



City of Durham Parish Council

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Date of Summons: 21st July 2023

SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council: Councillors E Ashby, V Ashfield, L Brown, N Brown, A Doig, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, R Hanson, G Holland, C Lattin, G Nair, R Ormerod, E Scott, S Walker and H Weston.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Meeting of the Council** to be held in the **Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF on Thursday 27th July at 7:00pm** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown.

Members of the public and press are also cordially invited to attend. Members of the public may address Council, Committee or Sub-Committee meetings for up to three minutes, with the agreement of the Chair of the meeting, provided that the statement is related to an item on the agenda. The speaker should approach the Clerk before the meeting commences to request to speak during the meeting.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, Civility and Respect and Human Rights plus Social, Economic and Environmental matters.

Yours faithfully,

A. Shanley

Mr Adam Shanley
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council

AGENDA

- 1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**
- 3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22ND JUNE 2023**
- 4. DISCUSSION WITH DAVE CLARKE, INSPECTOR FOR DURHAM CITY AND ASHLEIGH WHITE, SAFER STREETS COORDINATOR ON OPERATION LENTIL**
- 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 6. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- **Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 9th and 28th June and 7th July 2023**

Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:

<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/planning-committee/>

- Report on the production of a settings study for the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site.

- **Environment Committee minutes from meetings held on 13th June 2023**

Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:

<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/environment-committee/>

- Proposal to launch a Green Business Award for businesses in Durham City

- **Business Committee minutes from meetings held on 16th May 2023**

Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:

<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/business-committee/>

- Proposal to support the work of the ShopWatch organisation
- Proposal to improve the Fowler's Yard area of the City
- Proposal to support the Children's Book Festival event over the summer holidays
- LNER consultation on the proposed closure of the Ticket Office at the Durham Station

- To consider recent correspondence from local businesses regarding a PSPO on nuisance begging in the City

7. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 22ND June 2023

8. REQUEST FOR A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE MAYOR'S CHARITY APPEAL

9. PROPOSAL TO ADOPT THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

10. PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE EXCAVATION OF THE FLASS WELL AHEAD OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FLASS VALE PROTEST PICNIC

11. REPORT FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

- Report by Councillors R Ormerod and E Ashby on the most recent meeting of CDALC Larger Council's Forum

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the annual meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 22nd June 2023 at 19:00 in the Lantern Room, Durham Town Hall. Durham. DH1 3NJ

Present: Councillors A Doig (in the Chair), L Brown, E Scott, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, G Holland, S Walker and H Weston.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and Ms Lynda Delf (member of the public).

1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING

Apologies were received from Councillors E Ashby, V Ashfield, C Lattin, N Brown, G Nair, R Hanson and R Ormerod.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor R Friederichsen declared an interest in the grant application by Climate Action Durham and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

Councillor A Doig declared an interest in the grant application by Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

Councillor L Brown declared an interest in the grant application by Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

Councillor E Scott declared an interest in the grant application by Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

Councillor S Walker declared an interest in the grant application by Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25TH MAY 2023

The minutes of the annual meeting held on 25th May were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. DISCUSSION WITH STEPHEN REED, DCC PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, ON SECTION 106 FUNDING PROCESS

The Chair advised that, in light of the high number of apologies from Members in advance of the meeting, he had asked that the discussion with Stephen Reed be

deferred until the September Full Council meeting. As such, Stephen Reed was not in attendance and the item was deferred.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms Lynda Delf advised that she was attending the Parish Council meeting on behalf of the Elvet Residents Association and with a general interest in all Agenda items.

6. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing

Councillor G Holland presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 12th and 26th May 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee reports.

Report on objections to planning application and calls to Committee: DCC Central and East Planning Committee

In introducing his report, the Chair highlighted that it had been brought to the attention of the Parish Council that there has been concern at DCC about (i) the number of objections to planning applications and requests that the applications are brought before the Central and East Planning Committee by the City of Durham Parish Council Planning and Licensing Committee and (ii) objections to planning applications where the application – invariably involving HMOs – appears to fall within the formal requirements laid out in the County Plan (and especially in relation to Policy 16.3).

The Chair advised that he was keen to address this in some way with a formal approach to DCC. The Chair reminded Members that this matter has been discussed at previous Parish Council meetings – both Full Council and the Planning and Licensing Committee – and took the opportunity to thank all those involved in amending the original report from the April Full Council. The Chair advised that he would like this report to go to all Members of the Central and East Area County Planning Committee, Mr Stephen Reed and the Cabinet Member for Planning.

Councillor G Holland welcomed this report and expressed his unhappiness at the claim that the Parish Council appeared to be calling every application to the Central and East Area County Planning Committee. Councillor G Holland highlighted that the City of Durham Parish Council area was different to any other with very many planning factors e.g. a World Heritage Site, a surrounding green belt, significant development pressure and more to consider. Councillor G Holland advised that the right of call-in was an important provision for Parish and Town Councils which is enshrined in the County Council's constitution and that the City of Durham Parish Council has every right to call an application in to Committee and stand in solidarity with local residents.

Councillor E Scott advised that she had concerns over the wording of this report and felt that this was unwise, unless a formal approach had been made to the Parish Council expressing concerns over the number of call-in requests. Councillor E Scott advised that she was not aware of such an approach and therefore could not support the report and recommendation as drafted.

Councillor D Freeman advised that the Central and East Area County Planning Committee Members were very much aware of the reasons as to why a lot of application from within the City of Durham parish area came to Committee, namely the high proportion of total applications in the City in comparison with other areas.

Councillor G Holland also expressed the concern that the Committee was made up of Councillors from outside the Central and East Area of the County. It was highlighted that this was a separate issue to the matter under discussion.

The Chair proposed that this report be re-drafted in such a way as to provide an explanatory note to Members and Officers and that this be sent to all concerned. Members unanimously **agreed** with this approach (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

• **Environment Committee**

In the Environment Committee Chair and Vice-Chair's absence, Councillor L Brown presented the Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 16th May 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor L Brown moved on to Committee reports.

Proposal to support the Green Move Out operation in the City this year

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council recently agreed to launch a voluntary contribution appeal to local landlords and letting agents in Durham City towards keeping the City clean and green.

Following the decision at Full Council in March 2023, an appeal letter was sent out in April to all landlords and letting agents who own property in the City. The appeal included a request that all contributions be received by no later than 16th June 2023.

The Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council had requested a contribution of £52.00 per property from all owners/ agents – approximately the equivalent of the Band D tax charge within the City of Durham Parish area in financial year 2023/24.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has now received a total of £1,508 from local landlord and agents. This figure was received from 8 individual payments – including one from Loc8me on behalf of several landlords – and a further 3 pledges of financial support have been made.

The Clerk advised that, in order to deliver on the aims of this funding, representatives of the Parish Council's Environment Committee had recently met with representatives of Durham University and Durham County Council, in order to decide on the most beneficial use of this additional funding.

During this meeting, it was highlighted that the background to this request centred around the experiences of Green Move Out day in 2022, which saw furniture and

other items discarded in certain streets and a desire to combat this issue reoccurring. Albeit, it was recognised that 2022 was successful in ensuring that thousands of items were recycled/ donated to a local charity and that the team had been able to deliver this scheme in spite of the many challenges of Covid-19, increased student numbers, etc.

The Clerk advised that an early proposal that the funding could go towards the hiring of skips in certain streets in hotspot areas was rejected by all those involved in the operation as this would go against the principle of Green Move Out and the desire to recycle goods. Other concerns centred around misuse of these skips as well as contamination issues.

Both Durham University representatives and the DCC Waste Management team advised that they felt there is a gap in the Green Move Out operation insofar as the two Sundays during move out are not currently covered from a waste collection point of view and therefore waste left on a Saturday will remain in place until Monday at the earliest.

The Clerk advised that Durham County Council has confirmed that they would be able to cover both Sundays at a cost of £2,000 in total for both days and Durham University very much welcomed this proposal at the meeting. This would ensure that any waste could be recycled and any furniture discarded may be re-used or donated to a local charity (e.g. British Heart Foundation).

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council's Environment Committee recently met in early June and agreed that all funding received from the voluntary contribution request should be allocated towards this operation.

The Clerk also highlighted that Hannah Shepherd had offered to put a further £2,000 from her own budget towards this work and therefore it was unanimously **agreed** that the total funding should be allocated on a) covering the two Sundays as set out above and b) additional Neighbourhood Wardens during move out at a total cost of £3, 508.00.

The Chair remarked that he felt that the figure of £1,508.00 collected from landlords had been extremely disappointing in view of the high number of student properties within the City of Durham parish area. The Chair originally proposed that this initiative be scrapped however withdrew this when asked that this be taken back to the relevant Committees of the Parish Council for further deliberation.

Proposal to support the work of the Wear Rivers Trust

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council had established a very strong working relationship with the Wear Rivers Trust over the last few years and the Environment Committee had recently benefitted from a meeting with the new Co-ordinator Jack Butlin.

