

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on 5th March 2019 at 17:30 in Room 2, Alington house, 4 North Bailey, Durham, DH1 3ET.

Present:

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

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley

1. WELCOME AND RECEIPT FOR APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed all attendees. Apologies were received from Cllrs J Atkinson and R Ormerod

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Cllr S Cahill declared an interest in Item 5 on the Agenda, owing to his employment at Durham Students Union.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12TH FEBRUARY 2019.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th February 2019 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

As a matter arising from the Minutes, Cllr J Elmer raised the point that the County Council had not intended to compensate St Leonard's school for the loss of the playing fields. Cllr V Ashfield advised that under the proposed re-development of Aykley Heads, the adjacent field currently used by the school was not being altered and the other fields are used by the school on a grace and favour basis with the landowner and therefore there is no obligation to compensate for the loss of this.

Cllr E Ashby advised that plans for Sniperley development did have provision for greenspace and perhaps this was something the school may wish to look into for future use.

Cllr E Ashby requested that the Clerk also paginate the Minutes going forward for ease of reference. The Clerk confirmed he was happy to do this.

Cllr E Ashby also raised the matter of the green accreditation for the Parish Council as discussed under the Full Council's adoption of its Environmental and Sustainability policy. Cllr Ashby advised that she was aware of an organisation which does promote green tourism and she felt it would be a good idea if the Parish Council could perhaps seek some accreditation from this organisation.

Cllr J Elmer also made the point that he was aware of a trade-based accreditation for Fair Trade and advised that he felt it was a shame that Durham had lost its Fair Trade City accreditation and he felt that the Parish Council ought to look to get this reinstated. Cllr E Ashby asked that this also be done in consultation with the Durham BID team. This was agreed.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

No representations received from members of the public.

5. MEETING WITH UNIVERSITY RE: SNOW CLEARANCE VOLUNTARY PROJECT

Cllr E Ashby updated the Committee following a meeting she had had with Charlie Walker, the Opportunities Officer at the Durham Students Union on 14th February.

Cllr E Ashby advised that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of a joint student volunteer / Parish Council project to support members of local communities in need of assistance for example when it snows.

Cllr E Ashby explained that the idea of the project had come from receiving feedback from two parishioners who have problems whenever it snows and are left isolated in their homes as a result. Cllr Ashby explained that the aims of the project were to build neighbourhood cohesion, to combat social isolation, to provide support for those needing assistance in path clearance as an example and also to offer opportunities for students' personal development.

Cllr E Ashby advised that the Student Union did have insurance for the work to be carried out by their students and they would have a central services manager who would co-ordinate the work. Cllr E Ashby advised that what they were currently looking into is whether the Student Union's Public Liability Insurance also covered if a member of the public slipped and hurt themselves once the students had cleared the paths etc.

Cllr S Cahill advised that he felt there were a large number of students wanting to do good work for the community and Cllr E Ashby advised that the meeting with Charlie had been an extremely positive and productive one.

Cllr J Elmer asked how the University intended on identifying those residents who were particularly vulnerable at times when it is snowing. Cllr E Ashby responded saying that the residents' groups ought to be contacted to give a steer to DSU organiser on this in line with data protection legislation.

The Clerk advised that in a meeting with DCC's Clean and Green team, the Officers had advised Members that priority 2 and priority 3 areas needed to be cleared and gritted in times of bad weather – those being bus shelters and bus stops as well as bungalows and residential areas with steep access points. These might be the basis for planning the project.

The Clerk summarised the project by stating that the Parish Council would provide the SU with the equipment to carry out these works, the SU Central Services Manager would co-ordinate the work and a group of volunteer students would carry out the work.

Cllr E Ashby said that she wasn't sure about the matter of 'gifting' the equipment to the SU. Cllr S Cahill advised that this ought to be gifted for insurance purposes.

Cllr V Ashfield asked if a follow-up meeting could be arranged with Charlie to discuss further. Cllr E Ashby advised that she would arrange this in conjunction with the Clerk.

6. MEETING WITH DCC CLEAN AND GREEN TEAM

The Clerk reported that he, Cllr J Elmer and Cllr E Ashby had had a meeting with Jimmy Bennett and Andrew Jackson from the Clean and Green team at Durham County Council and felt that this had been extremely productive.

The Clerk advised that the purpose of the meeting was to identify what tasks the Parish Council could carry out to add value to the service already provided by the County Council Clean and Green team. During the course of the meeting, the Clerk advised that the following tasks had been identified and the Committee considered these one by one: (Items in bold were agreed)

- Provision of bike racks/ flower tubs in Fowler's Yard (back of Market Hall) – the Committee decided to investigate this further as there was some question over the ownership of the land.
- **Employing (contracted) an Environmental Enforcement Officer who could issue fines to individuals and businesses and has statutory powers to make businesses clear litter – the Committee agreed to take this forward as a proposal for 2 half days (8 hours) per month and discuss the SLA with the County Officer in charge of this. There was a feeling that the cost provided for 9 hours per week was too expensive for the Parish Council at present.**
- Grass cutting of Gilesgate Bank – the Committee decided not to proceed with this **due to the high cost of compliance with the health and safety aspect of carrying this out.**
- **Grass cutting of area opposite Walkergate – the Committee agreed to take this forward as a proposal.**
- **The riverbanks from The Racecourse upstream to The Sands. Popular with locals and visitors, especially the peninsula. The immediate surrounds are not cut, invasive weed**

becomes established and debris accumulated in the river to the sides – the Committee decided to look into this further. Cllr J Elmer advised that he felt that no cutting back should take place and the Council should instead be looking at natural planting.

