



## City of Durham Parish Council

The City of Durham Parish Council. Office 3, Clayport Library. 8  
Millennium Place. Durham. DH1 1WA.

Telephone: 07510 074875 Email: parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk

Date of Summons: 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024

### SUMMONS

**To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council:** Councillors E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, L Brown, N Brown, A Doig, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, R Hanson, G Holland, C Lattin, 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 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024 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**

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## **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 COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024**
- 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 5. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- **Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

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

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

- Verbal report on public inquiry relating to the Sniperley applications.
- Report by Jo-Anne Garrick on strengthening County Durham Plan Policy 16 (attachment).
- Report by the Parish Clerk on appeals data for County Durham.

- **Environment Committee minutes from meetings held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

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

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

- Report by David Miller on the condition of the existing Public Rights of Way network within the parish area.
- To consider supporting efforts to improve the drainage of the football field and adjacent adult fitness area at Merryoaks.

- 6. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024

- 7. INTRODUCTORY REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY CONSULTATION**

- 8. REPORT ON SECURING THE FUTURE OF THE DURHAM CITY SAFETY HUB**

- 9. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVE(S) ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

- Report by Councillor J Ashby on the most recent meeting of the University's Student Housing Strategy Management Group.

- Report by the Parish Clerk on the most recent meeting of the Durham BID board.

# City of Durham Parish Council

**Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7:00pm in the Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF.**

**Present:** Councillors A Doig (in the Chair), E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, L Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen and S Walker.

**Also present:** Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and Ms Polly Lowe (member of the public) and Councillor David Bell and Audrey Christie (CDALC).

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

Apologies were received from Councillors N Brown, E Scott, R Ormerod, G Holland and H Weston.

## **2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

None received.

## **3. PRESENTATION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S QUALITY AWARD BY COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

The Chair welcomed Councillor David Bell and Audrey Christie, from the County Durham Association of Local Councils, to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Councillor D Bell began by expressing his great joy to see the youngest local Council in County Durham – the City of Durham Parish Council - being recognised with a prestigious national award as part of the Local Council Award Scheme.

The Parish Council was awarded Quality Council status by the National Association of Local Councils last year. This achievement recognises that the council achieves the highest standards in governance, community leadership and council improvement.

Moreover, the City of Durham Parish Council goes above and beyond their legal obligations, leading their community and continuously seeking opportunities to improve and develop even further.

The City of Durham Parish Council has been in existence for just under 5 years and is now only one of three local Parish and Town Councils (out of 104 across County Durham) to have received this accolade and one of only 105 out of approximately 10,000 local Councils nationally.

The Award Scheme particularly highlighted community leadership, excellent governance, the Parish Council's corporate plan and the Neighbourhood Plan as outstanding in its assessment.

Councillor D Bell advised that the Local Council Award Scheme is a peer assessed programme that has been designed to promote and recognise councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector.

Councillor D Bell advised that it is great to see the speed and effectiveness with which the Parish Council has developed since it was founded in 2018.

In particular, the Parish Council has been known for taking the lead on big events such as Remembrance Day, The Platinum Jubilee, the King's Coronation and the City's Children's Book Festival.

In addition, the work the Parish Council does to improve its local environment, promote the City's rich and diverse heritage and tackle anti-social behaviour and environmental issues by working so brilliantly alongside the Police and Neighbourhood Wardens, have been tremendous.

As the City's local Council, Councillor D Bell advised that he was also aware that the City of Durham Parish Council gets its fair share of planning and licensing applications each month too. Analysing each application in such painstaking detail in order to protect the City from inappropriate development has been a key pillar in the Council's delivery. It is really tremendous to see the victories you have had on this front and the work you continue to do on this front.

Councillor D Bell advised that CDALC very much recognises that the City of Durham Parish Council has really established itself as an organisation which acts on its residents' issues and is now a major stakeholder in the life of our City.

The City of Durham Parish Council, and other local councils, are at the front line of the Government's localism agenda and it is clear that you do all you can to deliver services whilst being efficient and cost-effective.

Councillor D Bell expressed huge congratulations to all on this tremendous achievement.

Ms Audrey Christie also took the opportunity to highlight the success of the Parish Clerk in achieving his CiLCA qualification, which has propelled the Council to this recognition by the national body.

Audrey advised that the Clerk was a great joy to work with and she personally felt that the Clerk Adam had been her fellow study companion as she completed her CiLCA at the same time as Adam had. Audrey asked the Council to be in no doubt about the amount of work this qualification was and thanked Adam for all his support and work on this.

The Chair thanked CDALC for their continued work with the local Parish and Town Council sector and gratefully received the Award on behalf of the Parish Council.

#### **4. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> December were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

#### **5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ms Polly Lowe advised that she was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items.

#### **6. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

##### **• Planning and Licensing Committee**

Councillor S Walker presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023. There were no queries from Members.

##### **• Environment Committee**

Councillor C Lattin presented the Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023. There were no queries from Members and Councillor C Lattin took the opportunity to present two leaflets currently being produced by the Environment Committee and which would soon be distributed to residents of the parish. One leaflet being a recycling leaflet to various hotspot areas of the City where waste is a particular issue. The other being a community emergency plan leaflet – grant funded through the Community Resilience Fund – which is seeking volunteers to help with the production of the plan. Members thanked Councillor C Lattin for her continued efforts on these initiatives.

##### **• Business Committee**

Councillor D Freeman presented the minutes from the Business Committee meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023. There were no queries from Members.

##### **• Finance Committee**

The Chair presented the minutes from the Finance Committee meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023. There were no queries from Members.

#### **7. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023 as follows:

The Chair began by warmly welcoming Councillor John Ashby to his place as the new Councillor for Durham South and offered many congratulations on his election victory.

The Chair also put on record his sincere condolences to Councillor Helen Weston and her family on the passing of Mike Weston. The Chair noted that Mike was a

former England International rugby player who captained his home team 5 times during the 1963 England rugby union tour of Australasia. The Chair highlighted that Mike's sporting and business endeavours makes him one of the City of Durham's outstanding sons.

The Chair also sent best wishes to colleague Councillor Grenville Holland and wished him a speedy recovery after an awful fall on 17<sup>th</sup> January.

The Chair remarked that the Agenda for the next Planning and Licensing Committee meeting is a very important one. On the positive, the Chair welcomed that the Committee will be meeting with Stuart Priestley - DCC's lead ecologist - on the important issue of biodiversity net gain as well as adopting Jo-Anne Garrick's excellent reports on short-term letting and Policy 16.

On the not so positive, the Chair expressed his horror at the suggested plans to build a 300 bed+ PBSA on car park land near the hospital for undergraduate students. The land in question is a 100-space car park that is completely vital for the acute demand for parking next to the hospital. The Chair advised that he has grave concerns about these plans and expressed his confidence that the Committee will be analysing the plans very carefully once received.