The Clerk advised that the Durham Peninsula Invasive Non-native Species project is a long-term project aimed at connecting the dots across the project area to achieve a joined-up approach to managing, and raising awareness of, invasive non-native species (INNS), particularly Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed,

and Giant Hogweed. The Clerk highlighted that the project has been active since 2021 and has already seen various successes, including intensive survey efforts which have produced in-depth maps of the project area; widespread management of the source of Giant Hogweed within the Old Durham Beck system; and the creation of an active and engaged organisational register with members meeting regularly for steering / operations group meetings.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Council had agreed £3,000 in January towards supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust. The Clerk advised that the Trust is now seeking funding towards PA1/ PA6 training for volunteers, direct management action and educational sessions.

Members unanimously **agreed** to support this work with a fund of £3,000 as requested. (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

• **Finance Committee**

Councillor A Doig presented the Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 12th January 2023. There were no queries from Members on these minutes.

7. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 25th May 2023 as follows:

The Chair expressed his delight at welcoming the new Dean of Durham Reverend Canon Dr Philip Plyming to his new role. Dr Plyming's nomination for the role was approved last week by His Majesty King Charles and the Chair advised that he understands that an installation service for the new Dean will take place at the Cathedral at 3pm on 16th September. The Chair advised that he had asked the Clerk to write to Dr Plyming offering congratulations on his appointment and to express good wishes for a continued positive working relationship between the Parish Council and the Cathedral.

The Chair also took the opportunity to welcome the new Mayor of Durham Councillor Leslie Mavin and new Deputy Mayor Councillor Liz Brown to their roles. Both Councillors were officially welcomed to their new roles at a Mayor Making ceremony earlier this month. The Chair advised that he looked forward to working with both Leslie and Liz in their new respective roles. The Chair advised that Councillor Mavin has made St. Cuthbert's Hospice her official charity for this year and he wished her every success in her fundraising efforts. The Chair also thanked Councillor David Freeman for his successful year as Mayor and for raising over £4,500 for the Durham branch of the Samaritans charity.

The Chair also reported that the Chief Constable Jo Farrell has been appointed as the first female officer to lead Police Scotland. Jo has been with Durham Police since 2016 and is now set to succeed Sir Iain Livingstone in Scotland's most senior policing role. The Chair took the opportunity to wish Jo and her family every success in Scotland and look forward to the appointment of the new Chief Constable for the force in due course.

The Chair also offered huge congratulations to all the winners of this year's Durham University Volunteering and Outreach Awards. The Chair welcomed that over 300 nominations – the most ever in the Award's history – were received for individuals and groups at the University who give so much of their time voluntarily in the service of our community. The Chair highlighted that the Parish Clerk was delighted to present the Best Educational Award at the ceremony. The Chair thanked Katie Binks and her team for all they do.

The Chair reminded Members that voting is now open for the public to nominate the County Durham Tourism Superstar Award for 2023. The nominations are open on the Northern Echo website and are specifically for an individual who has shown the greatest passion for the county and a real dedication to giving visitors a priceless experience. The Chair advised that the Clerk will circulate details of this award and asked Members to help by sharing this as far and wide as possible.

The Chair advised that he was overwhelmed to read the latest report from the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Wardens Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson – both have worked tirelessly for the community since commencing this role and the Chair advised that the Council should recognise outstanding service like this. The Chair advised that he was aware that the most recent meeting of the Parish Council's Environment Committee had discussed this and the Clerk is presently looking to nominate both Kirk and Ant for an outstanding achievement award – an award run internally at DCC for staff members who have excelled in their role.

The Chair reminded Members that the Neville's Cross Community Association is hosting a special "Best practice in responding to planning applications that affect you" event at the Merryoaks Community Hall on 26th June from 7:30pm. The Chair thanked the Association for organising this event and for supporting residents to make their voices heard and to identify key policies within the local development plan to help best frame their arguments when being consulted on new proposals.

The Chair also advised that he was delighted to attend the official opening of the Hall and advised that he would once again like to warmly thank all those involved in its building. The Chair particularly thanked Councillor Susan Walker and her husband Glen for their outstanding work in setting up the Hall and for managing its day-to-day running.

The Chair expressed his deepest disappointment at news that Durham University is pulling its funding for the Safety of Women at Night hub in our City – the Chair advised that he felt this to be a terrible decision and one which the Parish Council is making every effort to overturn. Over 40% of all incidents dealt with at the hub – ranging from safe transport home to more serious sexual offences – involve a student of our university. Particularly at a time when safety of women and girls is such a serious issue at a local and national level. The Chair advised that he will be writing directly to the Vice Chancellor on this issue to try and resolve this matter. The Chair advised that the hub is providing a life-saving service and the University cannot continue to cut back on essential services like this as it has done with its Neighbourhood Warden and Police provision for our City.

The Chair advised that he was delighted to attend a multi-agency meeting earlier today and to meet and discuss the coming months with our new Safer Streets

Coordinator for Operation Lentil Ashleigh White. The Chair advised that Ashleigh has hit the ground running in this role and the Council anticipates a report of the Operational Lentil project by the end of next week and this will cover April, May and June. The Chair thanked everyone involved in this project.

The Chair took the opportunity to remind Members about the process for communications between residents and our Inspector Dave Clarke or any officers. The Chair particularly asked Members to be mindful not to include Dave in group communications between residents over emails on issues which are reported by members of the public.

8. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR 2022/23

- I. Members unanimously **agreed** the actions arising from the report of the internal auditor 2022-23
- II. Members unanimously **agreed** the annual governance statement 2022-23
- III. Members unanimously **agreed** the draft annual accounts for 2022-23
- iv. Members unanimously **agreed** the register of assets 2022-23
- v. Members unanimously **agreed** the accounting statement and explanation of variances 2022-23

9. 2023/24 ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING TO LOCAL VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The Clerk reminded Members that, at the January meeting of the Full Parish Council 2023, Councillors formally agreed to allocate £15,000 of the budget for 2023/24 towards grants for local and voluntary organisations.

The Clerk advised that the grant funding window opened on 1st April 2023 and this has been advertised on social media, the Parish Council's website, through the local press and through direct e-mails.

The Clerk reminded Members that organisations were asked to apply by 2nd June 2023 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.

The Clerk advised that Members have been provided with the full details of all applications.

The Clerk advised that, at its most recent meeting, the Finance Committee noted that there was an underspend of circa. £7,000 from the previous financial year and agreed to reallocate £5,400 of this funding towards additional funding for grants this financial year.

Members considered the merits of each application and unanimously **agreed** to allocate funding as follows:

Applicant	Project	Amount requested (£)	Amount agreed by Full
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			Council (£)
Alington House	We run 3 sessions of fitness sessions for the over 50's which has proved to be beneficial both mentally and physically. This also offers the chance to combat loneliness and isolation. To continue this very important project we need funding to pay our qualified fitness tutor.	2,500	2,500
Climate Action Durham	We want to continue to meet monthly in the City of Durham to raise awareness of the urgent situation of the climate damage which has been and is being done by humanity on our environment and to explore the way by which we can individually and collectively contribute to limiting this damage.	1,500	500
Discovering Durham CIC	<p>Discovering Durham's "Show Us Your Shelf" campaign is an innovative initiative aimed at encouraging people to support local businesses and embrace locally sourced products. The campaign invites participants to dedicate a shelf in their kitchen specifically for locally sourced items and then share a picture of their shelf, known as a "shelfie," on social media platforms. The primary goal of the campaign is to inspire individuals to incorporate more locally produced goods into their daily lives and to raise awareness about the importance of supporting local businesses. By dedicating a shelf to these products, participants showcase their commitment to the local economy and sustainable consumption.</p> <p>The act of sharing a shelfie not only serves as a personal expression of support but also has a broader impact. It acts as a catalyst for encouraging others to follow suit and create their own dedicated shelves. Through this collective sharing of how participants utilize the locally sourced products, the campaign aims to foster a sense of community and inspire a ripple effect of support for local businesses.</p> <p>By leveraging the power of social media and the visual appeal of shelfies, Discovering Durham hopes to create a widespread movement that highlights the benefits of buying locally sourced products. Ultimately, the "Show Us Your Shelf" campaign aims to strengthen the local economy, promote sustainable practices, and foster a sense of pride and connection within the community.</p>	1,500	1,500

