

# City of Durham Parish Council

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15<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Dear Finance Committee Member,

In accordance with both the Local Government Act 1972, I hereby give you notice that a meeting of the **Finance Committee** will be held in **the Clayport Library meeting room** on **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022 at 10:00am** to transact the following business:

- 1. Election of Chair of the Finance Committee**
- 2. Election of Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee**
- 3. Welcome and apologies**
- 4. To receive any declarations of interest from members**
- 5. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022**
- 6. To receive any public participation comments on the following agenda items.**
- 7. Report on current financial position of the Council 2022-23 – report attached.**
- 8. Consideration of the allocation of grant funding to local community and voluntary organisations in the parish for 2022/23 – report included.**
- 9. 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 to the City of Durham Parish Council**

# CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 11:00am via Zoom.

**Present:** Councillors A Doig, V Ashfield, L Brown and R Hanson

**Also present:** Parish Clerk A Shanley and Cllr G Holland

Cllr A Doig in the **Chair**

## 1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs D Freeman and H Weston.

## 2. To receive any declarations of interest from members

None received.

## 3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

## 4. To receive any public participation comments on the following agenda items.

None received.

## 5. Report on current financial position of Council 2021-22

The Clerk reported that the current expenditure of the Parish Council from this financial year is £136,272, with a further approx. £66,000 expected until the end of the financial year.

The Clerk advised that he is expecting that the Parish Council will finish the Financial Year with approximately £88,000 in the bank.

Members also **approved** the following virements for the budget for 2021-22:

- From the £15,000 contingency, £11,992 to be allocated towards the common land inquiry fund and £3,000 to be allocated towards the events budget.
- From the remaining £2,856 Frontage Awards fund, £1,201 be allocated towards the events budget and £1,000 be allocated towards the blue plaques scheme budget.
- From the £3,000 heritage app fund, £3,000 be allocated towards the Seven Hills trail project fund.
- From the remaining £4,178 Young People fund, £1,500 be allocated towards the events budget.
- From the £45,000 general reserves, £15,304.37 be allocated towards funding the cost of the May 2021 local parish council elections.

Members also **agreed** that "*Launching a Shhh campaign*" is a more appropriate budget description to the activities for cost code 7010 than "*Evening Wardens*".

## 6. Proposed Parish Council expenditure for the financial year 2022-23

The Finance Committee unanimously **agreed** the expenditure for the financial year 2022-23 as follows:

### Planning Committee

Item of potential expenditure	Cost (£)
Professional support in responding to planning applications	4,000.00
Supporting the production of a Conservation Area Management Plan	10,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2022-23 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>14,000.00</b>

### Licensing Committee

Item of potential expenditure	Cost (£)
Enhanced drug searching SLA with Durham Police	1,800.00
Hosting a licensing training event	1,000.00
Licensing award	1,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2022-23 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>3,800.00</b>

### Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
<b>PRIORITY 1: Being a voice for the City</b>	
OASES/ schools project	3,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 2: Noise abatement</b>	
Building on the Shhh campaign	2,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 3: Clean Air, Clean and Green City</b>	
Planting up and greening the parish	10,000.00
Event for clean air and active travel	1,500.00
<b>PRIORITY 4: Heritage</b>	
Information Boards on heritage and nature	3,000.00
Creation of new blue plaques in the parish	1,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 5: Appearance of the City</b>	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA with DCC	10,000.00
Christmas Frontages Awards (possible collaborative project with Business Committee)	2,000.00
Improving the river	6,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 6: Climate Emergency</b>	
Continuation of Terracycle scheme	3,000.00
Celebrating plastic free businesses	1,000.00
Community composting project	1,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2022-23 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>42,500.00</b>

### Business Committee

Item of potential expenditure	Cost (£)
<b>PRIORITY 1: Professional support for independent businesses in Durham</b>	10,800.00
<b>PRIORITY 2: Maintaining and promoting the e-commerce website "Totally Locally Durham" for Durham City Businesses</b>	1,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 3: Hosting events in Durham City</b> (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, Queen's Jubilee 2022, miscellaneous).	22,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2022-23 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>33,800.00</b>

### Full Council

Item of Expenditure	Cost (£)
<b>PRIORITY 1:</b> Administration of Parish Council (rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website, other expenditure)	15,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 2:</b> Training budget	3,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 3:</b> grants for local community and voluntary organisations	15,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 4:</b> Staffing costs – including salary, National Insurance contributions and workplace pension	56,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2022-23 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>89,000.00</b>

Committee	Proposed expenditure (2022/2023) against priorities (£)
<b>Planning Committee</b>	<b>14,000</b>
<b>Licensing Committee</b>	<b>3,800</b>
<b>Environment Committee</b>	<b>42,500</b>
<b>Business Committee</b>	<b>33,800</b>
<b>Full Council</b>	<b>89,000</b>
<b>TOTAL POTENTIAL PROVISION IN 2022-2023 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>183,100</b>

The Committee noted that it is expected that the Parish Council will finish the current Financial Year (2021-22) with (approximately) £88,000 remaining in the bank account (taking into account).