The Chair thanked all Members who took part in the meeting with the Citrus Group on plans for the new Prince Bishops Centre. The Chair also thanked James and the team for engaging with the Parish Council throughout this process. The Chair remarked that, whilst this is clearly a "do or die" scenario for the centre, it is concerning that little plans seem to be in place for the construction phase of this development and where the existing retail offer in the centre will be housed in the meantime. In addition, the Chair remarked that there seemed to be little community offer once the development is complete. The Chair did however highlight that James has reached out to the Clerk and offered a base for Durham Pointers to be housed in the centre.

The Chair expressed his shock at the alarming figures the Clerk circulated in relation to waiting lists for social housing. As of January 2023, nearly 10,300 people were on a waiting list for a house. The Chair remarked that the waiting time – even for those most in need – is absolutely horrific, all the more so given that 481 of those on the list are women fleeing domestic violence. The Chair advised that the need for more social and affordable housing is just as acute in the City as it is elsewhere in the County. As such, the Chair advised that he would be throwing his full weight and support behind Neville's Cross Councillors in identifying an appropriate site in the Ward for constructing new affordable housing, for which there is a substantial amount of Section 106 money that must be spent in the Ward. The Chair particularly thanked Councillor Susan Walker and Glen Walker for putting together a team of experts to look into this matter.

The Chair also expressed his shock to see the figures from today's Palatinate magazine which shows that Durham University's expenditure on commission for agents to secure international students has tripled to nearly £5million in 2022/23 alone. The University's original pledge to open 4-5 new colleges was not mentioned in the refresh of Durham's 10-year plan, while plans to increase the proportion of international students remain. The Chair remarked that Durham is

not alone in facing these pressures and it is worrying that the sector appears to be overly dependent on international students to prop up UK universities financially.

The Chair formally put on record his thanks to John Booth, the former Chair of the Freeman's charitable Trust, who has recently retired from this role. The Chair advised that John has been a terrific friend to the Parish Council – supporting our work particularly for the Platinum Jubilee and Coronation. The Chair advised that John's earlier work in 2008 as part of the Business Enterprise and Regeneration Group in the City set the tone for many more years of volunteer work in the City and undoubtedly the Freeman's Beacon will be his legacy. The Chair advised that he will be writing to John in due course to thank him for his work with the Parish Council and he has asked the Clerk to consider if there may be an appropriate award we can look to present to John for his many years' service.

Finally, the Chair thanked Owen Cleugh and Jacqui Toase – two exceptional officers at the County Council – for their ongoing work and commitment to the City Safety Hub. The Chair expressed his delight that they have worked so well with our brilliant new Vicar at St. Nic's Church and have managed to secure the room hire at nearly a third of the original cost. The Chair remarked that the Safety Hub is truly a remarkable example of partnership working delivering for our community.

## **8. REPORT ON THE UPGRADING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S WEBSITE**

The Clerk reminded Members that there is a desire to upgrade the existing Parish Council website and a budget allocation to deliver this has been included in the Council's draft budget for 2024/25.

At present, the Clerk advised that the Parish Council has a service level agreement (SLA) with the County Council to provide our website, along with a maintenance and support agreement. Our current website and existing SLA with DCC have been in place since 2018.

The Parish Council's website is a key tool for publishing important (statutory) documents and making residents aware of the work of the Council as well as news and events happening in the parish area.

The Clerk highlighted that, as part of its recent public consultation exercise, members of the public identified the Council's website as the best way for residents to stay informed of the Council's work.

A number of schools and other Parish/Town Councils have a similar arrangement with the County Council to provide this service. However, in September 2023, DCC's Head of Digital Services advised partners that this agreement would end in April 2024, following a comprehensive review of the Council's website support SLA, we will no longer provide the service to schools and town/parish councils from 1 April 2024.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has established a website working group including himself and Councillors Ashfield and Walker.



In reviewing the design specification for the new website, the working group particularly highlighted the websites of Prince Bishops, Durham BID and Stanley Town Council as particularly attractive and user-friendly.

The Clerk advised that he had reached out to a number of website providers and had received the below quotes from various suppliers, all of whom can deliver this new site by the beginning of April 2024:

**Company A** - £1,650 (+VAT)

**Company B** - £7,400 (+VAT)

**Company C** - £8,200 (+VAT)

In the case of Company A, the Clerk advised that the Parish Council has previously worked with this company on other graphic design projects, e.g. the production of the "What to do if you have a local issue in Durham..." leaflet, etc.

In addition to the costs set out above, the Clerk also recommended that the Parish Council acquires a dozen or so photos to populate the webpage from a local photographer and an additional element to the budget for this work is included in the current draft budget, should Members approve the appointment of Company A.

Once the chosen company is selected, it was proposed that the Council's working group be delegated overall design responsibility for the new website.

Members unanimously **agreed** to the upgrading of the Parish Council's website, as set out in the above report. In doing so, Members also **agreed** that Company A should be selected to carry out the works for the new website.

Members also unanimously **agreed** to delegate overall design responsibility for the new website to the Parish Council's working group.

Members also unanimously **agreed** that Councillor John Ashby should join as an additional member of the website working group.

## **9. TO REVIEW THE PARISH COUNCIL'S MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES**

Following on from the Durham South parish ward by-election, the Chair advised that there is a need for the Parish Council to consider the membership of its own committees as well as Councillors who represent the Parish Council on various outside organisations.

Members unanimously **agreed** the new Membership of its Committees as follows:

<b>Planning and Licensing Committee (7 Members)</b> Grenville Holland (Chair) Susan Walker (Vice-Chair) John Ashby Carole Lattin Alan Doig Esther Ashby Nicola Brown	<b>Environment Committee (6 Members)</b> Carole Lattin (Chair) Victoria Ashfield (Vice-Chair) David Freeman Liz Brown Susan Walker Rupert Friederichsen
<b>Personnel Committee (5 Members)</b> Alan Doig (Chair) Elizabeth Scott (Vice-Chair) Liz Brown Victoria Ashfield Grenville Holland	<b>Business Committee (6 Members)</b> Richard Ormerod (Chair) David Freeman (Vice-Chair) Nicola Brown Grenville Holland Esther Ashby Victoria Ashfield
<b>Finance Committee (6 Members)</b> Alan Doig (Chair) David Freeman (Vice-Chair) John Ashby Victoria Ashfield Helen Weston Liz Brown	

Members also unanimously **agreed** its representation on outside organisations as follows:

<b>Local organisation/ body</b>	<b>City of Durham Parish Council representative</b>
Community Engagement Task Force	Victoria Ashfield
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Economic	Esther Ashby
Community Engagement Task Force sub group – Citizenship	Victoria Ashfield
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Lived Environment	Carole Lattin
PBSA Liaison Group	Esther Ashby
Durham Access Group	Nicola Brown and Susan Walker
CDALC Larger Councils Forum	Esther Ashby, Adam Shanley and Richard Ormerod
City Safety Group	Adam Shanley
Durham BID board	Adam Shanley
Durham AAP Board	Susan Walker
Durham University Housing Group	John Ashby

## 10. PARISH COUNCIL STRATEGY 2024/25

The Chair reminded Members that the aim of the Parish Council's strategy is to give local residents, Councillors and Officers a clear understanding of what the council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver its aims and objectives.

