

## **CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at 17:30 in Room 1, Alington House, 4 North Bailey, Durham, DH1 3ET**

Present:

Councillors V Ashfield (Chair), E Ashby, S Cahill, J Elmer, M Ross, J Atkinson and R Ormerod.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Dave Wafer, Strategic Traffic Manager at DCC.

#### **1. WELCOME AND RECEIPT FOR APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed all attendees.

No apologies were received from Members

#### **2. PRESENTATION FROM DAVE WAFER, STRATEGIC TRAFFIC MANAGER AT DCC**

The Chair welcomed Mr Wafer and thanked him for attending the Environment Committee meeting. Mr Wafer began his presentation by illustrating the information relating to Air Quality in Durham on the Durham County Council website. Mr Wafer advised that a key priority for the County Council is to improve the Air Quality of the County and indeed new legislation from Central Government had been introduced recently to task local authorities to do this. Mr Wafer advised that the website illustrates areas of good air quality in green and areas of some concern in red. The areas which were measured were built up areas where people lived and worked.

Mr Wafer advised that though there were more vehicles on the roads, the data showed that air quality was improving as cars became more energy efficient.

A question was raised about the County's strategy on electronic vehicles and Mr Wafer advised that there were no quotas in place as to how many EV charging parking spaces the County Council had to have in place. He did advise that technology had moved so rapidly in this area that the EV charging points put in place a few years ago were already outdated.

Cllr V Ashfield asked what the situation was like for Market Place and Millennium Place as far as electric charging was concerned. Mr Wafer advised that Market Place already had electronic charging points. The issue was then raised that in market place the local ice cream van man and the health bus both operate from a diesel-run vehicle which wasn't required with the charging point available. Cllr V Ashfield advised that those using a diesel-run vehicle or generator should be encouraged or incentivised to use the electronic charging point.

Cllr J Elmer asked whether or not there was data on how effective the scheme SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique) has been for Durham. Mr Wafer advised that he would seek the data from his colleagues and, if available, he would circulate this to Councillors via the Clerk.

Mr Wafer advised that his team took an Area-based approach to improve walking and cycling capacity for Durham residents, with the aim of taking vehicular traffic out of the City Centre wherever possible.

Mr Wafer provided the Committee with a list of ongoing works which his team were currently working on. These included things such as recent Traffic Management Changes, such as changes to the Leazes Bowl roundabout, the Gilesgate roundabout, the installation of Pelwa Woods Cycle path, the refurbishment of Neville's Cross signals, Station Cycle Links, improvements to New Elvet bus stops, NCN14 Riverbanks, pedestrian improvements, work on Elvet Bridge, an upgrade to pay and display, introducing more hostile vehicle measures and the first stage of installing variable Carpark signs.

Mr Wafer also advised that his team were also working on some current and immediate proposals such as: improvements to the station underpass, which will take place next month, alterations to Dragonville link road, NCN improvements, the introduction of an additional park and ride site; supported by an ERDF funding application, the installation of New Inn traffic lights and footpath improvements to the City, improvements to the bus station and adding more relief roads to Durham.

Mr Wafer also advised that bollards had been installed in the City Centre for events as part of the Government's Counter-Terrorism strategy when big events such as Remembrance Day and Durham Lumiere were taking place. Cllr E Ashby asked whether or not Central Government funded this. Mr Wafer advised that the County Council had to pay for this.

The following questions (as submitted by residents) and answers followed Mr Wafer's presentation:

- **Given that the 'Domesticating the A167' project is based on local residents' unhappiness with the current speed limits and general traffic situation in the Neville's Cross area, hence the Working Party to address this issue: Could Dave W talk to us about the most helpful way for the WP to engage with (which?) County Council officers about the elements of the project - e.g. any legislative constraints on signage, location and types of crossing facilities, road markings, the expense of flashing speed signs etc. Is there one team we should liaise with and if not, what is the most efficient way of progressing the project in conjunction with the various teams in Highways? Would the County Council have problems with the entire project?**

Mr Wafer advised that the best person to speak to about this would be an Officer at DCC called Danny Harland.

The Committee expressed that they felt that more traffic calming measures should be in place and questioned why the speed limit had not been reduced to 30mph.

Mr Wafer advised that he felt the domesticating of the A167 was a worthwhile project.

- **There are rumours that the County Council already has plans for changing the pattern of lanes around Neville's Cross traffic lights and on over the railway bridge. Is this true?**

Mr Wafer advised that DCC had explored the potential benefits of carrying out such action had decided against doing this so no plans to do this now.

- **Are there any plans to address traffic issues around NX by the development of another Park and Ride facility on the A690, around the Stonebridge area? Also, for this and or other P&R sites is there any possibility of adjusting their hours of operation to service those who work later, e.g. on shift work, in the City?**

Mr Wafer advised that there were works to do this and these were ongoing. He would update the Committee through the Clerk as and where there were any updates.

- **Is it correct that one of the NX over bridges is due to be removed? Is there any potential for investigating more short stay parking in the area of the footbridge that has the Battle of Neville's Cross information boards? The PC hopes to bring forward a project to increase public awareness of this nationally important heritage site.**

Mr Wafer confirmed that there were no plans to remove this. There are no plans to increase car parking nearby.