DMC 4 Durham CIC	<p>Covid-19 followed by the cost-of-living crisis has had a long and lasting impact on small local independent businesses and families in Durham City. Businesses are seeing a vast reduction in footfall and people 'spending local' as families are increasingly watching their finances. We could like to create some free-standing community art installations on Market Hall stall roofs in collaboration with local artists/sculptors and primary schools in the area which will hopefully encourage families to visit and see how much Durham City centre has to offer. In addition to this, we would like to apply for funding for a hand truck/ sack barrow in order to support the operations of the market and to make this easier for staff on market days.</p>	850	850
Durham Fringe	<p>All of our volunteers are local people who give up their time to support this community arts festival. In recognition of the hard work that is given freely and to give a sense of belonging to the group, Fringe gives each volunteer a T-shirt for when they are on duty but it is theirs to keep. At each of our venues we provide snacks and a non-alcoholic drink which is offered free of charge to volunteers. In addition, all volunteers are given free access to as many Fringe performances as they wish to see. Therefore, we are applying to the Parish Council for a contribution towards the costs of T-shirts and to cover the costs of refreshments and travel expenses when requested. Our aim is to enable local people to participate in a voluntary group and support residents who volunteer their free time</p>	1,000	1,000
Lowes Barn Community Project CIO	<p>Within the new Merryoaks Community Hall, we have the facilities for meetings, conferences and public lectures which require the use of modern audio-visual equipment. This is something we currently do not have and is a gap in the offering that we provide for the local community. We plan to buy two or three screens that will enable a presentation to be made and shared throughout the Hall making the experience more inclusive for all participants irrespective of their ability or location within the Hall. A grant from the Parish Council will enable us to offer a more complete package to groups meeting in the Hall to the benefit of the inhabitants of Durham City</p>	5,000	5,000

Merryoaks WI	<p>To purchase a receiver and possible second hand held microphone to compliment the equipment we already have to allow more flexibility and inclusion.</p> <p>To purchase a full Zoom license to allow us to continue when needed to have speakers from other parts of the country and to enable us to have hybrid meetings when required.</p>	300	300
St. Cuthberts Church	Installation of a Baby Memorial, Installation of new signage, Renewal of footpaths, Professional Fees (architect and archaeologist).	2,000	2,000
St. Cuthberts Hospice	<p>Many of our visitors still prefer to meet and visit guests outdoors to prevent the risk of infection. Our gardens continue to provide much needed sensory stimulation and therapeutic benefit to our patients and their families. It is important that we continue to maintain and rejuvenate the mature gardens we are most fortunate to offer.</p> <p>We are so grateful for the support of the City of Durham Parish Council and would use any subsequent funds to continue 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 new and replacement 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 over 1,000 patients and their families will be able to enjoy the therapeutic value of nature within our grounds.</p>	4,250	1,750
St Margaret Centre	The replenishment of consumable materials used in the craft room, woodworking, shop supplies and horticultural sections of the Centre.	5,000	3,000
St Nicholas Church	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.	2,000	2,000
	Total	£25,900	£20,400

10. APPOINTMENT OF AN ARMED FORCES CHAMPION FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council has taken a lead at a local level on events such as Battle of Britain, D-Day commemorations, Remembrance Day and many more.

In order to promote the role of the Parish Council in its support for our Armed Forces personnel, the Clerk advised that he had been asked if the Council might consider establishing a new Armed Forces Champion role from within its membership.

The primary aim of the Armed Forces champion would be to maintain the Parish Council's commitment to support the Armed Forces and their families and veterans, and raise the profile of the support provided by the Council and the community as a whole.

To help define this role further, the following Terms of Reference were proposed to Council:

Armed Forces Champion Terms of Reference

1. The Nomination

The Parish Council shall nominate one Member at its annual meeting in May to undertake various roles consequential on the Parish Council's activities to honour our Armed Forces and continued links with the DLI. The councillor will be termed 'City of Durham Parish Council Armed Forces Champion' and will act to strengthen the Council's work on events such as D-Day, the Battle of Britain, Armistice Day, Remembrance Day, etc.

2. The Nomination process

Any councillor may nominate themselves for the role. Any nomination should be submitted in writing to the Clerk 7 clear working days before the meeting. Any nomination should be seconded by another councillor whose name should be recorded on the written submission. The nomination will be subject to a majority vote of the Full Council. In the event of two or more nominations, there will an election whereby the successful nomination will have a majority of votes cast; in the event of a tie, the Chair will have the casting vote.

3. The Length of Nomination

The period of nomination shall be for one calendar year; it may be renewed annually.

4. The Roles

The Armed Forces Champion's roles are as follows:

- Principal objective - raise the profile and needs of the Armed Forces community, within the Council and the parish area.

- Foster and maintain good working relationships with the Armed Forces community.
- Represent the Parish Council at key events centred around honouring the Armed Forces community both past and present, e.g., Durham City Remembrance Day.
- To act as the cultural link between the Parish Council and the DLI, County Council, Armed Forces and other stakeholders on the redevelopment of the DLI museum.
- Understand the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) and the needs of the Armed Forces Community in relation to Council policies and service delivery. Ensure awareness is cascaded to staff who have daily contact with the public through engagement.
- Actively communicate the AFC and the work in promoting it within the Council and the community, ensuring that Armed Forces Champion names and contact details are publicised and known both internally and externally through various communication channels.
- Act as the first point of contact for local Armed Forces Units and other key stakeholders, such as Service charities and other service providers.
- Ensure all areas of Council services recognise the needs of the Armed Forces community
- Understand Armed Forces activities and events within the parish area

5. Reporting

The Armed Forces Champion reports to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Full Council, as appropriate.

6. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The nomination should act at all times within the Parish Council's Standing Orders, with particular reference to SO18 (Financial Controls and Procurement), SO22 (Relations with Press/Media), SO24 (Communicating with District and County or Unitary Councillors), SO25 (Restrictions On Councillor Activities), FR 10 (Orders for work, goods and services), FR11 (Contracts), FR15 (Insurance) and FR17 (Risk management). The nomination should also act in accordance with City of Durham Parish Council policies on Communications, Environment and Sustainability, Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Safeguarding and social media.

Members unanimously **agreed** the Terms of Reference for the Armed Forces Champion., as set out in this report. (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

Members unanimously **agreed** to establish the Armed Forces Champion role, as set out in this report. (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

The Clerk advised that he had received a nomination of Councillor E Scott for this role. This was proposed by Councillor L Brown and seconded by Councillor S Walker. The appointment of Councillor E Scott as the Armed Forces Champion was unanimously **agreed** by Members. (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

The Chair reminded Members that this role would be reviewed at the annual meeting of the Parish Council each May.

11. REPORT FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The Chair presented the following minutes from the most recent meeting of the Parish Council's Community and Residents' Association Forum (CRAF).

In doing so, the Chair highlighted what was a difficult meeting and reported that the Whinney Hill Community Group has now resigned from the Forum.

The Chair advised that he hoped to have a meeting of the CRAF soon, in order that the Terms of Reference, as revised, could be agreed by all Associations present.

Minutes of the Community Residents' Association Forum annual meeting held on Wednesday 26th April 2023

Present: Adam Shanley and Alan Doig (City of Durham Parish Council) Richard Hornby and Carole Lattin (Gilesgate Residents Association), Alan Hayton and Des Ward (Whinney Hill Community Group), Simon Priestley (Crossgate Community Partnership), David Rosser (Sheraton Park Residents Association), Mike Costello (Distressed Residents in the Viaduct Area), Kirk Leister (St. Nicholas Community Forum), Mr John Ashby, Mr John Lowe (Side Residents Association) and Walia Kani (Durham University Residents Forum).

Also present: Inspector Dave Clarke (Durham Police) and PC Michael Ashurst (Durham Police).

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Roz Layton (Elvet Residents Association).

2. Election of Officers

Alan Doig was elected as Convener of the Forum, proposed by David Rosser and seconded by Simon Priestley.

Roz Layton was elected as Deputy Convener of the Forum, proposed by Alan Doig and seconded by Simon Priestley.

Adam Shanley was elected as Secretary of the Forum, proposed by Simon Priestley and seconded by Richard Hornby.

3. Approval of the draft minutes of the Forum meeting held on 25th January 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

In approving the minutes, Alan Hayton proposed that the Forum develops a mechanism by which the minutes can be approved before being presented at a Full Council meeting. The Secretary advised that he would seek to have these circulated for comments/ amendments prior to the next Full Council meeting where they would be presented.

Alan Hayton also advised that he felt that the views of the Forum did not appear to be given any due consideration when looking at the Full Council minutes and he felt that the views of the Forum on particular issues should be highlighted at meetings and minuted accordingly.

4. Consideration of the Terms of Reference for this Forum

The Convener reminded Members that there is a need for the Forum to review its Terms of Reference each year and this usually took place in April at the annual meeting of the Forum.

The Convener reminded Members that the existing Terms of Reference for the Forum had been pre-circulated in advance of the meeting. The Convener also advised that the changes made and circulated were amendments he had made to the Terms of Reference. The Convener reminded Members that this is the Forum whereby any comments of changes to the Terms of Reference may be made and agreed.

Alan Hayton and Des Ward advised that the amendments to the Terms of Reference had been circulated without any reference at all to who had made the changes. Alan Hayton also objected to Forum Members not having been asked in advance for their own amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Des Ward advised that he felt that Councillors should not be involved in this Forum and any Parish Councillors attending these meetings should be asked to leave. Des Ward advised that he felt that this went against the principle of the Forum and objected to Councillors attending the meetings. Des advised that he felt that Parish Councillors have their own political agendas which could get in the way of issues being progressed.

Des Ward and Alan Hayton asked for an audit of the Parish Clerk's emails in the run-up to the establishment of the Forum so that the original reasons for establishing the Forum could be considered.

Mike Costello advised that he felt that more was achieved for the community on DURF without Councillor attendance at those meetings.