The strategy sets out what the areas of development or change the Council intends to focus on over the next year outlining those areas of service that are identified as priority aims and objectives.

Members unanimously **agreed** that the five overarching priorities for the Parish Council are:

1. Being an ambitious voice for the city
2. Enhancing the physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish
3. Upholding the Neighbourhood Plan and representing the parish on planning matters
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.

Members also unanimously **agreed** that the priorities for each Committee in 2024/25 should be as follows:

### Planning and Licensing Committee

<b>Council priorities 2024/25</b>	<b>Planning priorities 2024/25</b>	<b>Looking Forwards initiative(s)</b>
<b>1. Being an ambitious voice for the city</b>	Representing the Parish as a consultee on planning matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City  Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Consulting the Parish on planning matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

<b>2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish</b>	Ensuring schemes deliver the required levels of affordable housing and adapted housing for the disabled and elderly.	Theme 4. A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Promoting the creation and adoption of new Public Rights of Way and ensuring that they are accessible to all.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City  Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
	Protecting our green infrastructure and assets within our parish boundary and ensuring that they are used to the best possible public benefit.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
<b>3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.</b>	Upholding the development plans for the area i.e. Neighbourhood Plan and County Durham Plan.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City  Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live

	To maintain and develop an evidence-base to update the Neighbourhood Plan and comment on planning applications.	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live</p>
	Protecting our World Heritage Site, Conservation Areas and designated and non-designated heritage assets.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Delivering a Conservation Area Management Plan	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Protecting against overdevelopment	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live</p>
<b>4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish</b>	Supporting accommodation above retail units in the City centre.	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 4: A City With Attractive And</p>

		Affordable Places To Live
	Supporting tourist attractions and transport infrastructure for the visitor economy	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future
<b>5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.</b>	Putting green future at the heart of planning considerations	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Resisting schemes which do not deliver net zero by 2030 and supporting those which do.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

<b>Council priorities 2023/24</b>	<b>Licensing priorities 2023/24</b>	<b>Looking Forwards initiative(s)</b>
<b>1. Being an ambitious voice for the city</b>	Representing the Parish on licensing matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
<b>2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish</b>	Ensuring that all new licensing applications and existing premises promote the four licensing objectives.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Empowering our residents to make informed representations on licensing matters.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City  Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy

	<p>Supporting a cumulative impact policy for the parish</p> <p>Supporting a late night-levy on licensed premises in the parish.</p>	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy</p>
	<p>Making licensing as open as possible through hosting an online licensing map</p>	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p>
	<p>Making the City more accessible to all by representing the needs of all users in relation to pavement and outdoor seating applications.</p>	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy</p>
<p><b>3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.</b></p>	<p>Ensuring that the objectives of licensing and planning are aligned.</p>	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy</p>
<p><b>4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish</b></p>	<p>Promoting the early evening economy to families and tourists</p>	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p> <p>Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City</p> <p>Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy</p>
<p><b>5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.</b></p>	<p>To encourage all new taxi licenses granted by DCC to be for low emissions/ electrical vehicles only.</p>	<p>Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future</p>

## Environment Committee

<b>Council priorities 2024/25</b>	<b>Environment priorities 2024/25</b>	<b>Looking Forwards initiative(s)</b>
<b>1. Being an ambitious voice for the city</b>	Engaging with and responding to residents of all ages and backgrounds in environment-related work Mobilise Volunteer groups Work with young people and respond to their concerns	Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life.
<b>2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish</b>	Promote cleaner air, a cleaner river, green spaces, and streets for living across the city. Reduction in light pollution. Reduction in night time noise. Sustainable travel	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
<b>3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.</b>	Work with all relevant committees to ensure the climate and ecological emergencies are considered in all planning matters. Sustainable housing	Theme 4: A City with attractive and affordable places to live
<b>4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish</b>	Improve and protect the appearance of the city and its heritage.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City  Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
<b>5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.</b>	Be proactive and collaborate with all partners (including Parish Council committees, Durham County Council, residents, developers, landlords, and other businesses) to coordinate our impact on the climate and ecological emergencies and increase community resilience. Encourage sustainable Travel Increased awareness and action on climate change. Tackle the ecological emergency	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure



	To work with partners to establish a Community Emergency Plan for the parish area	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future  Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
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### **Business Committee**

<b>Council priorities 2024/25</b>	<b>Business priorities 2024/25</b>	<b>Looking Forwards initiative(s)</b>
<b>1. Being an ambitious voice for the city</b>	Engaging with local businesses	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
<b>2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish</b>	Promoting responsible businesses	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
<b>3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.</b>	Supporting new businesses in empty units across the city	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
<b>4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish</b>	Marketing Durham as a place to visit	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy  Theme 5: A City with a modern and sustainable transport infrastructure
	Contracting professional support for local businesses in the city	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
	Promoting businesses in the city centre and encouraging a variety of businesses to ensure wide range of choice for visitors	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
<b>5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.</b>	Reducing food miles by encouraging the use of local suppliers	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy

		Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life
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## 11. PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

The Clerk reminded Members that there is a need for the Parish Council to have agreed its budget and to submit its precept request for the forthcoming financial year by the end of January 2024.

In order to support this work, all of the Parish Council's Committees met last year and have submitted their respective budget proposals for their work from April 2024.

The Chair highlighted that the Finance Committee had met on 17<sup>th</sup> January to discuss this and the proposed budget was before Members to consider.

In agreeing the below budget, the following amendments were made and voted on as follows:

- The events budget was unanimously **agreed** to be reduced from £30,000 to £25,000.
- The budget agreed for the toilet project was **agreed** by 7 votes in favour and 1 vote against. The description of the project was also **agreed** to be changed to "improve condition and accessibility" of toilets.
- The £10,800 budget in the Business Committee budget was unanimously **agreed** to be amended to "support for local businesses".

