

City of Durham Parish Council

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Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86964242623>

Meeting ID: 869 6424 2623

Dear Councillor,

In accordance with both the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of local authority and Police and Crime Panel meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, I hereby give you notice that a meeting of the **Environment Committee** will be held in **via Zoom** on **Thursday 29 October 2020 at 5.30pm** to transact the following business:

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

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

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

5. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

5a. To update and note:

- i) Bulb planting project
- ii) Installation of Mosaic art at Riverwalk
- iii) Noise abatement posters
- iv) Durham in Bloom: North Road; Wear Rivers Trust, etc
- v) Report on St. Nicolas Churchyard – report attached.
- vi) Neighbourhood Warden report – report attached.

5b. To complete:

- i) Young People's Challenge
- ii) Proposal to fund a water dispenser in Durham City.

5c. To decide:

- i) Further actions to reduce anti-social behaviour
- ii) Heritage project
- iii) Trees

6. AOB (please note for information purposes only, not decision-making)

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

And pursuant to the provisions of the above-named act, I Hereby Summon You to attend the said meeting.

Adam Shanley
Clerk City of Durham Parish Council

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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

Present: Councillors V Ashfield (in the Chair), E Ashby, L Brown, 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

Cllr L Brown declared an interest in the item relating to the North End Allotment site.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26th AUGUST 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th August 2020 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

I. Update on agreed alternative project for Durham in Bloom 2020

The Clerk advised that he had received a further update from the Clean and Green team on the proposals agreed by the Environment Committee as part of the alternative to Durham In Bloom project. The Clerk advised that the Clean and Green team had now put forward the following proposals:

- Area adjoining North Road church – the removal of the concrete sewer pipes / tubes and providing planters filled with trees and sustainable planting (not roses), similar to those on display in Millennium Place, close to the Gala Theatre.
- Southfield Way roundabout – the creation of new display in the central area, again using sustainable plants (incl perennial herbaceous plants and grasses, from the likes of Heucheras, Hardy Geraniums, Achillea, Stipa, Carex, etc. Flowering bulbs (Alliums, etc))
- A167 tree planting.

Members **agreed** to these proposals, expressing a preference for the A167 tree planting to take place near to the Mount Oswalds development in order to provide screening between housing and the road.

Members also asked the Clerk to see if the concrete sewer pipes could be retained as part of these proposals.

It was **agreed** that this would go forward to the next Full Council meeting.

II. Update on mosaic installation under Framwelgate Bridge

The Clerk advised that the mosaic artist for design 3 had indicated that she would be able to do the design as set out in design 1 (Councillor's preferred design) with some changes so as not to breach any copyright of the original artist. This could be done at the same cost as that quoted for design 3.

On the proposed location of the design, the Clerk noted that there were already some concerns about the use of the Framwelgate Bridge as the intended area where the mosaic would be fitted. Members **agreed** that the Riverwalk centre would be a better location for this and asked the Clerk to investigate this further as a possibility.

III. Update on Woodland Trust trees

The Clerk reminded Members that the Woodland Trust trees are due to arrive in November and at present there were two proposed locations for these to be planted: Flass Vale and a plot of land near to St Cuthbert's Hospice. The Clerk confirmed that the latter plot of land was indeed within the Parish boundary.

Members **agreed** that these locations should receive these trees on a 50/50 split basis.

IV. Report on North End Allotments site

The Clerk reminded Members that, in February 2019, the Parish Council agreed to take over ownership and management of the Allotments site on Larches Road.

The Clerk advised that Durham County Council is now in a position to formally hand over ownership of the Allotments site to the Parish Council, as required by the Local Government (Parish Councils & Parishes) Regulations 1990. This is the only allotments site currently under the ownership of DCC within the Parish and the County Council is unable by law to maintain ownership and management of the site with the existence of a Parish Council.

The Clerk advised that the site itself is based in the housing estate opposite the current County Hall HQ building, near to the Flass Vale Nature Reserve. It is currently run by an Allotment Association on a self-management basis and under this arrangement DCC receives no income from the site. All allotment tenants on the site must be members of the Association and as such currently hold a tenancy agreement between themselves individually and Durham County Council. They must also agree to the rules of the Association.