- **Are there Highways reasons why the art work on the railway bridge at NX remains unfinished? Might it be possible to make traffic arrangements e.g. on a Sunday, to enable a community project to complete the bridge artwork?**

Mr Wafer was open to the idea of some painting happening there and was happy for the Parish Council to look into doing this but DCC would need to be informed. Mr Wafer advised that the utility to the bridge was damaged and DCC are looking to repair this next month.

- **Residents on Gilesgate Bank frequently complain about heavy traffic on the hill, causing air pollution, sound problems and movement to the houses. What can be done to minimise HGVs on this road and encourage them to use the A690?**

Cllr V Ashfield advised that she frequently receives complaints about this matter. Mr Wafer advised that there were repair works carried out on the road recently. Cllr V Ashfield requested that a "not

advisable..” sign be erected in the area to deter large vehicles. Mr Wafer advised that such a sign already existed in this location and he would look to have an inspector check this out in the area.

Cllr M Ross asked whether a letter could be sent out to local businesses to advise them to avoid driving large HGVs in the area. Mr Wafer advised that he would firstly look to have an inspector come and look at the area and ascertain if there were significant problems with this.

- **What is the situation with the plans for Church Street?**

Mr Wafer advised that DCC were looking to carry out some modelling to improve the lights for pedestrians, but the designs were still in draft form.

Mr Wafer advised that one resolution to the issues for pedestrians may be to put a footpath through the Cemetery. Cllr V Ashfield advised that she felt the Vicar would be receptive to this idea and this may be a solution.

Cllr J Elmer asked if the University had contributed financially to this. Mr Wafer advised that they are doing.

Cllr E Ashby asked that an A5 pamphlet be created and sent to any students from abroad who are perhaps not used to the British transport system to ensure safety on roads. Mr Wafer advised that he felt that this should come from the University not from DCC.

Mr Wafer reminded everyone that there is an ongoing consultation on the Durham Local Plan. The next event taking place in our Parish would be Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February in the Town Hall.

Mr Wafer finished his presentation and the Chair thanked Mr Wafer for attending the meeting.

### **3. DECLERATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr R Ormerod declared an interest in all matters relation to discussion about the A167 due to him living in close proximity to the road.

### **4. MINUTES OF THE LAST TWO MEETING**

The Minutes of the previous meetings held on the 29th November 2018 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

The Minutes of the previous meetings held on the 13th December 2018 were accepted as a true and accurate record, subject to the word “reluctantly” being added to Item 7 relating to VA and EA agreeing to take the snow clearance forward as part of a working group.

### **5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public were present and therefore there were no participations from the public.

### **6. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES**

- (i) Clean & Green – Cllr V Ashfield asked for an update on the business frontages project. Cllr J Atkinson reported that she would like a steer on what to do with this. Cllr J Elmer offered to work with Cllr J Atkinson on this project. Cllr J Elmer felt that there was an officer at DCC who may be able to assist with this.

Traffic / Air condition – The Chair felt that this was covered in Mr Wafer’s presentation.

Snow clearance Grass cutting – The Chair advised that this ought to be left to the working group to discuss and to report back to Committee/ Full Council

- (i) Young people – Cllr V Ashfield and Cllr M Ross agreed to organise dates for meetings which could be held at local schools.

Cllr V Ashfield also asked about what was happening in respect of the skatepark. Cllr J Elmer advised that this had come by way of a young residents’ request to Cllr L Brown to

see if the Council could take a lead on getting a skatepark constructed. Cllr S Cahill offered to liaise with Cllr L Brown on this.

- (ii) A167 – Cllr E Ashby advised that a working group had yet to be setting up to look into this.
- (iii) Heritage signing – At present, nothing much happening with this with other priorities taking up a lot of time.

#### **7. UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE BUDGET FOLLOWING FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF 11TH JANUARY 2019.**

Cllr V Ashfield and the Clerk provided a verbal update on the meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> January where the indicative spend for 2019/20 was agreed by the Finance Committee.

Cllr V Ashfield advised that the budget for schools meetings had been moved to the Full Council budget, where the amount was already included. Cllr V Ashfield also advised that the £5,000 allocated to the University Theatre project had been removed and £2,000 had been added to priority 2B (item 4) - SU assistance on snow clearance and £3,500 to the A167 project

The Clerk reported that the budget for a potential event for Armed Forces Day had been moved to the Full Council budget.

The Clerk reminded Members that there is still £10,000 of this financial year's budget towards projects relating to identified priorities for the Environment Committee.

- At this point, Cllr J Atkinson left the meeting.

#### **8. POCKET PARKS PLUS: SUPPORTING PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES**

Councillors were originally going to consider whether or not to make an application for such a park. However, it was agreed that with the application deadline being 25th January, that timescales were too tight to get this done. The Chair advised that she would like this to be considered next year if the scheme were still available.

#### **9. AOB**

No other business raised from Members.

#### **10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS.**

The Chair advised that the next meetings of the Environment Committee would take place on the 12th February 2019 – 17:30 to 19:30 hrs and the 5th March 2019 - 17:30 to 19:30 hrs

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Signed

Chair City of Durham Parish Council Environment Committee