The following budget was unanimously **agreed** by Members:

### Planning and Licensing Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
<b>PRIORITY 1: Representing the parish on planning and licensing matters</b>	
Professional support in responding to planning applications and licensing hearings	£5,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 2: Improving the licensed economy</b>	
Enhanced drug searching scheme with Durham Police	£600.00
<b>PRIORITY 3: Review of the Licensing Framework Policy</b>	
Professional support for licensing policy review	£5,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>£10,600.00</b>

### Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
<b>PRIORITY 1: Additional policing and safety for the parish area</b>	
Enhanced SLA with Durham Police for late night policing	£30,000.00 – <b>(£15,000 carried forward from 2023/24)</b>
Safety of Women at Night Hub	£10,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 2: Noise abatement</b>	
Building on the <i>Shhh...11pm to 7am</i> campaign	£2,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 3: Clean Air, Clean and Green City</b>	
Planting budget	£10,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 4: Engaging the youth in the work of the Parish Council</b>	
Project working with young people to promote awareness of clean air (OASES project)	£2,500.00
<b>PRIORITY 5: Improving the appearance of our City</b>	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA	£10,000.00
Christmas frontages awards	£1,500.00
<b>PRIORITY 6: Recycling</b>	
Terracycle scheme	£3,000.00
Green business award	£1,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 7: Enhancing the River Wear</b>	
Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust	£5,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 8: Emergency planning</b>	
Supporting our community in preparing for emergency events	£2,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>£78,000.00</b>

### Business Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
<b>PRIORITY 1: Supporting Independent businesses</b>	
Support for independent businesses in Durham	£10,800.00
<b>PRIORITY 2: Increasing footfall through events</b>	
Hosting events in Durham City (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, D-Day Anniversary).	£25,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 3: Filling empty units with new retailers</b>	
Welcome to Durham Fund (match funded through UKSPF)	£5,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 4: Improving public toilets</b>	
Improving public toilets, <u>for example</u> , accessibility and condition	£10,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>£50,800.00</b>

## Full Council

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
<b>PRIORITY 1: Administration of Parish Council</b>	
(Office rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website and other expenditure)	£17,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 2: Training of staff and Councillors</b>	
Training budget	£3,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 3: Upgrading the Parish Council website</b>	
Website upgrade	£3,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 4: supporting local community and voluntary organisations</b>	
Grants budget	£10,000.00
<b>PRIORITY 5: Staffing costs</b>	
Clerk salary (including salary, pension, NI on costs)	£75,000.00
Part-time administrative support for the Parish Council's functions	£15,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>£123,000.00</b>

General reserves	£45,000.00
Contingencies	£15,000.00
Election reserve	£5,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>£65,000.00</b>

Committee	Cost (£)
<b>Planning and Licensing Committee</b>	£10,600.00
<b>Environment Committee</b>	£78,000.00
<b>Business Committee</b>	£50,800.00
<b>Full Council</b>	£123,000.00
<b>Reserves (to be added)</b>	£20,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024/25 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>	<b>£282,400.00</b>

## 12. PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT REQUEST FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

It was noted that the 2023/24 Tax Base is 4,641.5. The 2024/25 City of Durham Parish Council Tax Base has been calculated at 4450.1. Members noted that the Tax Base has therefore decreased by 191.4 which equates to a reduction of £9,985.34.

Members also noted that the LCTRS grant payable to the City of Durham for 2023/24 is £8,437.00. The reduced tax base and the LCTRS Grant produces a net position of -£1,548.34 for 2024/25.

Having carefully considered the budget item under item 11 of the Agenda, Members unanimously **agreed** that the total precept charge for 2024/25 will be £282,429.66 which equates to an increase in a Band D charge from £52.17 to £61.57 (18.02%).

### **13. REPORT ON PARISH COUNCIL INTERNAL CONTROLS**

Members unanimously **agreed** to the appointment of Mr Gordon Fletcher as the Parish Council's internal auditor for the financial year 2023/24.

Members unanimously **agreed** the following report on the Parish Council's internal controls:

#### **1. RESPONSIBILITY**

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **The Council**

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

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

The full Council meets at least 10 times per year. The Parish Council does not usually meet in August or in December.

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

### **Clerk to the Council**

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

### **Payments**

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

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

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

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

### **Internal Audit**

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

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations
- Risk management
- Reviews
- Insurance cover

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

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

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

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

### **External Audit**

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

## **4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS**

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

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

## **5. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The external audit report for 2022-23 was carried out by Mazars and was completed in September 2023. No issues were raised by the external auditors.

## **6. INTERNAL CONTROL ISSUES**

The Auditors did not raise any issues as part of the 2022-23 Audit.

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  
(22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024)**



## **ITEM 5: REPORT BY THE PARISH CLERK ON APPEALS DATA FOR COUNTY DURHAM**

As Members are aware, the City of Durham Parish area receives on average 7-8% of the planning applications which occur during the year within County Durham - far more than any other parish because of the nature of the community we represent and the City being a capital of the county. The nature of each application can also be far greater in scale and impact than in other parishes.

The Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee has noted over the last 2 years at least that DCC has been highly successful in defending its position at appeal stage and in almost every case in our parish, regardless of what the original recommendation may have been, DCC has won the appeals

The purpose of this research and report is firstly to highlight this success and secondly, to highlight to our residents the very real impact that we as a Parish Council have on this area of our work on their behalf, as issues which relate to the Council's planning functions are very often rated as amongst our residents' top priorities.

The findings of this research are stark and rather self-explanatory; however, some key headlines deserve highlighting:

1. Since April 2019, 235 appeal decisions have been made across County Durham. 180 appeals were dismissed, 46 were permitted, 8 were withdrawn and 1 was a split decision. We should absolutely commend the County Council for its terrific success in resisting these appeals.
2. Of the 235 appeals decided since April 2019, 195 decisions to refuse the original application were made by officers (under delegated powers) and the remaining 40 decisions to refuse (and which were subsequently appealed) were taken by the relevant County Council Planning Committee.
3. Over 5 years across our entire county, there have only ever been 5 applications for costs made against the County Council and only 2 of these have ever been successful. Both of these were in the City of Durham parish area - 3251179 and 3222572 - whilst each appeal case is of course different and each appeal must be decided on its own merits, the mere fact that only 2 appeals have ever been successful in securing costs, out of the hundreds of thousands of applications over this period, should surely give us pause for thought. An FOI request has been submitted to gain the full costs of these appeals.

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that costs may only be awarded against a party who has behaved unreasonably and thereby caused the party applying for costs to incur unnecessary or wasted expense in the appeal process. Unreasonable behaviour in the context of an application for an award of costs may be either procedural, relating to the process, or substantive, relating to the issues arising from the merits of the appeal.

4. Out of the 20 appeals which were refused at Committee and then subsequently refused on appeal, 9 of these had an original recommendation to the Planning Committee to approve the application. Of those 9 appeals, 5 were in the City of Durham Parish Council area and all of the original refusals were due to this Parish Council using its power of call-in and successfully making our case at Committee. It is easy to look at this in numbers terms only, the reality on the ground with these decisions is that our precious Durham City greenbelt at Fernhill has been safeguarded, our Conservation Area has been protected and the further loss of family homes (in Neville's Cross) has been resisted in a number of cases - surely the measure of a good Parish Council that looks into the detail of each application in painstaking detail I would suggest.

<b>DECISION REQUIRED</b>	For Members to note the findings of the above report and write formally to the Planning Development Manager to congratulate the Council on its appeal success record.
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## **ITEM 5: REPORT BY DAVID MILLER ON THE CONDITION OF THE EXISTING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK WITHIN THE PARISH AREA**

### **Report on the Survey, Analysis and Recommendations**

The below report sets out the outcomes of a survey of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the City which includes statutory footpaths and bridleways. The survey was carried on behalf of the Parish Council by volunteers in order to discover the condition of the network and how well it serves the public. The survey is a response to the Council's document 'Looking Forwards - Durham as a Creative and Sustainable City' Initiative 7: Identifying, conserving and Improving Footpaths in and around Durham City.