The Clerk advised that, since February 2019, he and the Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee have undertaken two separate visits to the site and the site is considered very well maintained.

The Clerk advised that the County Council has sent the official transfer documentation to the Parish Council; this includes a TP-1 form, the original conveyance of the land, a map of the land and HM Land Registry documentation.

There will be a need for the Parish Council to seek legal advice on the terms of the transfer of the allotment site before signing the Transfer deed. This is in order to ensure that the interests of the Parish Council are properly protected. It is imperative that the Parish Council fully understands the scope of its responsibilities and that there are no unforeseen issues with the legal title to the land. Once the transfer has been completed, we will then need to register the legal title to the land at the Land Registry.

In view of their position in handing over the land, it wouldn't be appropriate for DCC to provide this service to the Parish Council and therefore the Clerk advised that he had sought quotations from different legal representatives to support the work on this:

Company A - £600.00 (+VAT)

Company B - £850.00 (+VAT)

Members agreed to the proposal of contracting the services of a legal representative to act on behalf of the Parish Council on this transfer.

Members agreed to Company A to act on behalf of the Parish Council on this transfer.

V. Proposal for heritage project – seven hills of Durham trail

Members considered a proposal by local resident David Miller, who has carried out a lot of work mapping the seven hills of Durham trail, to fund the creation of a map for this trail, in order to promote the heritage of Durham City.

Members agreed that this would be a fantastic project to add to the Parish Council's existing Heritage app.

Members noted with thanks the work of David in producing this, however there were some concerns regarding the size of the map once folded out entirely and the feeling was that this would be too large for walkers and would need to be re-edited accordingly. Added to this, there were some concerns about the risks associated with a number of the crossing points on this map and it was felt that this would need to be risk assessed before the Parish Council could formally endorse this.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk should write to David Miller to express the Council's keenness to have this included in the Parish Council's Heritage app and to ask how flexible the editing could be to ensure that the map was as suitable as possible for users.

VI. Proposal for plastic only bins in Durham City

The Clerk advised that he had been investigating the proposal of having bins for plastic only waste installed in the parish. The cost of doing this would be beyond the means of the Parish Council and it was agreed that the Parish Council should instead focus on a project which tackled single-use plastics at its source.

It was **agreed** that the £5,000 towards a project with the youth should go towards a challenge with all of the local schools in the parish to come up with proposals which the Parish Council could then fund through its youth budget.

It was also **agreed** that the £3,000 towards plastic bins may be used to fund the installation of a free water dispenser in the city, in order to tackle the use of plastic water bottles; one of the biggest sources of plastic waste.

Members noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had increased the use of single-use plastics significantly.

VII. Update on noise abatement posters

The Clerk reminded Members that the design of the posters was now agreed and that he was awaiting confirmation from stakeholder groups that they would like to have their logos included in the poster.

6. AOB

The Chair advised that the temporary gates, promised by Kier, for the entrance of St. Nicolas Churchyard were still not installed.

The Chair also advised that the Churchyard was now being advertised for sale.

The Clerk advised that he would be inviting the new neighbourhood warden to the next meeting of the Parish Council's Environment Committee.

Cllr L Brown advised that she would be putting a report to Full Council on the issue of busking in Durham City.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was agreed as the 29th October 2020 at 14:30pm.

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

Signed,

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Environment Committee

ITEM 5a: REPORT ON ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCHYARD ON PROVIDENCE ROW

Members will recall 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.

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.

Two separate site meetings have taken place with representatives of the churches and the Parish Council and on-going correspondence with the C of E 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.

At the last meeting of the Parish Council's Environment Committee, it was reported that the churchyard is currently up for sale. 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.

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 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 Parish Council has been asked if we 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 is suggested, in the meantime that the Environment Committee:

- approach DCC to remove the debris left from the "clearing" task they contracted from the Probation Service, which has invited further small-scale tipping;

- approach Kier to provide the temporary “hera” gates they previously promised (keeping the CofE informed as they have to agree to the placement);
- support the CofE in general terms (possibly including with some small-scale grant) to improve the grounds.

And in the longer term:

- consider support for some permanent improvement, once the chapel and pathway works are complete (for example, funding some new, permanent, attractive / artistic (section 106?) gates.