Alan Doig advised that he would be content to leave the Forum and allow for this to become a meeting of all of the parish's Residents Associations only without anyone from the Parish Council involved. Des Ward objected to this statement by the Convener.

The Secretary highlighted that this Forum is an opportunity for Members to discuss the Terms of Reference for the Forum and to agree these in this Forum and proposed that a vote take place following the discussion to agree the newly drafted Terms of Reference. Alan Hayton and Des Ward advised that they were opposed to a vote on this in this meeting as Associations had not had the opportunity to discuss the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Fiona Adamson advised that she felt having Councillors attending this meeting was important so that they could listen to the views of residents on particular issues. Fiona also advised that she would struggle to justify calling a meeting of her own Residents Association simply to look at the Terms of Reference of the Forum; a matter which some residents may consider to be quite trivial.

Simon Priestley and Dave Rosser also advised that they supported Councillors attending the Forum meetings.

Richard Hornby advised that he felt that this was an issue for the individual Residents Association to nominate their chosen representative. Richard advised that, if the chosen representative so happened to also be a Parish Councillor, then this was fine but the Councillor was attending the meeting as a resident representing their individual Association.

Carole Lattin highlighted that she had been nominated by Gilesgate Residents Association to represent them on this Forum and she therefore felt entirely justified to attend these meetings.

The Secretary highlighted that Carole is an extremely proactive Councillor along with 14 colleagues for the community and that he felt that having Carole and Alan attend the meetings had not hampered any projects in any way, indeed quite the contrary.

The Secretary also advised that a decision on whether to allow Parish Councillors to attend the Forum was fundamental to the ongoing running of the Forum. The Secretary also objected as an employee of the Council to the idea that he would be the link between residents' associations and the forum.

The Secretary advised that he is simply an administrator of the Parish Council not the spokesperson or decision-maker and that he felt that these meetings were becoming increasingly hostile; something which runs the risk of becoming a HR matter for the Parish Council as an employer if he is to be left alone to defend any decisions.

This statement was supported by Kirk Leister who said that he did not feel that Parish Councillors attending the meeting but with a different hat on caused any issues at all.

The Convener proposed that a decision on the Terms of Reference be deferred until a special meeting in June could take place where these could be properly considered. The Convener asked all attendees to take the Terms of Reference to their respective Associations and come forward with any proposed changes for the next meeting.

5. Update on the Service Level Agreement between Durham Police and the City of Durham Parish Council

The Convener welcomed Dave Clarke and PC Michael Ashurst to the meeting and thanked them for their work in the City.

Dave began by confirming that the two additional officers as part of the Operation Lentil project in the City began in early April and they were already a visible presence around the City and its surrounding residential areas.

Dave advised that he was aware that the additional officers had already dealt with a number of incidents since commencing and having the additional resource for the City meant that issues were being dealt with much quicker than they were prior to the Operation.

Dave took the opportunity to thank the Parish Council and local residents for their ongoing support with this Operation and time will tell what difference this makes for the City in addition to the work already being done by the Parish Council and others on the Safety Hub.

The Secretary highlighted the exceptional amount of work which Dave Clarke has put into this Operation and his ongoing work to make the City a safer and more pleasant place for residents.

All Forum Members thanked Dave Clarke and his team for their work and agreed that this additional visible presence was really having a positive impact on the City.

Forum Members highlighted that the big issue in the City at present is the issue of nuisance begging and expressed their disappointment that DCC had not pursued a PSPO against begging in the City centre. Dave Clarke advised that he and his team are currently looking to build up an evidence base to go back to DCC on this to try once more for a PSPO.

The Forum unanimously **agreed** to draft a letter of support for such a PSPO in the City and to send this in to DCC at the earliest opportunity.

In relation to Operation Lentil, Dave advised that he and the Secretary would soon be conducting interviews for a new Safer Streets Co-ordinator role; funded by the PCC's office as part of the SLA and he hoped to have someone in post full-time in the near future.

The Convener thanked Dave Clarke for such a positive update. Having received a round of applause from Forum Members, Dave Clarke and Michael Ashurst left the meeting.

6. Discussion on proposed report on a) additional HMO licensing and b) the impact of Durham University on the parish area

The Secretary reminded Members that, further to previous discussions and correspondence on the BRE report on Durham University, he and John Ashby were able to meet with BRE representatives on 1st March 2023.

The Secretary reminded Members that he had asked BRE to focus on providing the Forum with a separate cost and scoping document for two areas:

1. A report setting out a justification for the introduction of an additional HMO licensing scheme for Durham City; and
2. A report which focused on the information we have agreed and which is set out in the attached document kindly produced by Alan Hayton for us.

In the case of number 1, the Secretary advised that BRE have now advised that they no longer offer this service since their last report in 2012 for the County Council but offered an alternative service which focused more on housing stock modelling, etc. The Secretary advised that the Forum has concluded in writing that this would not be appropriate for our needs.

Since that meeting therefore, the Secretary advised that he has reached out to over 10 local authorities across the country who have successfully adopted an additional HMO licensing scheme and asked if they have used the services of an external consultant to produce the report justifying their own schemes. A number of whom recommended the same Housing Sector Market Research consultancy and the Secretary advised that he had reached out to this consultancy firm to enquire about the costs for a report but again this company does not offer this service.

The Secretary also highlighted that he has reached out to the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils, the County Durham Association of Local Councils, the Institute for Licensing and private contractors to locate someone to carry out a business case for this; all of which had been to no avail.

In relation to the larger report detailed above at point 2, the Secretary highlighted that BRE advised that such a report would carry a significant workload, hourly-rated consultancy fees, boots on the ground for surveys, etc. and the likely costs for this would be well into the £100ks - far beyond the means of the Parish Council. It is therefore regretful that the Forum will not be able to proceed with this proposal at this time.

John Ashby highlighted that a compulsory, self-financing private landlords' registration scheme is/was DURF's top priority in the Issues and Actions Register. This arose from a well-received presentation of the Sheffield 'SNUG' scheme at DURF's national conference in 2016. John advised that both the Parish Council and DURF have sought the introduction of such a scheme in Durham.

John highlighted that the purpose of the scheme would be: (i) give better protection for student, (ii) require external maintenance of the property, and (iii) require management of nuisance e.g. noise from early morning parties, wheelie bins and parking.

John advised that DCC officers committed in February 2022 to putting together a business case, including the role of the housing officer(s) involved in such

inspections, and what funding would be required to recruit such officers. However, there has been no further progress as the County Council officers have subsequently felt unable to commit to working on a draft business case unless and until other agencies, notably the University, have committed to some funding for these additional officer resources.

John advised that he is aware that the local MP and Jeremy Cook (Durham University) are soon to meet with landlords and letting agents in the City and that Jeremy is presently pushing for the national Selective Licensing Scheme to be amended to recognise the special situation in University cities.

John recommended that the Forum should welcome such a proposal as well as the University pressing for a resumption of the County Council's work, currently suspended, on the business case for a licensing scheme for Durham City like the Sheffield SNUG scheme, with estimates of staffing requirements and costs.

This was unanimously **agreed** by Forum Members.

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

Signed,

Forum Convener

End of report

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

Signed,

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(27th July 2023)**

ITEM 6: REPORT ON THE PRODUCTION OF A SETTINGS STUDY FOR THE DURHAM CASTLE AND CATHEDRAL WORLD HERITAGE SITE

In 2020 a minor modification - an extension to the boundary of the World Heritage Site (WHS), was submitted to ICOMOS, the body which oversees WHS matters for UNESCO. The proposed boundary extension was put forward in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including DCC and the Parish Council.

The recommendations from ICOMOS raised matters which were felt needed to be addressed through development of a more robust evidence base. Following discussions with Historic England it was considered that this evidence base should be in the form of a setting study which would provide support to any proposed changes to the WHS site boundary etc.

The study would also be instrumental in supporting the production of the Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan, as well as function as an evidence base for planning decisions through the development management process.

The proposed new WHS Management Plan would also be informed by the study, in terms of providing a clearer understanding of the visual environment of the Outstanding Universal Values of the WHS.

The setting study is to be produced by an independent consultant commissioned by DCC, given its statutory role as the Local Planning Authority, particularly in terms of the protective measures toward the integrity of the WHS included within the County Durham Plan. The brief should be agreed by the WHS committee members and key partners, notably the Parish Council. The Setting Study would inform and support changes to the WHS Boundary as well as providing an evidence base to consider questions raised by ICOMOS previously including:

- a) A proposed minor modification to the boundary of the WHS, which may or may not vary to that previously put forward.
- b) Proposals relating to the consideration of a buffer zone,
- c) Details of how the revised area of the WHS would be protected, and what amendments to policy would be required if necessary.

The total costs for this project will be £30,000. Durham County Council has committed £10,000 towards this setting study. The World Heritage Site Coordinator has also confirmed that she is confident at being able to secure £5,000 from Durham Cathedral, Durham University and Historic England. The remaining £5,000 is being requested from the Parish Council.

