

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on 29th October 2020 at 17:30pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors V Ashfield (in the Chair), E Ashby, L Brown, S Cahill, J Elmer and M Ross.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr D Freeman.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 29th SEPTEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th September were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

5a. To update and note:

i) Bulb planting project

The Chair advised that over 7,000 bulbs had now been planted as part of this project by the Parish Council. Thanks to local Residents' Associations, these had now been planted across the parish area. The Chair also reported that local schools and volunteer students had assisted with the scheme down at the Sands. The Chair advised that the Parish Council can now look forward to these bulbs growing for Spring.

ii) Installation of Mosaic art at Riverwalk

The Clerk advised that he and Cllr E Ashby had met with the Manager of Riverwalk to discuss locations for the proposed mosaic art installation. At this meeting, two possible locations had been identified. The Clerk presented these options to the Committee. The Committee agreed to await feedback from the landlord of the Riverwalk Centre on his own preference for the location of the mosaic of the two options presented. The Clerk advised that he was awaiting feedback from the County Council's Planning department as to whether either option would require planning permission to install or whether this could come under permitted development.

iii) Noise abatement posters

The Clerk advised that he had now received acceptance of all stakeholders for the use of their logo as part of the final design for the noise abatement posters. The Clerk advised that he was awaiting feedback from the World Heritage Site Co-ordinator on the use of the Cathedral as an image in this poster to represent that the messaging related to Durham City. The Committee thanked Cllr E Ashby and the Clerk for their work on this and agreed to withhold putting this out until Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, with the aim that this did not detract from the public health messaging happening at present in relation to Covid-19. The Committee also asked the Clerk to investigate whether these posters could be displayed in A Boards at the Riverwalk Centre.

iv) Durham in Bloom: North Road; Wear Rivers Trust, etc

The Clerk reminded Members that £3,000 of the funding from Durham in Bloom had now been agreed by Full Council; this included the bulb planting project (approx. £1,000), a project to design out ASB at North Road roundabout with planters (£500) and a project to support the removal of invasive species from the River Wear (£1,500). The remaining funding was provisionally agreed to go towards a proposal from DCC's Clean and Green team on planting up the Parish. The Clerk advised that he was still awaiting definitive costs on specific proposals for this.

v) Report on St. Nicolas Churchyard

The Chair reminded Members that the issue of St Nicolas's churchyard on Providence Row has been discussed at previous meetings of the Environment Committee. This area has been the subject of a significant amount of anti-social behaviour and fly tipping and is currently in a poor, overgrown state.

The Chair advised that, at present, the former chapel on the site is undergoing renovation and it is expected that this work will be completed in the coming months.

The Chair reminded Members that two separate site meetings have taken place with representatives of the churches and the Parish Council and ongoing correspondence with the Church of England and the Orthodox churches and the architect. The first meeting also included representatives from Durham County Council and the second meeting included representatives from Kier and Durham Police.

The Chair reminded Members that, at the last meeting of the Parish Council's Environment Committee, it was reported that the churchyard is currently up for sale. The Chair confirmed this is not the case. There is a draft Pastoral Scheme which, when made, will transfer the ownership of the Chapel and an area of land approximately 2 metres in width around the Chapel to the Durham Diocesan Board of Finance, which in turn will then transfer the ownership to the Orthodox Church of St. Cuthbert and St. Bede, Durham.

The Chair advised that St Nicholas PCC now has the responsibility for the maintenance of the Churchyard. Previously the maintenance was carried out by Durham County Council, but as the churchyard is not yet a closed one, the

Council is not responsible for the maintenance. Previously, the County Council believed that it was their responsibility to maintain the site on the understanding that this was a closed churchyard. The PCC will be applying to the Ministry of Justice for an order closing the churchyard, but this will not be until after the Pastoral Scheme has been made and has come into operation.

The Chair advised that the church is required by its insurance company to have a tree surgeon inspect the trees and to carry out any necessary work to make the trees safe. St Nicholas PCC is also required to carry out a topple test on all the gravestones in the churchyard. The overgrown vegetation needs cutting back, but before that can be done, the church needs to make sure that the trees and the headstones are safe.

In order to facilitate this work, the church submitted a bid to Kier for its community project. However, this bid was unfortunately unsuccessful.

The Chair advised that the Parish Council has been asked if it may be able to support this work in some way: the Environment Committee has offered some support in the past at a modest level, and has suggested liaising with the residents' group to offer support in kind, but the extent of the work required, without the help of DCC, is huge.

It was **agreed** that the Parish Clerk should write to DCC to request that the brushwood left over by the probation service be cleared as soon as possible as this is attracting further fly tipping.

Cllr L Brown proposed that, if this was unsuccessful, the Parish Council may wish to hire a skip and recruit volunteers to help clear the site. There were concerns about health and safety with this proposal however as the site is known to have sharps discarded within it.

It was also **agreed** that the Parish Clerk should investigate a Section 106 application in conjunction with the church to support a longer-term project for the churchyard.

