including Durham County Council.
- 2.2 This year Christmas Day and New Year's Day fall on a Friday, with Boxing Day falling on a Saturday. Friday 25th December, Monday 28th December and Friday 1st January are Bank Holidays.
- 2.3 As a result it is proposed that the last working day be Thursday 24th December 2026 with the office re-opening on Monday 4th January 2027. This results in a closure of six weekdays, of which three are Bank Holidays.
- 2.4 It has become practice in recent years for the Council to give 2 concessionary days as a gesture of goodwill to recognise the commitment given by staff during the previous year. It is suggested that this continues this year.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1. That the Christmas and New Year holiday arrangements be as follows:

Friday, 25 th December 2026	Closed (Bank Holiday)
Monday, 28 th December 2026	Closed (Bank Holiday)
Tuesday, 29 th December 2026	Closed (concessionary day)
Wednesday, 30 th December 2026	Closed (concessionary day)
Thursday, 31 st December 2026	Closed (annual/flexi leave)
Friday, 1 st January 2027	Closed (Bank Holiday)
Monday, 4 th January 2027	Office re-opens

Subject: Projects Update Report

Report of: Events & Projects Officer

Committee: Town Council

Date: 21st October 2026

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on individual projects being delivered by Ferryhill Town Council.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Ferryhill Town Council Officers continue to develop projects prioritised by Members, ensuring that relevant permissions are in place and that Public Procurement Regulations are followed when employing contractors to undertake works.

3.0 Projects Update

- 3.1 Individual Project updates are provided below.

3.2 Replacement Trailer

With the Town Council's existing trailer no longer fit for purpose, County Councillors Joe Quinn and Paul Mountford kindly offered to fund the purchase of a replacement trailer through their Local Network Fund allocations.

The trailer is an essential asset for the Council's outdoor operations, enabling staff to transport equipment and materials between sites, that do not fit in the standard work vehicles.

An application for funding was submitted to the Local Network Team and was subsequently approved. Funding of £3,350 was awarded in July, and a new trailer has since been purchased at a total cost of £3,350, fully utilising the grant received.

3.3 Football Pitch Maintenance at Mainsforth Sports Complex and Dean Bank Park

Ferryhill Town Council were notified by the FA in 2023 that grant funding was available for pitch maintenance through the Football Foundation. Applications were submitted and Funding was secured to carry out annual pitch maintenance on the football pitches at both Dean Bank Park and Mainsforth Sports Complex. The FA & Football Foundation carried out Pitch Assessments of all the pitches at both sites and produced a detailed Report identifying the works that were required on each Pitch. At that point most of the pitches were graded by the FA as 'basic.' Grant monies totalling £57,598 (£46,932 for Dean Bank Park and £10,666 for Mainsforth Sports Complex) was approved to carry out the works. Grant monies were tapered over a six-year period as shown in the tables on page 2 of this report, with monies having to be claimed retrospectively on an annual basis and on production of invoices and bank statements showing payments made.

Quotations are sought each year from specialist Companies to carry out the Pitch Maintenance works. The works for years 1 - 3 have been carried out and monies claimed successfully for both sites. Quotations for this year's works (Year 4: 2026-2027) were sought from Agrovista, Turfcare and CLS Sport. Agrovista submitted the lowest quotation of £13,850 (£11,500 for Dean Bank Park and £2,350 for Mainsforth Sports Complex) and were therefore appointed. A quotation was received from Turfcare, which came in slightly higher at £13,997. No quotation was received from

CLS Sport. A claim for year 4 works will be submitted in November once all invoices have been received. Year 5 works will be commissioned to take place at the end of the current Football Season, in June 2027.

A minimum six-week resting period is required to take place after pitch maintenance works are completed each year, to enable the pitches time to rest and to give works carried out, the best chance of success. This means that no football matches or training sessions are permitted to take place during this time. All Football Teams are aware of this.

A Condition of the Grant is that two Pitch Inspections be carried out annually by the Football Foundation/Football Association. The last inspection that took place was in June 2026, where all pitches received an 'Advanced' Rating. Despite this rating it is recognised that the exceptionally hot weather experienced in July/August and large number of matches and training sessions held on the top pitch at Dean Bank Park had a detrimental impact on this particular pitch, and accordingly extra works have been commissioned to take place in October to address the issues (at a cost of £5,800). The additional works will not impact on the existing Pitch Maintenance grant.

(Note: The FA/FF Rate Pitches as either Poor, Basic, Good, Advanced or High).