This piece of work is essential to underpin the response to UNESCO, the CAMP and 2035 WHS Management Plan.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree to support the production of a World Heritage Site Setting Study at a cost of £5,000
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ITEM 6: PROPOSAL TO LAUNCH A GREEN BUSINESS AWARD FOR BUSINESSES IN DURHAM CITY

As Members are aware, the Parish Council has agreed a fund of £1,000 towards launching a Green Business Award in the City of Durham parish area as part of the Environment Committee's budget for 2023-24.

The City of Durham *Green Business Award* is a new initiative by the Parish Council aimed at celebrating and promoting local independent businesses that are making positive changes for the environment while helping local independent businesses become more eco-friendly.

The City of Durham Green Business Award Scheme is free for businesses to take part in and is designed to encourage and inform businesses about simple ways to reduce their environmental impacts, helping them to make sustainable changes that support local and national climate targets.

A further intention of the award is to recognise businesses in our city who are real recycling champions as part of this scheme with the offer of a recycling champion branded window sticker for your business frontage.

At the same time, the Environment Committee wishes to celebrate a winning business which goes above and beyond in our joint aim of tackling climate change.

A cash prize of £1,000 for the winning business is available as well as the chance to be named "Durham City Green Business of the Year 2023".

To take part, businesses will be asked to complete the attached form electronically either by retrieving a Word copy of the application form via the Parish Council's website or via a Google Forms questionnaire.

The content of this form has been shared with all Councillors and the Environment Committee recently agreed its content at its last meeting in June 2023.

If agreed by Council, the Parish Council will promote those via a flier, on our website and social media channels as well as through active engagement with Graham Sout, Durham BID and other partners. Businesses will also be asked to apply by a particular deadline.

It is proposed that the judging of all applications be delegated to the Parish Council's Environment Committee.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) For Members to agree to launch the Green Business Award, as set out in the above report.2) If 1) is agreed, for Members to agree the content of the Business Award Criteria.
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ITEM 6: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE SHOPWATCH SCHEME IN DURHAM CITY

As Members are aware, ShopWatch has been operating in Durham City in one form or another for some time now. The scheme has developed further since November 2022 through the work of the PCSO for Durham City Michael Ashurst and both the Police and daytime economy businesses in Durham are keen to continue this work.

ShopWatch is a partnership network of businesses in Durham City, linked by radio to each other and the police. This scheme operates in most major cities, towns and shopping centres across the country, and collaborating with local councils and the police, ShopWatch has a purpose to deter and ultimately assist with the prevention of antisocial behaviour within public spaces as well as increasing personal safety and confidence amongst many retailers and their customers.

Key aims of the Durham City ShopWatch scheme include:

- To tackle and prevent retail crime and anti-social behaviour through effective communication and the prompt reporting of retail crime, anti-social behaviour and criminal activity.
- To promote a sense of security for customers and staff.
- To improve police/licensee liaison by providing effective communications through two-way radio.

Since ShopWatch began developing in November 2022, Durham has noted a reduction in shoplifting crime within the City. This has had a positive impact on local businesses by decreasing losses of stock as well as creating a safer environment for customers. Having a live form of communication between businesses and the police is clearly central to the success of this scheme.

ShopWatch meets at the end of every month in Durham Town Hall and this is an important network of businesses which is well-attended and where feedback can be provided to the Police by retailers and the Police can also share intelligence to retailers (e.g. recent banning orders for individuals found guilty of an offence, etc.).

The Police are looking to expand the ShopWatch scheme further by providing approximately 14 licensed radio sets (provided by the company Apex who currently operate the scheme) to some of the smaller independent businesses in the City. These businesses have expressed an interest in being part of this scheme and it is hoped that supporting businesses with the hire costs for a radio set for a 12-month period will incentivise them to continue with this scheme into the future. This will also

allow businesses to assess the radio link while protecting their business by using the radio.

Provision of additional radio sets will also increase the coverage of the scheme across the City, thereby making this safer for businesses and visitors as well as growing the network of small businesses actively engaged in public safety within the City.

The Durham scheme, through Apex, has a rental fee of £20 per month, however Apex are willing to reduce this cost for the year to £120/ annum if 14 radios are hired, with match funding coming directly from Apex.

In addition, Inspector Dave Clarke has also been successful in securing additional officers to cover the City centre and residents and businesses have noted an increased visible police presence during the day.

The Police are hoping that the Parish Council will provide funding for these 14 radios at a total cost of £1,680.00. Although this funding was not allocated in our January budget setting, funding is available from the Parish Council's Operation Lentil budget of £50,000 in order to accommodate this expenditure.

One of the key aims of the Parish Council's Business Committee is to promote the daytime visitor economy of the City and supporting this proposal is consistent with that aim.

At its recent meeting on 18th July 2023, the Business Committee agreed to support this initiative as set out in the above report.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree to support the expansion of the ShopWatch scheme, as set out in the above report, and fund the hiring of 14 radios.
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ITEM 6: PROPOSAL TO IMPROVE THE FOWLER'S YARD AREA OF THE CITY

As Members are aware, improving the public realm and promoting businesses within the Fowler's Yard area of the City has been discussed at previous Committee meetings. At the Business Committee meeting in May, it was agreed that a Working Group of stakeholders should be established in order to assess what actions can be taken to positively promote this hidden gem of our City.

The potential of Fowlers yard to play a key role in the City's business, cultural and visitor economies has long been recognised but never realised.

At the May meeting of the Business Committee, the Committee received and welcomed a report by Councillor E Ashby which set out a number of proposed for working towards Fowler's Yard and Back Silver Street enhancement. These points set the basis on which the Working Group has worked are set out below:

Some ideas for working towards Fowlers Yard and Back Silver Street Enhancement

1. A scheme be designed to way-sign Walkergate as entry to FY and BSS and the circular route up the steps to Silver Street and then either on to the vennel to Saddler Street/ castle etc or North Road.
2. The 2 sets of steps from FY/BSS to Silver Street be cleaned and if possible, the walls to waist/shoulder height brightened.
3. Introduction of a lighting scheme to co-ordinate the circular route.
4. Briefing from and work with bin companies on details of their systems re: legal requirements, business contracts, etc. What signs can we/they put on bins etc? - need for basic information. Practical matters such as days of collection/ time etc. Best ways of arranging bins for collection and daily use. Guidance notes for new businesses.
5. Award for business demonstrating best waste management and waste reduction. This might go across the whole city centre.
6. Improve the green/ riverside boundary as part of a pedestrian route - good photos across the river.
7. Meet with businesses in Fowlers Yard including the Theatre etc and DCC's Cultural officer re: growing the wider cultural offer.

Since the May meeting of the Business Committee, a number of positive actions have been taken in relation to these proposals and these are summarised below:

Lack of signage

- It has been highlighted that there is a lack of signage within the public realm, particularly from Lower Claypath to the corner of St. Nic's Church to let pedestrians know that Fowler's Yard exists.
- Sarah Billingham (DCC) is arranging for a new fingerpost sign to be installed on the sign at the corner of St. Nic's to say "Fowler's Yard Artisan Crafters".
- In addition, Colin has requested the installation of a further fingerpost sign on the grass verge on the corner of Back Silver Street to include details of the Indoor Market (which includes information about the lift and the toilet facilities). Sarah is investigating this.

- The bin at Silver Street could be moved elsewhere on Silver Street to make the sign for Fowler's Yard more visible.

Bins

- There is a proliferation of bins within Fowler's Yard itself. New yellow painted hatching has been painted on to the road and this has improved the positioning of the bins so as to allow the collection lorry to make a U-turn once the litter is collected. It has also freed up space within the public realm and made the area look marginally tidier with the positioning of the bins more aligned.
- It is clear that a number of businesses do not have enough space capacity within their allotted bins and their bins are regularly overflowing. The Parish Council's Neighbourhood Warden team is liaising with businesses concerned to seek a solution but preferably for more collections to be paid for.
- The Parish Council has met with the owners of Fowler's Yard and, long-term and subject to planning approval, they are hoping to develop the site such that most of the industrial bins can be housed internally. Members will need to consider that there are heritage impact implications for these proposals insofar as the present site allows for a largely unblemished view of the World Heritage Site from the riverside.
- The Parish Council's Environment Committee is hoping to launch a Green Business Award in August and this includes a criteria for waste management as well as recycling and other criteria. It is hoped that this will inspire positive change for improvements to the public realm re: bins etc.
- Although the Neighbourhood Wardens have labelled a number of bins, a small few remain unlabelled and it is essential that these be identified so that action can be taken against anyone allowing their bins to overflow, etc.

Flytipping

- Colin at Durham Markets Company has reported incidents of fly tipping within his designated waste area and this is a continuing problem which must be addressed by identifying those who do this. Colin has received a quotation for a CCTV camera pointing at the bin area and has asked if the Parish Council might be in a position to offer some match funding towards this. The total cost for this camera is £1,341.06. Although Colin originally offered to pay £500 towards this, the Parish Council's Business Committee is recommending that the Parish Council funds the full costs of this and Colin has offered to improve his bin stores and make them more secure. It is felt that this will help to make the entrance to Fowler's Yard from St. Nic's a more attractive entrance.