Of the remaining £88,000, the following was **agreed** to be ring fenced for the next financial year:

General Reserves	£45,000
Contingencies	£15,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£60,000</b>

## **7. Parish Council precept request 2022-23**

The Clerk advised that the 2022/23 City of Durham Parish Council Tax Base has been calculated at 4,494.9. For 2021/22 the Tax Base was 4,421.1 and therefore the Tax Base for the parish has increased by 82.8.

This means that, if the Parish Council retains its current council tax band D charge of £34.87, it can generate a precept of £156,737.17. This would represent an increase from 2021/22 which generated a total precept of £153,849.93.

The Clerk also advised that the LCTRS grant payable to the City of Durham Parish Council for 2022/23 is £0. In 2021/22, the LCTRS grant paid to the Parish Council was £622.00. (Total amount paid to the Parish Council in 2021/22 – £154,471.93)

Members **agreed** to recommend to Full Council that the current parish council tax charge be retained, therefore the total income for the Parish Council (from Precept and LCTRS Grant) would be £156,737.17.

## **8. Report on internal controls of the Parish Council**

Members **approved** the following report on internal controls for the Parish Council:

### **1. RESPONSIBILITY**

Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 requires Councils to carry out a review of their internal controls annually before the end of the financial year.

The City of Durham Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

In discharging this responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

### **2. SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL**

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them effectively, efficiently and economically.

The Parish Council has now adopted a risk register and this is under continuing review by the Clerk and any issues arising from risk assessments carried out will be reported to full Council.

### **The Council**

The Council has elected a Chair who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings and together with the Clerk for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful.

The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets for the following year at its January full Council meeting each year. The January meeting of the Council also approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

The full Council meets at least 11 times per year. The Parish Council does not usually meet in August.

A budget report is prepared and submitted to all of the Parish Council's Finance Committee meetings showing income and expenditure together with a budget update for all Committee spends. Any budget revision reports are also reported for information and these set out any changes to the budget as per Council decisions or any known budget over or underspends.

### **Clerk to the Council**

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for the day to day compliance with laws and regulations and advises the Council on managing risks. The Clerk also ensures that the Council's procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to. The Clerk also manages projects agreed by full Council and works with all suppliers and contractors agreed by full Council to carry out functions on behalf of the Council.

2021 has again been a difficult year for all due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation. It became apparent in March 2020, just before the first national lockdown that things would be operating very differently, and it was then that NALC and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) recommended reviewing and agreeing local councils' delegation to the Clerk. Councillors agreed this delegation to enable the Council to fulfil its responsibilities to its residents.

This meant that day to day operations of the Parish Council could continue normally as much as possible. The Parish Council has continued holding meetings of Committees via Zoom and returned to physical meetings of the Full Council in 2021, whilst observing the latest Covid-19 guidance from Government throughout.

### **Payments**

All payments made are reported to all Finance Committee meetings. The Parish Council now makes all payments via electronic banking. Two Members of the Council from the current list of five authorised signatories (excluding the Clerk who acts as administrator) must authorise every payment against invoices before authorising the payment using their own login details provided by the bank.

There is a facility for making urgent payments out of meeting if necessary. Such payments are also reported to the Parish Council's Finance Committee meeting and all decisions to spend funds as urgent action are ratified at the next Full Council meetings and minuted as such.

### **Risk Assessments/Risk Management**

The Council carries out regular risk assessments in respect of actions. The Clerk makes an annual risk management report to the Council. A review of financial management risks is included as part of the review report.

### **Internal Audit**

Last year, the Council appointed an independent Internal Auditor, Mr Gordon Fletcher, who reports to the Council on the adequacy of its:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations

- Risk management
- Reviews
- Insurance cover

A review of internal audit must be carried out before the end of each financial year.

Gordon Fletcher has indicated that he is willing to carry out an audit of the Parish Council again next year. The cost of this service is £150.

Gordon was previously the Audit Manager at Easington District Council before retiring when the Unitary Council was formed and set up his own business by providing an internal audit service for Town and Parish Councils. This has grown to a current portfolio of 7 local Town Councils and 24 local Parish Councils.

Gordon is C.M.I.I.A. (Chartered Member of the Institute of Internal Auditors) qualified and has his own professional indemnity insurance.