The survey is intended to provide evidence of where the paths require improvement and to report the findings to Durham County Council's Rights of Way team for action to be taken where necessary and possible. This could include both minor maintenance and cases where more significant interventions are proposed, for example to reinstate a path or to seek a Path Creation Order.

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023, on a warm and clear morning, 16 volunteers assembled at The King's Lodge in Durham City for a briefing before setting out in pairs to survey the Parish Rights of Way. The event had a pleasing social dimension with new contacts being made both during the survey and at the buffet at the King's Lodge later. The volunteers were very content to have had the opportunity to take part.

### **Summary**

The survey has shown that the network of public rights of way (PROW) in the Parish is comprehensive, well used and mostly in good condition with 94% is either in good condition or passable requiring only minor improvements:

- 76% are in the Category of 'good' requiring no action.
- 18% are in the category 'passable/minor problems. The most common fault is the lack of finger posts or obscured finger posts (usually by being overgrown) from the road. The next most common faults are muddy patches or the requirement for minor repairs to surfaces or stiles.
- 6% are in the category of 'difficult or impassable' where more serious problems suggest greater interventions. There are a few instances where reconstruction of surfaces including drainage provision would be desirable. Also, there are a few cases where paths have disappeared largely through disuse that should be examined. There are also instances where path creation could be desirable which are included in this category because of lengthy processes involved.

A technical report is set out below including a summary for each mapped area and a list of path segments where faults were recorded. Members may have detailed knowledge of network and may wish to submit enhanced observations on individual paths for consideration.

### **Recommendations**

- The City of Durham Parish PROW Survey Report, Analysis and Recommendations, be adopted following the inclusion of any further comments and be forwarded to Durham County Council for support and action.
- Request that Durham County Council reports, taking particular notice of the Parish Council's views that the PROW network is 'the poor relation' to the highway network and that full potential of PROWs be exploited by promoting the most important footpaths as a vital part of getting around the City, improving health and well-being, and enjoying the experience of the City
- A copy of the submitted report be sent to the volunteers with the thanks of this Council.

## **City Of Durham Parish Public Rights of Way Survey, October 2023 – Analysis and Recommendations**

### **The Survey**

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023, on a warm and clear morning, 16 volunteers assembled at The King's Lodge in Durham City for a briefing before setting out in pairs to survey the Parish Rights of Way. The event had a pleasing social dimension with new contacts being made both during the approximately three-hour survey and at the buffet at the King's Lodge later.

The area was divided up into 16 map areas and allocated to eight pairs. Some map areas were capable of completion in three hours. It was inevitable that several of the sub-areas contained too many paths to be covered in the time available, and most pairs agreed to complete and return the survey sheets at a later date. Other survey work was carried out later where gaps in the coverage were discovered.

**It should be noted that the comments are from volunteers, and that the Parish Council does not necessarily endorse the observations in their entirety. Nevertheless, the Parish Council fully supports the general intention and is grateful to the volunteers for having made this contribution to improving their local paths.**

All survey comments by the volunteers were entered onto a master sheet of all path sections. This acted as a check to establish if all the paths had been covered and where not, the paths were later surveyed. Photographic evidence of problems discovered was assembled for onward transmission to DCC

### **Standards of PROW**

There are 128 rights of way, many of which are split into shorter segments totalling 229 segments. The total length in the Parish is around 41 kilometres. The assessment standard used by the volunteers is shown below with a summary of the standard of the network observed.

1 No problems	2 Passable/Minor problems: maintenance required e.g. -	3 Difficult/More serious problems: path difficult to use e.g. -	4 Impassable/Path unusable on Definitive line e.g. -
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• missing fingerpost</li> <li>• waymarking required</li> <li>• faded sign</li> <li>• clearing path is necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• illegal/misleading notice</li> <li>• surface destroyed</li> <li>• temporary obstruction</li> <li>• dangerous stile</li> <li>• a gate, stile or gap having barbed wire on/immediately next to handrail etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• permanent obstruction – e.g. a building, wall</li> <li>• other physical obstruction or impairment – an excavation; locked gates</li> <li>• Illegal diversion</li> </ul>
175 Segments (76%)	40 Segments (18%)	10 Segments (4%)	4 Segments (2%)

The survey has shown that the network of public rights of way (PROW) in the Parish is comprehensive, well used and mostly in good condition with 94% is either in good condition or passable requiring only minor improvements:

- 76% are in the Category of 'good' requiring no action.
- 18% are in the category 'passable/minor problems. The most common fault is the lack of finger posts or obscured finger posts (usually by being overgrown) from the road. The next most common faults are muddy patches or the requirement for minor repairs to surfaces or stiles.
- 6% are in the category of 'difficult or impassable' where more serious problems suggest greater interventions. There are a few instances where reconstruction of surfaces including drainage provision would be desirable. Also there are a few cases where paths have disappeared largely through disuse that should be examined. There are also instances where path creation could be desirable which are included in this category because of lengthy processes involved.

### **Assessment of Condition and matters for the action by Durham County Council**

In each of the map areas, these are the main observations. It should be recognised that the assessments may not be wholly consistent because of the different emphasis that volunteers placed upon what they observed. Nevertheless, it is a

comprehensive attempt to identify the priorities for maintenance of the network and those links within it that require consideration for action.

### **1 North End/Whitesmocks**

Mostly good paths but the surface of the important bridleway that opens up the network of paths beyond the Parish needs to be improved.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
BW 6.1	436.5115358	Very dangerous crossing to link to 5.1 (E). Perhaps raise with Highways? Undergrowth encroachment. Seriously muddy in winter (F)	3
FP 7.1	254.3134884	Wonky stile needs fixing. Gap in hedge rather narrow	2
FP 5.1	221.0902362	Minor obstruction by overhanging hedges (D)	2

### **2 Flass Vale**

A complex and intensively used recreational network mostly within the Flass Vale Local Nature Reserve is maintained to a good standard by volunteers. In recognition of the huge effort that goes into this work, occasional assistance in terms of materials such as gravel from DCC would be greatly appreciated.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 124a.1	51.80461437	Abandoned/overgrown? Unnecessary to reinstate?	?
FP 125.2	37.28527967	Mud patch would benefit from some new drainage	2
FP 122.1	201.8142012	No fingerpost from Valeside	2

### **3 Nevilles Cross**

The network here comprises mostly urban paths in good condition.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 9.1	776.3475866	Loose step on stile (C)	2
FP 10.1	447.9796298	No fingerpost at western end (A). Other fingerpost obscured (B?)	2

### **4 Crossgate**

The network here is mostly urban paths in good condition with several paths missing fingerpost directions from the nearest road.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 21.1	232.5302853	No finger post from road (A), Finger post missing or obscured (B)	2
FP 13.1	542.669844	No finger post visible (or missing) from road. Second finger post missing at other junction	2
FP 22.1	155.3922991	Finger post completely obscured	2
FP 21.2	140.4932604	Ivy starting to grow into path. Salt bin impeding progress. Broken sign	2