It was also agreed that Kier should be contacted regarding the promised heras fencing

vi) Neighbourhood Warden report

The Clerk provided the following update from a meeting with Belinda Snow and Stephen McCallan on 27th October 2020 as follows:

- Stephen took up post on 1st October 2020 and has been working in Durham City Full-time, with 10 hours funded by the Parish Council. Stephen is one of 6 Neighbourhood Wardens covering the City of Durham parish area.
- Adam reported recent issues going on in the Crossgate area – including low level ASB and waste issues. Stephen advised that he would look into these issues.
- Stephen advised that there had been a number of waste-related issues with a number of the businesses on North Road and, in one instance, a Section 47 (community protection) notice had to be issued to a business who had left rubbish in a public highway.

- Adam highlighted the recent videos which have appeared online showing large gatherings of young people outside shops and licensed premises in Durham City over the weekend. Belinda advised that the County Council is currently in the process of recruiting 18 new evening Wardens (county-wide, potentially working up until midnight – TBC) in order to address this and other issues in the City. Adam highlighted that the University has contracted the services of a private security company (Mitie) in order to deal with the sorts of issues seen over the weekend.
- Esther advised that, in some cases, the young people shown on the footage may be from Durham Sixth Form Centre rather than Durham University.
- Adam asked about shops such as Tesco being licensed up until 11pm to sell alcohol (i.e. after the 10pm Government curfew for bars and restaurants) and asked if this is having an impact. Belinda advised that she understood that Tescos for instance would not be selling alcohol after 10pm.
- Adam asked about the possibility of having CCTV installed at St. Margaret's Churchyard but Belinda said this was not possible and would require a RIPA license.
- Andrew Jackson and Belinda Snow will be linking in to improve the area where the benches were located to improve this with the Parish Council's agreed £500. Stephen asked if it is worth getting a volunteer group together in order to assist with this. Stephen also proposed that the concrete planters be moved slightly.
- Esther raised the issue of dog fouling and garden waste at Sheraton Park. Stephen advised that Geoff Parker (Neighbourhood Warden) covered this particular area and it was agreed that Geoff should distribute some introductory leaflets around the doors at Sheraton Park to make residents aware that he is active in the local area and advise them how to report issues.
- A further meeting with Belinda and Stephen is expected to take place on 10th November 2020.

5b. To complete:

i) Young People's Challenge

The Clerk reminded Members that the £5,000 worth of funding towards eradicating single-use plastics as part of a Young People's Challenge had now been agreed by Full Council. The Chair advised that she would be writing out to all local schools in the Parish to let them know about the challenge and to progress this project.

ii) Proposal to fund a water dispenser in Durham City

The Clerk advised that, since the last meeting where this proposal was discussed, he had received some very encouraging correspondence from the Chief Executive of Northumbrian Water and also from the Managers of Prince Bishop's Shopping Centre and the Indoor Markets Company.

It was **agreed** that a Zoom meeting should be organised between Northumbrian Water and the Parish Council in order to progress this proposal.

5c. To decide:

i) Further actions to reduce anti-social behaviour

The Chair reported that she was still aware of anti-social behaviour issues taking place in the City Centre, specifically related to drug and alcohol misuse and it was **agreed** that the Clerk should write to Ian Hoult at DCC to ask what further actions could be taken to address this and whether the Parish Council may be able to finance additional resources to tackle this issue.

ii) Heritage project

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council had now agreed a proposal to submit a Section 106 application for the restoration of the Ruth First plaque on Providence Row. The Clerk advised that he would be submitting this application in the coming days.

The Clerk also reminded Members that the Parish Council had also agreed to gather information on other plaques in the parish area and also to launch a Blue Plaque nomination scheme for noteworthy former residents of the Parish. The Clerk advised that he would be speaking to neighbouring Parish Councils to ask how they went about organising this scheme.

The Committee also considered a proposal by local resident David Miller regarding a number of trails in and around Durham. The Chair reminded Members that the Committee had previously agreed to support the 7 Hills of Durham trail with a proposal that this be part of the Heritage app and, eventually, printed for distribution.

The Clerk reported that he had received agreement from DCC's Highways Officers to carry out a risk assessment of the route before this could be given formal Parish Council approval.

It was **agreed** that the 7 Hills of Durham trail only would be progressed as a Parish Council project for the time being.

iii) Trees

The Clerk reminded Members that the Woodland Trust trees were due to arrive in November. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the Hospice is now unable to accept half of the trees from the total application to the Woodland Trust and therefore approximately 158 trees now needed to be allocated to a different location. The Clerk reminded Members that the Friends of Flass Vale had offered to take all of the 315 trees for Flass Vale. It was **agreed** that all of the trees this year would be offered to the Friends of Flass Vale.

6. AOB

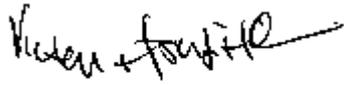
None received.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was agreed for the 24th November 2020.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria + [unclear]". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Environment Committee