### **External Audit**

The Council's External Auditors are Mazars, appointed by the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA). They submit an annual Certificate of Audit, which is presented to the Council, together with a copy of their report listing any issues to be raised. At the end of the Audit the Council must display the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for 14 days and must make the Annual Governance and Audit Return (AGAR) and Final Accounts available on request. These are also displayed on the Parish Council's website.

## **4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS**

The Council has a responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of:

- The Full Council
- The Clerk to the Council who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment and managing risks
- The independent Internal Auditor who reviews the Council's systems of internal control
- Mazars, the Council's external auditors, who make the final check using the AGAR, which is completed and signed by the Responsible Financial Officer, the Chairman and the Internal Auditor.

## **5. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The external audit report for 2020-21 was carried out by Mazars and was completed in September 2021. No issues were raised by the external auditors.

## **6. INTERNAL CONTROL ISSUES**

The Auditors did not raise any issues as part of the 2020-21 Audit.

The Internal Auditor did recommend that the Council open a new bank account, not associated with its existing bank, in order to further protect its finances. At present, only £85,000 would be protected as part of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). The Council has now opened an account with NatWest Bank and funds will be deposited into this account.

An alternative electronic provision for approving invoices has been arranged for this year in view of the Covid-19 pandemic but going forwards it is hoped that these can be approved by wet signature in addition to the online approval.

End of report

In approving this report, Members also **agreed** to the appointment of Mr Gordon Fletcher as the internal auditor for the Parish Council for the financial year 2021/22.

**9. Update on the allocation of grant funding to local community and voluntary organisations in the parish**

The Clerk advised that almost all grant funding from the current financial year has now been allocated by the Parish Council and reminded Members that each grant award winner is required to provide a report to Full Council later this year on the impact of this funding.

The Clerk also advised that all grant award winners have now spent all grant funding from the financial year 2020-21, reminding Members that a number of organisations were granted an extension to spend the funds (beyond the 12 months period specified in the Council's policy) in light of the difficulties arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Clerk advised that he had received no updates from the St. Oswald's Institute on their project and the Committee **agreed** to task the Clerk with chasing this up with the group and to ask for an update on this project, reminding the group of the need to have the project delivered and the funds spent and the terms of the Parish Council's grants policy.

Clr V Ashfield also advised that SNCF has £43 remaining from its awarded grant and asked if this funding could be spent on leaflets for residents in the SNCF area with information about bins and waste disposal. The Committee **approved** this use of the remaining funding.

**10. Dates of future meetings**

The Chair advised that the date of the next meeting of this Committee would be communicated in due course.

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

Signed,

**Chair of the Parish Council's Finance Committee**

## **ITEM 8: CONSIDERATION OF THE ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING TO LOCAL COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN THE PARISH FOR 2022/23**

Members are reminded that at the January meeting of the Full Parish Council 2022, Councillors formally agreed to allocate £15,000 of the budget for 2022/23 towards grants for local and voluntary organisations.

- The project to be funded meets the aims and objectives of the Parish Council.
- Assistance will be given on the basis of need, merit and contribution to the local community.
- Applicants must clearly show how any assistance given will benefit the people living in the Parish or will benefit the environment of our Parish.
- Any assistance given will be subject to on-going monitoring and subsequent evaluation of the outcome of the grant.
- Organisations should not make a presumption that funding will continue on a year to year basis.

In accordance with the Parish Council's current grant awards policy, the City of Durham Parish Council provides grant funding to support the following aims:

- To enable local people to participate in voluntary groups and activities.
- To help the parishes' voluntary groups to improve their effectiveness.
- To ensure the provision of services, needed by the residents, via the voluntary sector.
- To support organisations which meet the needs of people experiencing social and economic difficulties.
- To ensure that there is equality of access and opportunity for all parishioners of City of Durham to the services it provides and funds.
- To improve or enhance the local environment.
- To achieve value for money.

At its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022, Full Council approved emergency grant funding of £10,000 from this budget towards the continuation of the Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) hub in Durham City.

The grant funding window for the remaining £5,000 opened on 1st April 2022 and this has been advertised on social media, the Parish Council's website, through the local press and through direct e-mails.

Organisations were asked to apply by 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022 in order that the Finance Committee may consider this at its meeting in June and make a recommendation to Full Council in June. Once approved, all grant payments will be made at the end of June 2022. Members have been provided with the full details of all applications. For ease of reference, the applicant, the amount requested from each applicant and a summary of each project is provided overleaf.