Dean Bank	Year 1 2023-24	Year 2 2024-25	Year 3 2025-26	Year 4 2026-27	Year 5 2027-28	Year 6 2028-29	Total
Cost of Work	£11,732	£11,732	£11,734	£11,734	£11,734	£11,734	£70,400
Grant	£11,732	£11,732	£7,822	£7,822	£3,912	£3,912	£46,932
FTC Contribution	£0	£0	£3,912	£3,912	£7,822	£7,822	£23,468

Mainsforth Sports Complex	Year 1 2023-24	Year 2 2024-25	Year 3 2025-26	Year 4 2026-27	Year 5 2027-28	Year 6 2028-29	Total
Cost of Work	£2,666	£2,666	£2,667	£2,667	£2,667	£2,667	£16,000
Grant	£2,666	£2,666	£1,778	£1,778	£889	£889	£10,666
FTC Contribution	£0	£0	£889	£889	£1,778	£1,778	£5,334

3.4 Improvements to Mainsforth Bowls Green and Upgrade of Showers for Football Teams Using Mainsforth Bowls Pavilion

The Bowls Green at Mainsforth has deteriorated badly in recent years. Despite the Maintenance Officer's best attempts to revive the Green, it had become diseased in places and suffered due to the very hot Summer experienced this year. A specialist Company was invited to inspect the Green and report back, providing a programme of works and quotation to improve the facility to a standard that would see it brought back into full use, so that Mainsforth Bowls Club can once again take part in major competitions.

The Football showers located at Mainsforth Bowls Pavilion have not been updated for almost 30 years. The facilities are tired and are constantly in need of repairs. Ferryhill Dynamos FC have repeatedly reported issues with water pressure and the Town Council have carried out numerous repairs over the years, all of which have incurred costs on the Town Council. As discussed at the Town Council Meeting held on the

4th March 2026 (Minute Number 124.26-27 refers) the Dynamos have a good relationship with Mainsforth Cricket Club and on occasions where the football showers are out of action, the Dynamos have been allowed to use the Cricket

Pavilion facilities instead. This has always been considered temporary until funding could be secured to carry out a full repair/refurbishment of the football shower facilities.

A site visit by the FA and Football Foundation determined that the football changing facilities at Mainsforth do not meet current FA standards as they do not comprise individual shower cubicles and a separate referee's room. The FA/FF can offer a grant of up to £25k to help bring the facilities up to FA standards, but it is recognised that works would actually cost in the region of £50k, and with no match funding in place, the FA/FF are unable to assist with the project.

Although the FA/FF are unable to assist further at the current time, £5,000 external funding has been secured through Sport England's Motivation Fund together with £5,000 through County Councillor Joe Quinn and Paul Mountford's Local Network Fund, to enable improvements to be made to both the football showers and the bowls green. The Motivation fund does not ordinarily fund Football related projects, but because the funding application was for a multi-sport project, funding was approved on this occasion.

Specialist works, which were agreed with Sport England, have recently taken place on the Bowls Green. Turfcare were appointed to carry out the works at a cost of £3,542 plus VAT at the end of the Bowls Season. Ongoing maintenance to the Bowls Green will be required throughout the Season (May to August), which has already been built into the Town Council's Repairs and Maintenance Budget for the site. This essentially leaves a total of £6,458 grant monies remaining to spend on repairing the football showers at Mainsforth.

Quotations were sought from several Companies to identify and address the issues with the Football Showers. Two quotations were received by the deadline given, however, only one of the quotations received (from Blackwell Heating Ltd.) gave any certainty that the issues could be rectified. Blackwell Heating Ltd. have recommended further investigations be carried out at a cost of £740 plus VAT to determine the best option to repair the showers. The Company have identified various options, one of which they are confident will provide a permanent fix. Detailed Options were provided to Sport England, who approved the grant funding on this basis. It is therefore proposed that Blackwell Heating Ltd be commissioned to carry out the additional investigations, with a further report being brought back to Council, to confirm the final option and cost of the repairs. Based on the options provided works are expected to cost in the region of £5,300 - £6,500.

3.5 Regeneration of King George V Playing Field

At the Town Council Meeting held on 17th June 2026 and following a community consultation exercise, Members agreed to prioritise the Regeneration of the King George V Playing Field as one of its next major projects. (Minute Number: 26.26-27 refers). Members also agreed to undertake the project in two phases. Phase 1 it was agreed would concentrate on replacing the old play equipment at the site, with details of Phase 2 being revisited once works had commenced on Phase 1. Phase 2 would include an extension to the existing footpath that runs through the Playing Field to make it more accessible. Members agreed to contribute a minimum of 10% of the total project costs towards the works. It was understood that there would also be professional fees incurred on the project including procurement fees.