General public realm appearance

- The Parish Council's Environment Committee has sufficient funding available to fund additional planters and this could help improve the public realm if adopted by local businesses in the area.
- The Durham City Theatre windows facing onto Fowler's Yard are in a terrible condition. The Clerk has met with representatives of the Theatre on-site and this is not only causing an issue from a public realm perspective but also causing a serious issue of damp to the upper floors of the Theatre. The

Clerk will look to support the group with an application to the Durham AAP and with planning etc. if this is acceptable to the Committee.

Photos of the site

Photo 1 – entrance to Fowlers Yard



Photo 2 – DMC bin store



Photo 3 – Durham City Theatre



Photo 4 – yellow hatching



Photo 5 – bin area behind Market Place



Photo 6 – signage from St. Nic's



**DECISION
REQUIRED**

For Members to consider the above report and agree any further action to be taken in respect of the aims of this proposal, including funding the costs of the additional CCTV camera at £1,341.06.

ITEM 6: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL EVENT OVER THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

As Members are aware, the Parish Council has agreed a total budget of £25,000 for this financial year towards hosting events in the City. One of the events identified within this budget was the regular Book Festival in the City.

The Parish Council and the Durham Markets Company have established a very close working relationship to deliver events for the City. As such, the Parish Council has received the following request for support to once again host the Durham City children's book festival in 2023 from the Markets Company:

Durham Children's Book Festival

Aims:

- To celebrate and promote north east authors, illustrators and small businesses who do such a fantastic job of inspiring children to pursue their dreams and aspirations.
- To encourage footfall into Durham City Centre
- To provide locals and tourists with a positive view of Durham City as a family friendly destination with accessible and affordable family activities.
- To work together with different inter-city organisations to promote Durham City Centre.

Festival programme

- 4 author/illustrator workshops each day interspersed with literary themed circus workshops from Lunatrix from 9/10am-4pm
- Free family entertainment (face painting and street entertainment TBC)
- Debut of the Durham Children's Book Festival Family trail (1 for young children around the immediate city centre with a slightly longer one for families with older children). Children will be encouraged to explore a different view of Durham City and visit independent retailers to find hidden story themed statues.
- Family market of north east businesses

Cross partnership working

- Durham Markets Company
- City of Durham Parish Council
- Durham BID
- Kylie Dixon and Northern Lass Lounge
- Elvet and Bailey
- Durham Constabulary
- Waterstones

Funding

- Literary themed circus workshops (2days) = £1400
- Bugs 'n' stuff (2 days) = £350

- Facepainter (2days) = £300
- Authors workshops (2days) = £1200
- Sound = £1000
- Promotion (leaflets and social media) = £500
- Family walking trail (to promote and encourage families to explore the city centre and the small independents within it) = £700

Total: £5450

Funding from Durham Markets: £1,150

Total grant funding applying for: £4300

Efforts to make the festival more sustainable

- The decision has been made to reconfigure the festival layout in order to make it as cost effective as possible while still providing a fantastic experience for young children and their families. With this in mind, we are using the gazebos to create a marquee this year (easier to assemble and allows us greater flexibility to work within the confines of the Market Place). We also are holding a family market to go alongside the festival, in order to allow local authors and small independent businesses to promote themselves in the city centre for a relatively small cost.

With grateful thanks for your consideration and we look forward to working with the CoDPC again on another successful event for families in the city centre.

The Parish Council has sufficient budget to support this event, as well as other future events in its agreed programme, at a cost of £4,300.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree to support the 2023 Durham City Children's Book Festival, as set out in the above report, at a cost of £4,300.
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ITEM 6: LNER CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE TICKET OFFICE AT THE DURHAM STATION

As Members are aware, rail firms have recently announced plans for the mass closure of England's ticket offices to "modernise" the railway. The LNER ticket office in Durham is also proposed to be closed and this has sparked a significant public reaction to the plans.

The move, pushed by the government to save costs, was confirmed by the industry body, the Rail Delivery Group (RDG). Train operators have confirmed their intention to shut down almost all of the 1,007 remaining offices, bar at the busiest stations, within three years.

The RDG have said ticket office staff would move on to station platforms and concourses in "new and engaging roles."

Among the proposed closures are 131 out of 149 remaining Northern Rail ticket offices; stations as big as Darlington and Durham on LNER; and all those run by Avanti West Coast.

England's big passenger train operators are directly contracted by the government and have been told to find savings to bridge the gap in revenue, with fare income still more than 20% down since the coronavirus pandemic and the decline in commuting amid a switch to hybrid working patterns.

The consultation on these proposals was launched on 5th July 2023 and ran until 26th July 2023. The Parish Council received no formal notification of the proposals to close the ticket office by LNER or any other rail body.

Given the tight timeframe in which to respond to this consultation, the Parish Council agreed to delegate responsibility to the Business Committee to consider and comment on these proposals. The Business Committee was joined by representatives from Gilesgate Residents Association, the Crossgate Community Partnership and the Durham Access for All Group at its recent meeting. All of these organisations have objected strongly to the proposals.

The Parish Council has responded as follows to the consultation:

The City of Durham Parish Council writes to express its strong objection to the proposed closure of ticket offices at LNER and urges Transport Focus to reject these proposals without delay.

Firstly, the Parish Council wishes to express its disappointment at the lack of engagement or advertising of this consultation as well as the extremely limited timeframe of 3-weeks in which to respond to a consultation. These proposals will have a huge impact on many of the most vulnerable passengers of LNER's services and it is wholly unacceptable to carry out a consultation in this manner. The Parish Council, like many other organisations with a democratic structure and a monthly meeting schedule, have had difficulty in putting this consultation on their regular schedule of meetings.

The Parish Council strongly believes that passengers would no longer have widespread and easy access to the purchase of rail products and best value fares if the ticket offices closures went ahead. Durham has the highest number of passengers from among the stations where LNER propose to close the ticket office and demand for the ticket office in Durham remains high.

No source is given for the Customer ticket purchasing habits information in the information booklet¹. The relevant year is not given, and during the Covid pandemic people were reluctant to buy tickets face-to-face. The actual number of passengers has not been given but from data provided by the Office for Rail and Road² we learn that in the past four years the numbers using Durham Station were as follows:

<i>Year (April to March)</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>
<i>Entries and exits</i>	<i>2,822,860</i>	<i>2,732,836</i>	<i>472,580</i>	<i>2,092,432</i>

Numbers are still recovering and it seems probable that Durham station in a "normal" year will have around 2.8 million travellers. This number has been on an upward trend: in 2000/01 1.2 million travellers used Durham Station. Assuming entries and exits are equal, the 1% figure is 14,000 tickets bought at the ticket office, but because we do not know which year or whether the 1% is 0.8% or 1.4% it could be considerably higher.

While the Government says that 'only' 12% of tickets are sold at ticket offices, in 2022/23, there were 1.5 billion passenger journeys, which equates to around 180 million journeys being facilitated by ticket offices.

There are a range of products and services available at the ticket office, which may not be available from Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs). This includes refunds, season ticket changes, ranger and rover tickets, ferry/bus connections, park and ride, group save, disabled persons discount, season tickets over one month in length, advance fares, rail card purchases, off-peak tickets before 9.30am, changes to ticket classes, seat reservations, cycle reservations, photocards for season tickets, scholar tickets, sleeper bookings and car parking.

Using TVMs is a one-sided process, there is no interaction between customer and retailer like there is in the ticket office. In contrast, ticket office staff can ask customers questions about their journey and requirements to ensure they get the right ticket for their journey and can offer a range of routes and classes.

¹ <https://www.lner.co.uk/globalassets/lner2233-wfr-information-booklet---digital-v13.pdf>

² <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/media/1908/table-1415-time-series-of-passenger-entries-and-exits-and-interchanges-by-station.ods>

Many TVMs do not take cash, or permit a part cash, part card payment. Given that people on lower incomes and older and disabled people are more likely to use cash, these groups stand to be disproportionately affected by ticket office closures and may find it difficult to travel as a result. In addition, the TVMs at Durham railway station are often unreliable and we are aware of anecdotal evidence of the TVMs not working.

The table on the web page <https://www.lner.co.uk/station-changes> lists where the various types of tickets may be bought. Only the Customer Information Centres will sell the full range of tickets and the one nearest to Durham is in Newcastle. A passenger needing to make a journey at short notice will not be able to buy or renew a railcard unless they have a smartphone, which many older people do not possess.

Unlike ticket office staff, TVMs do not automatically offer passengers the cheapest ticket for their journey, or clearly explain restrictions on certain fares, such as operator-specific tickets. Indeed, there is no requirement in the DfT's Schedule 17 guidance for TVMs to offer all fares. This risks passenger losing widespread and easy access to a range of products and fares.

Moreover, Durham is unique in the high percentage of overseas students at the university, often whose first language is not English and, although tech savvy, have a poor grasp of the complexities of multiple operators and complex fares structures which means they often rely on the face-to-face detailed explanations of how to navigate these.

