

SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2025

Minutes of the Special meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe on Wednesday 19th November 2025 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Carl Robinson (Chairman),

Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jaci Beddard, Tony Beddard, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Neil Collinson, Luke Ellis, Jordan Gill, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Sandra Kirby, Jackie McFadden Lewis, John Moore, Ken Robson, Brian Sowerby, Michael Stead, Tracey Williams, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICIALS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)

Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

No members of the public were in attendance.

68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Tunde Akinsanya, Lisa Conners, George Gray, Richard Hutchinson and Kyle Robinson.

69. MEMBERS DISPENSATIONS

No dispensation requests had been received.

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Martin Ashcroft declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding the bowls item; it was agreed that he could speak on the matter but not vote.

71. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

72. COUNCIL FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2026/27

The Chairman requested members permission for the Finance Manager to issue a briefing note regarding the recent news regarding the full withdrawal of the Local Council Tax Reduction Support (LCTRS) Grant by Durham County Council and the impact this will have on the 2026/27 Revenue Budget, this was agreed.

Members were asked to consider the information provided in the briefing note and give initial guidance on their preferred options. It was agreed that the note will be added to the Policy and Resources agenda for 3rd December for discussion.

Councillor Arun Chandran advised that he has submitted a motion to the next meeting of the Full Council on 10th December for members to discuss this recent information.

Following the briefing note, members considered a report from the Finance Manager, outlining the recommended changes to the fees and charges for each of the Council's services for 2026/27.

Cemeteries

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston that cemeteries charges be increased by 10%.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- a) cemeteries fees for 2026/27, are increased to 10%,
- b) the installation fee for memorial benches of £168.00, plus the cost of the bench and any memorial plaque from supplier be formally adopted,
- c) The installation fee for memorial trees of £127.00, plus the cost of the tree and any memorial plaque from the supplier be formally adopted.

Football Pitch Hire Charges

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Luke Ellis that football pitch charges be increased by 4%. This was agreed.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- d)(i) The football pitch costs be increased to the following amounts:

School Aycliffe	£910.00
Moore Lane Park	£910.00
Simpasture Park	£640.00

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson that the Junior Teams football pitch charges be increased by 4%. This was agreed.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- d)(ii) Junior Teams Football Pitch costs to be increased by 4% be agreed;
- e) the casual hire rate increase to £52 be agreed.

St Oswald's Pre-School

Councillor Tony Beddard queried the late fees and asked if this would be subject to the appeals process if requested.

Councillor Arun Chandran proposed that the late fee charge be left to staff discretion and any decisions made are reported to the Pre School Sub Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft.

Following a discussion, Councillor Lindsey Aston further proposed that this item be brought to a Pre-School Sub Committee meeting which was seconded by Councillor Tony Beddard. Councillor Chandran then withdrew his proposal.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- f) The proposed 40p increase in pre-school charges for 2026/27 be agreed;
- g) The proposal of a £10 late fee for every 15 minutes, or part of, that a parent/guardian is late collecting their child after the end of their agreed session be submitted to the next meeting of the Pre-School Sub Committee.

Allotments Rents

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and,

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- h) The proposed 7.5% increase in allotments rent charging bands for 2027; be agreed
- i) The proposed 7.5% increase in pigeon site rents for 2026/27; be agreed
- j) The proposed 7.5% increase in poultry site rents for 2027; be agreed
- k) The proposed 7.5% increase in beekeeping plots for 2027; be agreed
- l) The proposed 7.5% increase in raised plots for 2027; be agreed
- m) The rent payable by the Great Aycliffe Garden Guild is increased by 7.5% in 2027/28, in line with the rent band for a large allotment at Clarence Chare Allotments, be agreed

Sports Complex

- n) The proposed increase in the annual membership fee from £28.00 to £29.50 for adults and from £20.50 to £21.50 for senior citizens for 2026/27, be agreed
- o) The proposed freeze in the annual membership for juniors at £10.00 for 2026/27, be agreed
- p) The removal of group membership in 2026/27, be agreed
- q) The introduction of a 50% discount to employees of the appropriate annual membership rate was discussed.

Councillor Arun Chandran proposed that this be agreed subject to conducting further research into this.

Councillor Lindsey Aston proposed that it should be free membership and the cost of the activity be discounted and be only one staff member at one time, this was seconded by Councillor Luke Ellis.

Councillor Chandran withdrew his proposal.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- i) Free membership be given to employees and the cost of the activity be discounted, subject to one staff member booking at one time.
- r) The proposed increase in indoor bowls fees be agreed as follows:

- **Members** - Adult and Senior Citizens from £3.70 to £3.90 for 2026/27;
- **Non-Members** - Adult and Senior Citizens from £4.90 to £5.10 for 2026/27;
- **Junior Members** – From £2.30 to £2.50 for 2026/27;
- **Junior Non-Members** – From £3.30 to £3.50 for 2026/27;

s) The proposed changes to sporting activities prices be agreed as follows:

Members:

Activity	Category	Member 2026/27 Rate
Badminton	Adult /Senior	£7.20
	Junior (reduction)	£3.70
Squash	Adult /Senior	£7.20
	Junior (reduction)	£3.70
Table Tennis	Adult /Senior	£7.20
	Junior (reduction)	£3.70
Pickleball	Adult /Senior	£7.20
	Junior	£3.70
Dartboard	All	£1.00
Five a Side Football	Adult /Senior	£43.00
	Junior	£27.00

Non-Members:

Activity	Category	Non-Member 2026/27 Rate
Badminton	Adult /Senior	£9.00
	Junior (freeze)	£4.70
Squash	Adult /Senior	£9.00
	Junior (freeze)	£4.70
Table Tennis	Adult /Senior	£9.00
	Junior (freeze)	£4.70
Pickleball	Adult /Senior	£9.00
	Junior	£4.70
Dartboard	All	£2.00
Five a Side Football	Adult /Senior	£52.00
	Junior	£33.00

- t) The proposed removal of the deposit for hire of equipment and facilities, and the freeze in hire charges from of £1.50 per hour be agreed.
- u) The proposed increase in bowls locker hire from £7.75 to £8.25 per annum be agreed.
- v) The proposed freeze in the shower fee at £1.50 per use be agreed.
- w) The proposed freeze of fees for hire of the entertainment system be agreed:
- x) The proposed increases in the hourly function room hire be agreed as below:
- Members Function Room hire from £10.50 to £11.50 per hour
 - Non-Members Function Room hire from £13.50 to £14.00 per hour

Councillor Martin Ashcroft took the Chair at this point.

Golf Complex

- y) Members discussed the option for the increase to golf membership prices for Adults, Over 60s and ages 19 to 30:

Membership Category	Option 1	Option 2
7 Day Adult	£514.00	£544.00
5 Day Adult	£467.00	£499.00
7 Day Over 60	£467.00	£499.00
5 Day Over 60	£415.00	£449.00
19 – 30	£182.00	£225.00

It was proposed by Councillor Ken Robson, and seconded by Councillor Neil Collinson, and agreed;

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- i) the increase be £50.00 on Option 2 across all groups.
- z) Members discussed the option for the increase to golf membership prices for the Junior ages 15 to 18 and Under 14 categories.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston, that the increase be £4.00 on top of the amount noted in Option 1.

It was further proposed by Councillor Neil Collinson, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson, that the increase be as per Option 2.

A vote then took place on the amendment with the following result:

For: 5
Against: 16

The amendment failed.

A vote then took place on the original proposal of an increase of £4.00 on top of the amount noted in Option 1 and was agreed by a majority decision.

The Town Clerk clarified that the 2026/27 Junior ages 15 to 18 and Under 14 categories be increased to £65 and £30 respectively.

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that

- i) the 2026/27 Junior 15 to 18 and Under 14 categories be increased to £65 and £30 respectively
- aa) Members discussed membership considerations including the suggested increase to the age of the over 60 category and the restriction of new member recruitment. It was agreed that no changes take place.
- ab) The introduction of a 50% discount to employees of the appropriate annual membership rate was discussed.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that;

- i) the introduction of a 50% discount to employees of the appropriate annual membership rate be agreed and that this be for permanent staff only and to be trialled over a 12-month period.
- ac) The proposed freeze of the replacement membership card charge be agreed.
- ad) The proposed continuation of 14 month for the price of 12 months membership from 1st February 2026 for new members; be agreed.
- ae) Option 2 be the preferred option for the increase to green fees:

	2026/27 Option 2 – 8% to 12% increase
Weekday	£23.00
Weekend/Bank Holiday	£28.00
Winter *	£13.50

- af) Option 2 be the preferred option for the increase in the County Card rate:

	2026/27
Option 2	£17.00

Councillor Carl Robinson returned as Chair at this point.

- ag) The increase to green fees for visiting parties 2026/27 be Option 2; be agreed:

	2026/27
Option 2	£19.00

- ah) The proposed removal of visiting party food deposit from the golf complex fees and charges be agreed.
- ai) The Golf Administrator, in consultation with the Town Clerk and Finance Manager, continues to be authorised to offer special promotions during the year in response to customer demand and usage, and to react to pricing changes by competitors e.g. by reducing rates at quiet times of the day, week year, etc be agreed subject to a report to members following any personnel issues. The Town Clerk reminded members that the Golf Update report to the Recreation Committee will update on quiet times and reactive changes.
- aj) The proposed increase in buggy hire charges for members to £16.50 and non-members to £25.00 be agreed.
- ak) The following increases for the driving range baskets be agreed:

	2026/27
Small Basket	£4.50
Large Basket	£8.25

- al) The proposed removal of the driving range card price offer of 10 for the price of 8 baskets be agreed.

- am) The proposed introduction of the driving range card offer of 5 for the price of 4 baskets at a price of £33.00 be agreed.
- an) The proposed 25p increase in golf trolley hire to £5.00 be agreed.
- ao) The proposed freeze in the custom fit charge of £20 be agreed.

Caravan and Camping Site

- ap) The following increases for the use of the caravan site for 2026/27 be agreed:
 - £0.50 increase for casual use per night to £16.00.
 - The removal of the charge for rallies per night (up to 10 vans)

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that:

- i) The report and recommendations be received.

Chairman