An external funding bid for £100k has been submitted to the Landfill Operator, Tarmac Ltd for consideration. If successful, monies will be used to deliver Phase 1 works, to replace existing play equipment. A decision on the application is expected early in the New Year. The County Councillors for Ferryhill, Councillor Joe Quinn and Councillor Paul Mountford have also been invited to contribute to the project.

Any application for the Councillors Local Network Fund allocation is likely to be submitted in the new financial year, 2027-2028.

3.6 Funding for Events

A combination of grant funding and sponsorship was secured during 2026 to provide financial support to deliver the Council's Armed Forces Day Party in the Park event and Santa Visits to local Schools as follows:

Armed Forces Day Event:

Ministry of Defense - £2,750

County Councillors Local Network Fund (Cllrs Joe Quinn & Paul Mountford) - £998

Livin - £500

Supportive - £500

Mel's Travel - £300

NE Stair Lift Company - £300

Anonomous Donation - £200

Anderson Group - £100

Catertech - £50

Santa Visits to Schools:

County Councillors Local Network Fund (Cllrs Joe Quinn & Paul Mountford) - £500

Unfortunately, a £10,000 funding application submitted to the National Lottery, Awards for All Programme to support the Council's Events Programme over the next two years was rejected. An application for £9,500 has been submitted to the Local Network Fund to help cover the cost of hosting another Armed Forces Day Party in the park event. A decision on this application is due by the end of the year, however, it is expected that the fund will be heavily oversubscribed.

3.7 Recording Equipment for Filming Meetings

At the Town Council Meeting held on 29th July 2026 Members agreed that funding be applied for from County Councillor Joe Quinn's Local Network Fund allocation, to purchase an Owl Recording system, at a cost of approximately £1,500, to enable Council Meetings to be recorded and made available to the Public online. (Minute Number: 40.26-27 refers).

When the Events & Projects Officer first requested the application form to apply for the funding to deliver this project, she was advised that the project was not eligible as it did not demonstrate sufficient community value. This decision was challenged by both the Events & Projects Officer and Councillor Quinn. DCC Funding Officers have now advised that to progress with a funding application, the Town Council would need to be able to provide evidence that the project is needed and that the community have requested it. DCC Officers queried whether the public had flagged-up difficulties engaging with the Town Council. If the project were to receive funding, the Town Council would need to demonstrate at the Monitoring stage of the project, that Members of the public were benefiting from it. In considering this, Members need to agree how they want to proceed with the project.

3.8 Mural Art Project

At the Town Council Meeting held on 8th April 2026 Members agreed that Officers be instructed to seek external funding to employ a mural artist to create a scheme for the former toilet block at Ferryhill Station (Minute Number 143.25-26 refers).

Officers have explored various funding options and have identified the Arts Council as the most suitable funding body for this type of project. The Arts Council offer grants of up to £30,000. The application process is quite detailed however, and as such, it might be worth Members considering applying for funding to deliver a larger

scale Art Project that would produce a series of murals throughout the Town, with a view to having at least one mural per ward.

To be able to progress a larger public art project, Members would need to agree potential mural sites and then consult with the community to gauge support for the project. It should be noted that if the public were not supportive, then it would be very difficult to secure external funding to deliver the project.

Arts Council Funding, as with most external funding, requires a 10% contribution towards the cost of the project.

If Members would prefer to pursue the original project, to create one mural, on the former Ferryhill Station Toilet block, additional options regarding how the project could be funded would need to be pursued. With the majority of smaller scale funders favouring registered charities and community groups over public bodies, and with the level of Officer time that would be required to complete a complex Arts Council Funding Application for a relatively small amount of grant monies, the Town Council's options are limited in terms of sourcing funding to deliver such a small project.

In deciding how to proceed with this project it should also be noted that most Public Art Murals have a life span of approximately 10 years.

4.0 Recommendations

It is **Recommended** that:

1. Members note the contents of the report;
2. Members agree that additional investigation works be carried out on the football showers at Mainsforth Sports Complex, by Blackwell Heating Ltd;
3. Members agree how they want to proceed in relation to the project to purchase recording equipment for the filming of Council Meetings;
4. Members agree how they want to proceed in relation to the Mural Art Project.