## 5. Observatory Hill

These are important and well-used City paths. FP 23.2 provides access to one the City's greatest views of the Cathedral and Castle and should be improved to a good standard and safety.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 15.3	278.6169331	Clay Lane at A167 needs finger post to this important path	2
FP 23.2	519.5793489	Near path loose fencing wire, paths blocked. Should be inspected for minor upgrading to maintain standard as on the 7 Hills Trail	4
FP 40.1	232.2147961	Nettles , leaves, garden waste need clearing at Quarry Heads Lane entrance	2

## 6. Mount Oswald

Path generally in a good condition with a fine whin sill gravel-dust surface. At the point where the path crosses the road into the new History Centre, there is Herras fencing either side which has been there for a long time and there is no way through. To alleviate this, path users are directed to take the road and rejoin the actual path c 50m either side. At the start and finish there are green/white finger signposts.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 18.1	615.9827883	Long term blockage of path and informal diversion needs attention.	3

## 7. Farewell Hall Farm

Only one path and probably unnecessary to consider any maintenance

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 19.1	585.9143344	Condition of the path on 18 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 was all ok. Conditions were a bit damp underfoot. River Browney stepping stones were under water and too deep to make a safe crossing.	2

## 8. Low Burn Hall

This path, in the main, is in reasonable condition, but some signposting could be improved, although it can be argued that not every junction should be signed. At the main junctions and coming from the roads (South Road and the A167) there are good signposts.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 29.1	391.2866978		2
FP 30.1	230.5889873		2

## 9. Blaid's Wood

Popular recreation paths at all times of the year. Require some surface improvement to make them more accessible and safer.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 31.1	869.4008367	Problems of surface quality in Blaid's Wood, muddy and wet in several places	2
FP 29.2	1366.726639	Bridge and steps towards the interpretation boards. Bridge could be improved	3

## 10 Great High Wood

This is one of the most popular areas for walking and has some heavily used paths. FPs 33.1, 35.1 and 36.1 would benefit from early attention and are probably the most needed improvements in the whole Parish.



Houghall Estate has gone from having a pleasant rural agricultural feel underpinned by a commitment to 'public good', to a more hostile feel underpinned by a commitment to privatising spaces and maximising the income generated from the site eg: people who can afford to stable their horses in the new equestrian facility, or pay for rooms in the new student accommodation blocks, but not the general public.

If walkers want to walk down the single-track road from the end of PROW 31.3 past the Pump House to Stockton Road, there are 30+ red and white and other signs randomly stuck to trees and fenceposts stating 'no parking', 'no unauthorised entry' 'private land' etc. This is very off-putting to walkers.

There is also an out-of-date brown sign on Stockton Road stating 'Houghall Gardens' despite the gardens now being closed to the public. DCC should discuss these concerns with Houghall College and ask them to reduce/tidy up all the off-putting unnecessary signage and work with the local community by creating a 'public access working group. It is good to note that most of the 'PRIVATE LAND' signs that were put up at every single footpath entrance to Houghall along the Stockton Road have recently been removed.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 32.3	207.8416283	The third part of the path 32.3 is in good condition. The bench where 32.2 meets 33.1 is looking slightly worse for wear.	2
FP 35.1	200.1960739	Nearly 20 steps need repairing and waymarking improved (See attached report)	3
FP 37.2	385.4351259	Missing fingerpost from road and loss of path See attached report	3
FP 36.1	526.4505931	Signs missing and path blocked and overgrown. See attached report	4
FP 33.1	245.2229562	The steep path is muddy all year round and the informal user diversion is slippery and potentially dangerous and requires drainage)	3
FP 34.2	529.4328938	Multiple signs damaged or deteriorated and better waymarking needed See attached report	2

## 11. FP 54.1

The main footpath is in good condition apart from one possible safety matter. The closed path requires consideration.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 54.1	768.927225	Mortar gun emplacement a potential hazard?	2
FP 41.3	118.0737871	Overhanging branches	2
FP 82.2	329.1105584	Path no longer exists. Now Uni. sports field. If the change is permanent, then the path should be deleted from the Def. Map	3

## 12. Maiden Castle

The main issue is the University's land at Whinney Hill where informal paths to the fine viewpoint of the WHS have been used for many years and should be recognised as important links in the network including those which form part of the 7 Hills Trail by pursuit of a statutory footpath creation order. Another matter that arises here is the need to identify important all-purpose paths as a network and to bring the surfaces up to standard for everyday use. FP 51.1 from the Science site to Church St. and St. Oswald's is one such path.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 45.2		Info missing	
FP 46.1	116.72031	Path indistinct and unused. Probably unnecessary to repair	2
FP 45.3	103.7954066	Path indistinct. Waymark would be helpful	2
FP 43.2	175.2331146	Path has disappeared and disused. Informal footpaths to the viewpoint of the Cathedral have replaced it including the route adopted as part of the Seven Hills Trail. Suggest these paths should be adopted.	4
FP 43.3		Info missing	
FP 38.2	220.5136024	Path blocked by University to discourage access to rear of buildings. Possibly ok as 39.1 is a good alternative but needs looking into	2
FPS in Pelaw Woods		Pelaw Woods area. All over the woodland, waymarks have disappeared although the posts remain. The waymarks should be reinstated if there is a reasonable chance of their survival.	2

FP 59.1	92.38813212	Muddy in the wet across the churchyard and a slippery descent onto 58.4	2
FP 58.5	28.76854669	Some overhanging branches	2
FP 51.1	248.7340454	An important all-purpose path but far too muddy in the wet and needs a better surface	3
FP 60.1	141.2196377	Seems to have disappeared completely. Presumably blocked to deter walking across the school sports field. Probably unnecessary link now.	?

### 13 Racecourse

Good paths generally with only questions about fingerpost signs and waymarks arising.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 84.2	61.91602077	Waymark missing although post remains	
FP 107.1	179.2795545	FP is very indistinct. Needs waymarking	2
FP 85.3	127.0954441	Waymark missing although post remains	2
FP 105.1	No informtn	No fingerpost from the road	2
FP 81.1	558.7964046	Waymark missing although post remains partly in Belmont	2
FP 84.1	413.1247508	Waymark missing although post remains	2

### 14 Peninsula

The City Centre and riverbanks paths are in very good order as would be expected in a World Heritage Site. There are a few untidy spots and a few potential maintenance matters that should be dealt with.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 67.1	53.5864888	Pathway has litter, rubbish, no lighting, sandbags on steps down to river at top of intersection with 78.3	2
FP 62.1	161.5021935	Sign is damaged (loose)	2
FP 52.1	121.5714575	Path up side of church boundary is non-existent and covered in undergrowth	2

FP 52.5	155.0343572	Requires maintenance to make safer	2
FP 52.7	70.55764217	Requires maintenance to make safer	2
FP 61.2	341.9820697	Pathway inhibited by Bin and signs	2
FP 52.8	331.5410381	Requires maintenance to make safer	2

## 15. The Sands

The paths are mostly within housing estates and the only matter is that there are two sections of continuous paths that are not included in the statutory PROW map and perhaps should be.