- Crossgate Peth - the tree area on one side and the overgrown area opposite, needs attention – the Committee decided not to take this forward until questions over land ownership were clarified.
- **Snow clearance and gritting of Priority 2 areas and Priority 3 areas – the Committee was already looking to progress this through the snow clearing project with the Students Union.**
- **Need to clean North Road and Claypath every two weeks. The Committee agreed to take this forward as a proposal. Also investigate shared cost of phased surface treatment of North Road and Claypath to assist ongoing gum removal.**
- **Need to tidy up land at Highgate (owned by DCC) and potentially turn into sensory garden/park - the Committee agreed to take this forward as a proposal.**
- **Member of City Scene staff for 15 hours per month – litter picking on road sides and washing street signs - the Committee agreed to take this forward as a proposal and Cllr E Ashby emphasised that this should also include street signs as well as highways signs.**
- **Finance flower towers for Durham in Bloom, street weed control and sustainable planting down Walkergate – Cllr E Ashby expressed a preference for the provision of temporary floral panels in Millennium place and advised that the decision on whether to become a partner with Durham in Bloom ought to go to Full Council.**
- **Provision of temporary screening for empty shops – the Committee agreed to take this forward as a proposal and Cllr E Ashby offered to set up a meeting between the Clerk and Durham BID representatives.**

7. CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESOLUTION.

Cllr J Elmer presented a report on the climate emergency resolution which he'd like the Full Council to adopt. The proposal being that the Council commits to becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030, creating a carbon audit and roadmap for achieving this aim by the end of 2019.

Cllr V Ashfield advised that she felt that the section relating to “our place in reducing CO2 emissions” in the report covered what was needed for an organisation like the Parish Council, in addition to the proposal to become carbon neutral, for environmental implications to be included in all officer reports and the proposal to seek ways to facilitate and encourage the community in reducing direct and indirect CO2 emissions and to become resilient to changes caused by the changing climate.

Cllr J Elmer emphasized he would like Environmental considerations to be part of all Council reports going forward. The Clerk advised that he would be happy to do this and the Committee felt that a set statement ought to be agreed where the impact of Council activities on the Environment was seen to be negligible.

The Committee also agreed to amend the proposal so that the carbon audit and the roadmap for achieving the aims of the resolution be extended to the end of 2020 rather than 2019.

Cllr V Ashfield agreed to put a report together on this to go to Full Council.

8. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

(i) Involving young people

Cllr M Ross provided an update to the Committee to state that she had a meeting with the sixth form college about the work of the Parish Council who saw links between their politics and law classes with the work of the Parish Council. Likewise, Cllr M Ross advised that Durham Johnston school had also identified the links between these subject areas and the work of the Parish Council and Cllr M Ross found the Headteacher of the school to be extremely enthusiastic about involving the Parish Council.

Cllr M Ross advised that she and Cllr V Ashfield had also met with the School Council (ages 11-17) of St Leonard's school who had come up with some really great ideas.

Cllr V Ashfield advised that School Council had surveyed school pupils and the feedback on the idea of a skatepark at Whorton park was that they would not like this and felt that this would bring anti-social behaviour to that area, which is a multi-use park.

Cllr M Ross also advised that transport had been a really big issue with pupils advising that they found bus transport very expensive.

Cllr V Ashfield reminded the Committee that the next Full Parish Council meeting would be taking place at St Leonard's school and it is hoped that pupils would get involved with this work.

ii) Business frontages

Cllr E Ashby presented a report to the Committee in Cllr J Atkinson's absence. Cllr E Ashby advised that she had recently met with Cllr J Atkinson to begin to draw together a proposal for a possible City Frontage Improvement award. Cllr E Ashby advised that this would run during the summer months with the aim of promoting the city centre as a welcoming and attractive place to live and visit.

Cllr E Ashby advised that the aims for the project were to identify and reward city centre premises between the Viaduct and Gilesgate including the Peninsula and Elvet that can evidence either improvement in the cleanliness and healthiness of their frontage, an addition to the cultural offer of their frontage and/or an improvement in the environmental attractiveness of their frontage.

Councillors deliberated over the criteria each shop frontage could be judged by and it was agreed that this ought to be for commercial premises only and should all be about the cleanliness and the welcoming feel of the shop frontage.

Cllr E Ashby also felt that there ought to be an international aspect for these awards too.

The Clerk advised that some large chains may not be eligible for this as he was aware that some national chains had strict guidelines on what they could do with their shop frontages.

Cllr M Ross advised that she felt that something ought to be done to promote Easter given Durham's historical links.

The Committee agreed that the award should not just be for appearance of short duration but for all year round.

Cllr E Ashby offered to take this work forward with Cllr Atkinson and the Clerk also expressed a desire to discuss this at the potential future meeting with the Durham BID team.

iii) A167

Cllr E Ashby advised that there were no further updates on this matter.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

The Chair advised that the next meeting of the Environment Committee would take place on the 19th March 2019 - 17:30 to 19:30 hrs and the following meeting on 16th April (same time and place).

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.