Ticket office closures would cause a significant worsening of the facilities and support offered to disabled, deaf and older people. Already, disabled people face numerous barriers in accessing the rail network and are three times less likely to travel by rail than non-disabled people. Twenty-two percent of the population had a disability in 2020/2 and since 2002/3 the number of people reporting a disability has increased by 3.8million (+35%).

There has been overwhelming opposition to ticket office closures from disabled people's organisations, including our own local Durham Access for All Group, Disability Rights UK, National Federation of the Blind UK, Transport for All, RNIB, RNID, Guide Dogs, Scope, Thomas Pocklington Trust, Winvisible, Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People and the MS Society.

The presence of staff is vital for ensuring the railway is accessible to all. At many stations ticket office staff are the only staff present, and their responsibilities often include assisting passengers on to trains, including with ramps where required and meeting them off the train. TVMs are not accessible for many disabled people, the functionality is poor and there is no interaction, unlike in the ticket office. Disabled people are much less likely than non-disabled people to have access to the internet, and therefore online ticketing is not accessible for many.

Ticket offices provide passengers with dedicated advice and expertise about their journey and onward travel. They can tailor their service to meet their customers' needs in a way that TVMs or online ticketing is unable to. At many stations access to facilities such as toilets, disabled toilets, waiting rooms and lifts is dependent on ticket office staff.

Having 'roving' staff, no longer based in the ticket office, not only makes them more difficult to locate, which is particularly problematic for many disabled and older people, but also diminishes their ability to give tailored and one-on-one advice.

Staffed ticket offices have an important role in supporting passenger safety and security. Ticket offices provide a place of safety for both staff and passengers. Requiring staff to undertake transactions out on the platform puts both passengers and themselves in a more vulnerable position.

Ticket office staff are trained and experienced in dealing with difficult incidents, indeed many staff at Durham are trained in first aid (including mental health first aid), and the presence of staff deters abusive and anti-social behaviour.

Ticket office staff provide support and assistance to passengers during times of disruption or in response to emergencies and their role often includes carrying out safety and security checks at the station throughout the day.

As the passenger watchdogs will be aware, there is a consistent theme emerging from research, which is that passengers like and value the presence of staff. Having staffed ticket offices supports passenger perceptions and feelings around safety, and closing ticket offices could lead to passengers no longer feeling safe when travelling.

It is difficult to see how train operators would be able to demonstrate that their proposals would make cost savings, unless there is the intention to reduce staffing. The Parish Council is wholly opposed to any cuts to station staffing and believe any supposed cost savings cannot be used to justify a policy that will worsen passenger service, accessibility, safety, security, and access to rail products.

The Parish Council also believes that ticket office closures will be counterproductive in terms of revenue, as it would disincentivize rail travel for many. Already disabled people are much less likely to travel by rail, and there is the real risk that many people will not be able to travel by rail at all if these closures go ahead. Surely the rail industry cannot afford to lose the circa 180 million annual journeys which are facilitated by the ticket office?

The Parish Council is deeply concerned that the Government and train operators have given no commitment that staffing numbers will not reduce as a result of ticket office closures.

It is also of significant concern that if ticket offices are closed, there would no longer be any statutory regulation of staffing provision at stations and the passenger watchdogs would have no formal role in monitoring this. Undoubtedly this will lead to reduced staffing provision at stations.

Consequently, for the reasons set out above, the Parish Council urges Transport Focus to reject all the proposals to close ticket offices at LNER.

End of response

In addition to agreeing to respond to this consultation as per the above, the Business Committee has agreed to recommend to Full Council that the Council seeks an urgent meeting with the Rails Minister regarding these proposals. It is recommended that the Parish Council liaises with the MP's office in order to seek such a meeting.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) For Members to endorse the response to this consultation by the Parish Council's Business Committee.2) For Members to agree to liaise with the MP's office in order to seek a meeting with the relevant Minister to express the Council's concerns regarding these proposals.
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ITEM 6: TO CONSIDER RECENT CORRESPONDENCE FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES REGARDING A PSPO ON NUISANCE BEGGING IN THE CITY

The Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 was introduced in October 2014 which, amongst other things, brought in a range of powers that included Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO). The PSPO replaced dog control orders, designated public place order (DPPO) and gating orders, and create area-based restrictions on quality-of-life issues with the penalty for not complying being a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or prosecution.

With the legislation came a requirement to review the existing controls including the Dog Control Orders and Designated Public Space Protection Orders before October 2017 (3 years). A Public Spaces Protection Order is made by a Local Authority if satisfied on reasonable grounds that two conditions are met. Firstly, that:

- a) activities carried on in a public place within the authority's area have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality; and
- b) it is likely that activities will be carried on in a public place within that area and that they will have such an effect.

The second condition is that the effect, or likely effect, of the activities is, or is likely to be of a persistent or continuing nature, such as to make the activities unreasonable, and therefore justifies the restrictions imposed by the notice.

An advantage of a PSPO over other forms of byelaw is the instant and proportionate availability of enforcement by way of out of court disposal through a Fixed Penalty Notice.

A public spaces protection order is an order that identifies the public place and prohibits specified things being done in the restricted area and/or requires specified things to be done by persons carrying on specified activities in that area. It can make normally legal behaviours and actions illegal.

The order may have effect for up to 3 years and the Local Authority must consult with the chief officer of the police, the local policing body, and local communities before issuing the order.

A "public place" is defined at section 74 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act as: "any place to which the public or any section of the public has access, on payment or otherwise, as of right or by virtue of express or implied permission. Accordingly, land used by the public as a matter of custom and practice but not by virtue of any right or express permission will still count as a public place.

On 16 March 2022 DCC Cabinet agreed there should a consultation exercise to consider public views on whether a PSPO should be introduced to control aggressive begging. A public consultation exercise was carried out between 18 March 2022 and 29 April 2022 to seek and welcome views on this subject. Certain organisations such as Durham Constabulary, Durham Business Improvement District, the City of Durham Parish Council and Sanctuary 21 were specifically contacted as part of this exercise.

At that time, the City of Durham Parish Council supported the introduction of the PSPO however this was not agreed by DCC's Cabinet as the Council felt that there was insufficient evidence to support the introduction of a PSPO against aggressive begging.

Since this decision was made, the Parish Council has been made aware of a letter from no fewer than 80 local businesses and the PCC requesting that DCC reconsiders this issue and introduces a PSPO on nuisance begging.

The letter from local businesses states as follows:

We are writing on behalf of the 45 traders in the Market Hall and the 35 Saturday outdoor traders, to submit our support for a PSPO in Durham City with regards to nuisance begging and anti-social behaviour as it is having a direct and adverse effect on ourselves, the small independent businesses which we support and perceptions of the city as a whole.

Nuisance begging in and around the Market Place is disruptive to trade as it discourages the buying public from entering nearby premises and/or not stopping to look at stalls outside in the Market Place.

The nuisance begging is often associated with anti-social behaviour, fuelled by drink, drugs or both, which is intimidating to market staff, traders and customers. Customers and visitors' feedback have highlighted negative connotations of the city centre as they feel this type of nuisance begging and associated anti-social behaviour is very visible and prevalent and puts them off from visiting. Comments are passed on social media, which then has a direct knock-on effect with businesses. With footfall in the city centre still fairly low and a long way to go before reaching the figures pre-pandemic, businesses in the city don't need any more obstacles put in the way of visitors coming to Durham, but rather need positive and obvious encouragement.

It is usually the small independent businesses which take the majority of the financial brunt of this negative perception of the city centre, and we are increasingly concerned that, without a PSPO in place to tackle nuisance begging, then Durham will, as it is now already starting to, become a focal point for nuisance begging and will escalate further as other cities in the North East, such as Newcastle, Darlington and Sunderland already have existing PSPO's in place, leaving Durham as the only remaining option, a very attractive one at that with its strong student population.

The resulting anti-social behaviour not only puts our staff, traders and members of the public at risk with market staff having to be on constant alert, particularly during weekends and school holidays, but the language and abuse, which is so clearly driven by an excess of drugs and drink, does not make it the pleasurable experience it should be, especially for families, to visit the city centre.

We have provided, at our own additional cost, stewards and have had to double up on staffing during holiday periods which is very difficult during this financial period of Covid recovery, so quickly followed by the cost-of-living crisis. In addition to this, our traders are bearing the cost of replacing stock which is damaged/stolen as a result of anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour in the Market Place

detracts from events being held in an iconic city centre and had resulted in some traders not wishing to return because of the experiences they have had as a result of anti-social behaviour enhanced by drink and drugs.

The city centre desperately needs a co-operative approach between police, council and businesses to address the growing problem of nuisance begging and anti-social behaviour. The city centre is becoming renown for all the wrong reasons and attracting a growing number of such people who, in the main, aren't homeless but find the begging so lucrative. Open air drinking, fuelled by drugs, is also clearly a problem and affects the ambience of the city centre which people are working so hard to enhance. The application of a PSPO might be politically unpalatable to some but, to those with businesses in the city centre, it is just another negative preventing people coming to the city. We are already finding that most new businesses are hospitality/licensed and there is a clear gap in quality retail businesses to attract a day time footfall, which, if it is allowed to continue, will be a very worrying trend.