<b>DECISION REQUIRED</b>	For Members to consider the merits of each of the grant applications and to make a recommendation for each award to Full Council in June.
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Organisation	Project details	Amount requested
Durham Hospital Radio	<p>To fund continued improvements to the Durham Hospital Radio studios to improve the functionality for the presenters enabling social media and other software to be used in conjunction with live shows. Also, some installed computers need hardware upgrades to allow moving systems to Windows 11.</p>	£1,200
Sixth Form Centre	<p>A grant is required to support and extend our community programme offer into 2023. Following the success of our ongoing pilot programme launched in April 2022, we have gained valuable experience and significant positive feedback from participants.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Including:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>'Friendly, accessible and welcoming - I loved it!'</i>, <i>'Engaging content! Thank you for arrangement and planning'</i> and <i>'Great value. Very exciting - loved the collaborative exercise, fun and very creative.'</i></p> <p>Initially we have commissioned AiRs past and present to deliver either one-off workshops or a series of classes, supported by our arts development officer. Each workshop or block of classes covers a specialist art form, so far including ceramics, ink drawing, digital illustration and drawing.</p> <p>We hope to commission a new programme of classes to launch in Spring 2023. We will continue to work with our AiRs and extend partnerships with cultural organisations and individuals to deliver specialist sessions such as photography and life drawing.</p> <p>By Spring 2023 our new community arts space and gallery will be complete and will be a base for this community work. We hope to reach out into new community groups and invite people to take part in our programme of activities.</p>	£2,000
ERA	<p>Re-painting and enhancement of both sides of the brick 'football' wall in St Oswald's playpark (Church St, Elvet). The front side will be repainted with appropriate images for play (e.g. goalposts, targets), and the rear side repainted with a mural depicting by local historical themes: an image of the 'Dun Cow', with a frame inspired by miners' banners. Community artist Lewis Hobson (<a href="http://www.facebook.com/DurhamSprayPaints">www.facebook.com/DurhamSprayPaints</a>) has created an outline design, and (if the project goes ahead) will work with residents and with pupils at St Oswald's Primary to develop it. (See attached document for images.) He will also be responsible for carrying out the painting work.</p>	£1,263

Harbour	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Stronger Together</b></p> <p>This is a new project we want to launch to support the family members of the clients we help. We have recognised that there is no practical support for immediate family or even close friends of the clients who are using our service. Whilst our clients get emotional support and practical advice from us, when in an abusive relationship or after leaving an abusive relationship, it can often be difficult on the parents, siblings and adult children. As those people have not been direct victims of abuse they are not eligible for support within our service but it has become clear that they often do need some form of support. We want to offer a monthly group session so they can offload, have a contact within Harbour to ask or seek advice and guidance.</p> <p>Initially we will deliver this service via Teams, but in the longer term we want to deliver this locally, face to face in a friendly environment, we therefore need to cover staffing costs, venue costs as well as refreshments. We will also need to cover costs to promote this new service across the area. We have a staff member who is willing to deliver this service, as additional hours to her usual working hours, therefore no additional training costs are needed. She is a fully qualified Counsellor and Support worker so has all relevant skills and tools needed to facilitate this project. It will be supported by the Service Manager and organised and managed by an admin officer. We have had some funding to deliver this in the Tees Valley area but would like to reach our Durham clients also.</p>	£1,000
Merryoaks WI	<p>To purchase a further microphone enabling each speaker to have their own avoiding the need to share. To purchase a full Zoom subscription to allow speakers from elsewhere in the country and to enable us to hold hybrid meetings, making us fully inclusive.</p>	£250

St Cuthberts Hospice	<p>Our gardens provide much needed sensory stimulation and therapeutic benefit to our patients and their families.</p> <p>Funds from the City of Durham Parish Council will be used to improve accessibility around the Hospice grounds and enhance experience for all who visit our gardens through improvements and essential repairs. Your donation will be used to pay for tools, equipment, plants and furniture.</p> <p>As a result of these funds and improvements, we will be able to remain a welcoming, peaceful and accessible environment for our patients, families and visitors, through innovation and repair. Over a 12 month period we expect that 1,000 patients and their families will be able to enjoy the therapeutic value of nature within our grounds.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gardening Supplies = £1,750 Grounds Maintenance = £2,500</p>	£4,250
St Margarets Centre	<p>A new course has been arranged in joinery and wood working skills in order that participants can earn a certificate issued by the centre describing exactly the level of skill that has been achieved by the production of actual articles made and produced on the course. For example, joints, rebates, hinge and lock settings, routing etc. This application is specifically for the purchase of a new Bandsaw and the purchase of materials where the costs have escalated for the purchase of both soft and hard wood.</p>	£3,000
St Nics Church	<p>To help fulfil our aims of serving the community and acting as an eco-church we need to reclaim the church's graveyard which has been neglected (and desecrated) over the last 10 years. We want to turn it into a heritage rest and recuperation area potentially with mini-allotments for older residents to use and designated picnic and meeting areas and areas for rest and contemplation.</p>	£3,200
<b>Total</b>		<b>£16,163</b>