Subject: Consultation – Annual Budget (2027/28) and Medium-Term Financial Plan (2027/28-2030/31)

Report of: Acting Town Clerk

Meeting: Council

Date: 14th October 2026

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider and respond to a consultation being conducted by Durham County Council, with residents, businesses, partner organisations and community organisations, regarding Budget Proposals for 2027/28 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2027/28 – 2030/31.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Durham County Council faces a **forecast budget shortfall of £83.662 million** over the four years from 2027/28 to 2030/31, driven by rising costs and demand across services such as social care, transport, waste management, environmental services, digital provision and cyber security.
- 2.2 The council has already achieved around **£301 million in savings and efficiencies over 16 years** and now needs to make further difficult decisions in order to balance its budgets.

3.0 SAVINGS PROPOSALS

The Medium-Term Financial Plan for the next 4 years combines:

- 3.1 **£2.555 million of savings, previously agreed** in February 2026, which are due to be delivered across 2027/28 and 2028/29
- 3.2 **£21.519 million of new savings proposals:**
- 3.2.1 £9.171 million of these proposed savings could be delivered from 2027/28. These new savings over the next 4 years fall into three broad areas:
- £6.716 million from back-office and operational efficiencies — including staffing and management reviews; catering service reviews; fewer corporate buildings; reduced consultancy and contingency spending; and changes to how services are funded.
 - £1.170 million from additional income and third-party contributions — including a review of the Registrars Service, planning services and procurement services fees, Aycliffe Secure Services, and the introduction of a park and walk offer at park and ride sites.

- £1.285 million from changes to frontline services — including revised customer contact arrangements; greater use of contractors for winter maintenance; possible changes to grounds maintenance services and grass cutting frequency; public toilet provision and a review of funding of food and other local festivals.

3.2.2 A further £12.348 million in longer-term transformation savings is being proposed through the Changing Together programme. Possible measures include redesigning legal, data and insight services; reviewing the number of recycling centres; library and leisure service provisions; allotment management; reviewing Local Network arrangements; examining discretionary environmental services and reviewing corporate cleaning and health and safety services.

These proposals require further development over the next 12 to 18 months and would be subject to separate consultation before decisions are made.

3.3 Even if all proposed savings are delivered, a **£62.143 million shortfall** remains across the next 4 years, of which £16.616 million is likely to fall in 2027/28 and £16.471 million in 2028/29. The council must therefore consider council tax increases, further savings or service reductions.

4.0 COUNCIL TAX INCREASES

4.1 The Government's financial planning assumptions expect councils to make use of Council Tax increases to help fund local services, which means considering increases up to 4.99% each year.

4.2 Council Tax increases to reduce the council's deficit are summarised as follows over the 4 year period:

Council Tax Increase per annum	Total budget deficit over 4 years	C.Tax bill increase in 27/28 – Band D	C. Tax bill increase in 27/28 – Band A
0%	£62.143 million	£0.00	£0.00
1%	£49.171 million	£20.71	£13.81
2%	£36.199 million	£41.42	£27.61
CPI linked	£26.549 million	£72.49	£48.33
3%	£23.177 million	£62.15	£41.43
4%	£10.188 million	£82.84	£55.23
4.99%	Budget balanced	£103.35	£68.90

4.3 The full Cabinet Report dated 16th September 2026 provides full details on the proposals. [Cabinet Report on MTFP - 16th September 2026](#)

4.4 Full details of this consultation are available at [Let's Talk County Durham](#)

5.0 FERRYHILL TOWN COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

5.1 As part of the consultation, DCC are particularly interested in understanding

- Any impacts the proposals may have on the Town Council, service users or

communities.

- Opportunities for joint working that could help mitigate impacts.
- Alternative approaches that could help address the financial challenge.
- Any equality or community impacts the town council believes should be considered

5.2 The survey questions to this consultation are attached as Appendix 1.

5.3 The consultation has been posted on the Town Council's website and Facebook page with a link to DCC's consultation page.

6.0 HOW TO TAKE PART

6.1 Residents, businesses, partner organisations and community organisations are being encouraged to give their views by:

- Completing an online survey – at [Let's Talk County Durham](#) or
- Completing a paper survey available from any County Durham library.
- Attending an online consultation event, to hear more about the proposals and ask questions. Register for this event at the bottom of this page: [Let's Talk County Durham](#)

Event Dates: 21 October at 6pm
 05 November at 11am
 12 November at 6pm

- Emailing letstalkcountydurham@durham.gov.uk if any further information is required or if the information is required in a different format.

6.2 The consultation runs until **Sunday 15th November 2026 at 11:59pm**

6.3 Consultation feedback will inform a Cabinet report in **January 2027**, with final budget decisions expected from Cabinet and Full Council in **February 2027**.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

That consideration be given to a response to the consultation survey and that it be agreed on how best to feed this information back, agreeing that this be done on an individual or collective basis.