The Parish Council's PinPoint system has also recorded incidents of nuisance begging, as reported by members of the public.

At its last meeting, the Parish Council's Business Committee agreed to support the local businesses who have drafted this letter to DCC and propose to Full Council that they write to DCC urging the Council to adopt a PSPO at its earliest convenience.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree to write directly to DCC urging them to consider adopting a PSPO on nuisance begging.
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ITEM 8: REQUEST FOR A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE MAYOR'S CHARITY APPEAL

The Parish Council has received correspondence from the Mayor's PA at Durham County Council on behalf of newly elected Mayor of Durham City Councillor Lesley Mavin, asking if we would consider supporting this year's Mayor's Charity Appeal.

Following her election as Mayor in May 2023, Councillor Mavin announced that any funds raised during her Mayoral year would be channelled towards St. Cuthbert's Hospice in Neville's Cross.

No specific amount has been requested in the letter from the Mayor's PA and any offers of a donation will be gratefully received and acknowledged.

In both 2020 and 2022, the Parish Council supported the previous Mayors' appeals with a donation of £500 towards the Fire Fighters Charity and Durham Samaritans respectively.

The Hospice itself has recently launched a public appeal for donations towards the cost of energy to keep the Hospice running.

The Hospice provides free care and support to people with life-limiting illnesses, people approaching the end of life and people that are bereaved including children and young people.

Hospices were previously protected by price caps helping to offset the alarming cost of energy but since March much of this support has significantly reduced. The reality is Hospices are receiving minimal discounts, the same as shops, restaurants and even pubs.

Forced to turn to its already generous local communities and business supporters the Hospice has launched its Power Up! Appeal to raise the funds needed to weather the storm that will inevitably reach them this winter.

Last year, Paul Marriott, Chief Executive of St Cuthbert's Hospice, and the leaders of 11 other independent local Hospices across the Northeast and North Cumbria collectively issued a call to action for Government to respond to the impact of sharply rising energy costs affecting end-of-life care providers.

The energy crisis, as a significantly impactful issue for Hospices, received coverage across the year featuring on ITV and the BBC with ongoing support from City of Durham MP Mary Kelly Foy who wrote to the Chancellor specifically on the matter. Durham Council Leader Amanda Hopgood and the new Mayor of Durham, Lesley Mavin have too shown ongoing support for the Hospice.

However, despite the coverage and despite the clear ask for help the Hospice is once again turning to those they already rely upon - their very loyal supporters.

St Cuthbert's Hospice prides itself on being a centre of excellence within our community, providing all-embracing and individualised care to all those affected by life-limiting illnesses, at a time and a place that is right for them. The everyday things that can easily be taken for granted, like popping the kettle on for a cuppa,

or enjoying a warm bath, really make a difference to those receiving care and support at the Hospice.

It is so important that Hospices can provide this level of care and continue to do so for the future.

So far, the Hospice has received £50,000 in pledges from grant-giving organisations and corporate supporters and are asking the public to support in generating the final £50,000 required.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) For Members to agree to support the Mayor's Charity Appeal for Durham Samaritans.2) If 1) is agreed, for Members to agree an appropriate donation to the Mayor's Charity Appeal.
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ITEM 9: PROPOSAL TO ADOPT THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

Local authorities, including town and parish councils, are created by statute and so can only do what they are allowed to do by statute. This means that before undertaking any activity, members must be satisfied that the town council has the power under some statute to undertake the activity.

Town and Parish councils have many specific powers, for example to provide open spaces and recreational facilities, and there is also the general power in section 137 Local Government Act 1972 to spend up to a certain limit for 'purposes not otherwise authorised'.

In the Localism Act 2011, the Government included a 'general power of competence' with the intention that local authorities would no longer have to identify a specific power, and that the risk of challenge would be further reduced.

The general power of competence is the 'power to do anything that individuals generally may do'. It is specifically stated that this includes things that are unlike anything else the local authority does, or unlike anything that other public bodies do. The authority can use the general power of competence inside or outside the parish area and it need not show that the action benefits the authority or its area or its residents. There is no limit on expenditure under the general power of competence. The general power of competence has replaced the power of well-being, which is no longer available to local authorities in England.

The only real limitation is that the general power of competence cannot be used to get round a restriction or limitation in an existing specific power – they will still remain. The general power cannot be used where the primary purpose of an activity is to raise money but it could be used to invest (subject to government guidance) in a company or a co-operative society where there may be an investment return. Governance requirements and other legislation (e.g. employment, health and safety etc) still apply.

The Government has not given any guidance on what sort of activities might be undertaken under the general power but some examples could be:

- Running a community shop or post office;
- Investing in a local co-operative society;
- Setting up a company to provide a service such as a bus service;
- Cutting highways verges but this would need permission from the Highways Authority;
- Providing a grant to an individual, e.g. an Olympic or Paralympic athlete.

The General Power is available automatically to principal councils but only to 'eligible' parish councils. The conditions for eligibility are:

- The parish council must pass a resolution stating that it is eligible to use the general power;
- When the council passes the resolution at least two thirds of the membership of the council must have been elected (i.e., not co-opted);
- The clerk must hold the Certificate in Local Council Administration (the recognised qualification for clerks) and must also pass the new 2012 CiLCA module on the use of the general power.

Eligibility lasts until the annual meeting of the council immediately after the next ordinary elections (i.e. May 2019) but can be renewed at that meeting provided the conditions are still met. Parish councils which are eligible to use the general power are no longer need to keep a separate record of any section 137 expenditure.

The City of Durham Parish Council satisfies all the conditions as:

- All 15 Councillors were elected at the election in May 2021;
- The Clerk holds the CiLCA qualification;
- The Clerk has passed the 2012 CiLCA module on the Power of General Competence

It is recommended that the members consider this report and pass the following resolution:

"The Parish Council resolves from 27th July 2023, until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council, that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, to adopt the General Power of Competence".

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree to the above resolution and adopt the General Power of Competence.
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ITEM 10: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE EXCAVATION OF THE FLASS WELL AHEAD OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FLASS VALE PROTEST PICNIC

Members are reminded that the Friends of Flass Vale are organising a 50th Anniversary event for the Flass Vale Protest Picnic; a resident-led movement which helped to safeguard the Flass Vale from development and retain this precious resource as an important green lung in the heart of our City.

Members have already agreed to support this event with a small donation of £300 towards Hall hire and catering. The organiser – Val Standen – was also named Citizen of the Year at our annual meeting of the parish for her work in maintaining the Vale. The Friends of Flass Vale work tirelessly to keep this area beautiful and it is right that we mark our appreciation for the work they do.

In conjunction with this event, Councillor Liz Brown has also been working to carry out some environmental improvements to the area; including restoring the path leading to the Flass Well through her Members' local schemes funding. Part of this work also includes the excavation of the Flass Well (owned by Redhills) and both Councillors Liz Brown and Elizabeth Scott are part-funding this work, to be carried out by Durham University's Archaeology department at the end of the first week in August.

The works are set to commence on 7th August 2023 and all running smoothly, will take approximately 1 week to complete, ensuring that this will be ready for the 50th Anniversary. It is hoped that the event could include an official opening of this ancient Well.

In addition, the University is also hoping to produce an interpretation board to show the history of the Well and its historical importance to residents, visitors, etc.

The total costs of the project are as follows:

Excavation, post-excavation works and reporting £6,580

Interpretation

Research and design £900

A2 Oak lectern interpretation panel £1,100

Total: £8,580

Both Councillors Brown and Scott are providing £2,000 each in funding towards this work and the Parish Council has been asked if it might also consider providing £2,000 towards this work, with the remaining funding coming directly from Redhills.

Very little is known about the Well itself however historically, pure and reliable water was very difficult to come by. The rare places where safe and fresh water sprang miraculously from the ground were known for miles around and were treated with the greatest reverence from pagan times.

As the North-East became Christianised, so the springs became regarded as holy wells. Many of them were dedicated to saints whose miraculous intervention was believed to have caused this life-giving water to gush endlessly out of the ground.

In County Durham, there are believed to be at least 30 holy wells which once had religious significance.

Durham City has a number of these holy wells. Possibly the best preserved is the Flass Well, which can be accessed by the steps at the top of Mowbray Street and Flass Street. It is believed to have been used by local people during the winters of 1947-48 and 1962-63, when it provided pure spring water, but it is now so overgrown and full of rubbish that you cannot see it.

The Flass Well is beneath Redhills, the Durham Miners' Association's Hall, and as the association restores its site, the historic well is seen as a key part of this development.

Beneath the overgrowth there is expected to be quite a lot of stonework holding the bank up and providing a seat beside the gushing spring. Many of the holy wells of County Durham are now dry. Mining affected water levels and, of course, development has redirected many streams.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree to support the excavation of the Flass Well, as set out in the above report, at a cost of £2,000.
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