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
		Unmarked FP across the Sands POS needs formal recognition	4
FP 74.2	186.6903922	No finger post	2
FP 79.1	299.4562377	No signs as it is in an estate	2
FP 73.1	323.3974353	No finger post. Section joining with 75.1 missing	2
FP 75.1	280.2435095	Unmarked deviating path	3
FP 76.2	270.4705693	No finger post	2

## 16. Frankland Lane

The National Trust comments 'In terms of the section within the Green Corridor near Crook Hall, signs and waymarks around BW 1.2 could be clearer. The paths are obviously connected to further paths outside of the parish, so it is important to consider if wider connectivity can be achieved.'

	Length	Assessment of issue to report to DCC	Condn
FP 118.2	444.8111167	Lack of good signposting in area/ signpost needs straightening	2
FP 118.1	335.1459515	No sign, very overgrown, not visible	3
FP 1a.1	304.1204204	Exists as highway although path still shown on Definitive Map. Perhaps correct map?	?

## Appendix from 'Looking Forwards'

## **Initiative 7: Identifying, conserving and improving footpaths in and around Durham City**

The Proposal: A recent initiative promoted by the Ramblers' Association is to enable local communities to focus attention on making their neighbourhoods more walkable. Signing up to the Charter for Walkable Neighbourhoods could be a useful step towards a greener and more pedestrian-friendly future and give effect to the wishes of the community expressed during consultations:

- (i) To map current footpaths, particularly traditional routes, in Durham City that are not designated as public rights of way and to seek such designation.
- (ii) To audit the management status of all footpaths in Durham City, including public rights of way.
- (iii) To support the proposals made by the Friends of the Durham Green Belt for improving existing footpaths and linkages to the network of attractions in the Durham Green Belt (See Appendix A)

Public Engagement: Creating a public right of way is the role of Durham County Council. A list of existing public rights of way can be seen at <https://durham.gov.uk/definitivemap>. It should be noted that unrecorded footpaths and bridleways created before 1949 need to be recorded before 2026. Individuals, residents' groups and interest groups have knowledge of the footpaths in their area and their current management status, and can collect the necessary information needed to request Durham County Council to make a footpath a public right of way. They can also forward through Parish or County Councillors any concerns about the management of footpaths and public rights of way, and suggestions for improvements. Support for overall improvement of paths and trails in the Green Belt as proposed by the Friends could be undertaken by local communities.

## **ITEM 5: TO CONSIDER SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE DRAINAGE OF THE FOOTBALL FIELD AND ADJACENT ADULT FITNESS AREA AT MERRYOAKS.**

The Parish Council's most recent Environment Committee meeting was presented a report by Councillor Susan Walker in relation to the continued flooding of the football field and adjacent adult fitness area in Merryoaks.

The field and adult fitness areas are well used by the local Merryoaks and Neville's Cross communities though it is clear that there is a significant flooding issue occurring within these areas which impacts on their use and enjoyment.

A stated aim of the Parish Council is to promote outdoor green spaces for our residents for health and recreational goals.

The land in question is owned by Durham County Council.

Although there is a substantial amount of Section 106 funding (£141,015.20) available within the Neville's Cross Ward from the development of the Police HQ at Aykley Heads (**application ref:** 8/CMA/4/73) this is designated to Sports England who are not minded to use these funds for drainage solutions on existing provision but rather designated towards enhanced provision of sports facilities within the Ward. The latest proposal for the use of this funding towards enhanced provision involves a scheme with Durham School in our parish.

The Parish Council's Environment Committee agreed that this funding could be essential in ensuring that this free and open (albeit existing) provision of open green space for sports and recreation activities is safeguarded into the future.

The Environment Committee has asked if Full Council might consider seeking a resolution to this matter for its residents in the Merryaoks part of the parish. As a first step, the Parish Clerk has approached a groundworks company to see if they can provide an estimate of the likely costs for rectifying the drainage issues at this field.

Members have asked if an approach to DCC might be possible to seek a resolution to this problem either through funding via the S106 funds or otherwise.

### **Flooding at the playing fields and adult fitness area**



## **ITEM 7: INTRODUCTORY REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY CONSULTATION**

Durham County Council has recently launched a consultation on the review of its Statement of Licensing Policy for County Durham.

The Licensing Act 2003 places a duty on all Local Authorities, as the licensing authority for their respective areas, to review their licensing policies at least every five years.

The existing Statement of Licensing Policy runs between 2019-2024. Whilst the Policy applies countywide, its content has particular implications for the City of Durham parish area as home to over 232 active licensed premises.

The Statement of Licensing Policy has two main purposes. Firstly, it provides a decision-making framework for the council to use when responding to licence applications. Secondly, it advises businesses and the public on the authority's position concerning the Licensing Act 2003, including details of how the licensing objectives should be promoted in County Durham.

The policy also guides applicants on how to apply for a licence in accordance with the council's expectations. Importantly, it will help applicants and others to identify important factors that should be considered when drawing up an application for licensed premises that will operate in County Durham; an area that is diverse and contains many different types of premises and localities.

Statements of licensing policies promote the four licensing objectives: Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Public Safety, Prevention of Public Nuisance, and Protection of Children from Harm. It also covers the licensable activities of the:

- retail sale of alcohol
- supply of alcohol by or on behalf of a club
- provision of regulated entertainment
- provision of late-night refreshment such as live music, film, indoor sporting events

The licensing policy aims to balance the legitimate needs of businesses and public demand for leisure and cultural activities alongside the need to mitigate against potential adverse effects.

Durham County Council considers that achieving good practice in connection with the licensing objectives involves focusing on these objectives whilst at the same time considering the issues specific to different areas and different types of licensed premises.

Durham County Council is now reviewing its current policy and are looking to understand if the policy provides sufficient and satisfactory information on the four licensing objectives, and in particular:

- the problem of drink spiking
- licensing hours and opening hours
- sexual harassment and misconduct and gender-based violence

DCC also want to know if the public feel that there is anything missing from the policy.

The Parish Council's previously stated positions on the current policy is that a Cumulative Impact Policy and a late-night levy on licensed premises are missing features of the existing policy.

In setting its budget for 2024/25, Members approved a fund of £5,000 towards professional support in responding to this consultation. This is a key part of the work of the Licensing Committee and will surely set the parameters for all future applications in Durham for the next five years.

The Parish Clerk has been seeking a suitable professional to support the Parish Council in responding to this consultation. To date, the Council's former barrister Ms Nicola Allan has advised that she will be able to support the Council with its response to this consultation.

The current consultation is now live and will run until 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024. The Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee will be reviewing this in forthcoming meetings.

<b>DECISION REQUIRED</b>	For Members to note the above report and await a further report on this matter in due course.
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## **ITEM 8: REPORT ON SECURING THE FUTURE OF THE SAFETY HUB IN DURHAM CITY**

As Members are aware, the Parish Council is a funding partner for the City Safety Hub at St. Nicolas Church. In setting its budget for 2024/25, the Council agreed to provide £10,000 worth of funding for the hub for this financial year. This is in addition to the funding provided in 2022/23 of £10,000 and the same amount this current financial year.

### **Background to the hub**

In Summer 2021, the Home Office invited applications for the latest round of Safer Streets (SS3) funding. The initiative was aimed at implementing improvements for the safety of public spaces. Shortly after release, another funding opportunity linked to Safer Streets was launched.

This opportunity was specifically aimed at the Safety of Women and Girls at Night (SWaN). The same organisation could not bid for both funds, so working in partnership, the Police and Crime Commissioner's office applied for SS3 and DCC applied for the SWaN funds.

Although the projects complimented each other, the SWaN bid could not contain any matters applied for under SS3. The spend on both bids had a challenging target date and was to be delivered by the end of March 22 and the funding could not be carried forward beyond that date. In November 2021, it was announced that the SWaN bid had been successful although SS3 had not.

The SWaN bid had four key elements

1. The appointment of a co-ordinator to oversee and deliver the project
2. Delivering vulnerability training to key staff working in the night time economy and situational awareness training to University Students
3. Deliver a Comms campaign highlighting the issue of safety of women and reporting of sexual harassment
4. Deliver a night hub on a Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights which could provide a safe space for women should they feel at risk or vulnerable. The Hub would also be manned by staff of DCC who would also assist others in the night time economy when required

The original plan was to secure a retail unit and refit it to suit. Due to the complexities of securing a unit and the costs of refit, this option very quickly became impractical so an alternative solution was sourced.

Positive liaison with St Nicholas Church resulted in an agreement to use that venue for the night hub. The venue is already used by Durham Street Lights and it was agreed that a room in the church could be suitably adapted to meet the needs of the hub.

Staff from the Community Protection Service volunteer to man the hub as well as employing two SIA registered security staff. In addition, officers at the Durham

City Medics, a local charity based in Chester le Street, also support the hub's operation.

### **The Safety Hub in operation**

Since opening on the 5th February 2022, the hub has proven to be a positive and at times life-saving facility for Durham City on the busiest three nights of the week. Working between the hours of 8pm and 3am (to date) they have provided necessary support, assistance, and guardianship not only to females in a vulnerable or at-risk state, but also males in a similar situation. The hub has dealt with nearly 4,000 incidents since launching and these can range from the most serious life-threatening issues to the every day care and wellbeing facility.

The latest (confidential) report from January 2024 of the hub's operations and incident log has been sent to Members.

The new running costs for the hub are set out below, based on 3 Safer Streets Officers and a running time of 9pm to 3am on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights.

	<b>Nightly cost</b>	<b>Weekly cost (based on 3 nights)</b>	<b>Annual cost (based on weekly costs x 52)</b>
<b>Accommodation</b>	£40	£120	£6,240
<b>Safe travel</b>	£15	£45	£2,340
<b>Security</b>	£137	£411	£21,372
<b>(DCC) Safer Streets Officers x 3</b>	£439.20	£1317.6	£68,515
<b>Total</b>	£631.21	£1,893.63	£98,467

The above costs have been significantly reduced from the previous running costs of the Hub (circa. £130,000) owing to a successful negotiation with St. Nic's Church to reduce their room hire costs.

The above costs also represent the minimum staffing level required for health and safety reasons to ensure the Hub can continue safely for all involved. A dedicated police presence attached to the Hub will likely cost an additional £150/ officer/ night.

The Durham City Medics have previously carried out their duties free-of-charge as a charity. Their model of operation will soon be changing and they are intending to join forces with the newly established Durham City Street Friends, another group of volunteers working to ensure a safe night time economy in the City. They will remain a cost neutral element to this budget.

### **Funding the hub**

Durham County Council, the lead partner behind the Safety Hub, has approached all partners to seek out a more sustainable (3-year) funding model for the Hub.

As such, the below funding model has been suggested based on partnership commitments for the Hub:

<b>Partner organisation</b>	<b>Commitment towards costs over 3-year period</b>
Public Health (DCC)	£60k
Durham PCC (subject to change depending on May 2024 elections).	£60k
City of Durham Parish Council	£30k
Durham BID	£30k
Durham University	£30k
Serious Violence Duty (national funding to be paid in 2024/25)	£50k
Durham AAP (if successful)	£12k
<b>Total</b>	<b>£272k</b>

At a recent PubWatch meeting, representatives of the licensed night-time economy emphasised the huge benefits of the hub in the City and its Chair indicated that he may be able to secure corporate sponsorship for the hub.

It has always been the hope of the Parish Council that the hub could be funded into the long-term by the trade itself.

DCC is keen to secure funding over the 3-year period as soon as possible.

<b>DECISION REQUIRED</b>	For Members to consider an agreement of a 3-year funding model, as set out in the above report, to allow for the Safety Hub to continue.
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## **ITEM 9: REPORT BY COUNCILLOR J ASHBY ON THE MOST RECENT MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT HOUSING STRATEGY MANAGEMENT GROUP**

Note of meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024

1. Terms of Reference: these have been amended to re-name the group as the Student Housing Management Group. I queried where the crucial work on a strategy for housing for students would be placed; the answer is that DCC and DU and DSU have together agreed to prepare a housing strategy and an implementation plan for student housing in Durham city. I believe from the response by PVC Jeremy Cook that the stages and outcomes of this work will be shared with the Student Housing Management Group, but I need to check with University's Senior Manager Community Relations and Housing.
2. The University has met with senior officers of the County Council to explore next steps with the draft County Housing Strategy. It was accepted that significant additions are needed to recognise the particular nature of the housing market in and around Durham City caused by the student population. There was less convergence on the University's assertion (and the Parish Council, DURF, DRAF and DSU) that an Additional Licensing Scheme is needed. - work remains to be done on evidence of need. It is fair to say that PVC Jeremy Cook felt strongly that the need is obvious.
3. There was an update on the well-publicised issue of missing gas and electricity certificates. The Public Register of Licensed HMOs is apparently up-to-date. However, there are still many licensed HMOs whose records are missing. The County Council served 250 Notices before Christmas requiring that the missing certificates be provided. The majority of landlords have complied but there are 13 premises where an up-to-date gas certificate has not been provided to DCC; 47 electricity certificates still missing; and 4 where both are missing. Enforcement action will be taken in early February, and possibly prosecutions thereafter. Publicity may also assist with the outstanding cases.
5. Planning update and policy: CDP Policy 16 review was raised and the Parish Council's consultant's report welcomed. Several possible PBSA schemes have been put to the University at pre-application stage. The University will make formal comments in due course.

6. Durham Students Union (DSU) noted that affordability of accommodation is a more serious issue than ever and are seeking a benchmark such as 50% of income.