

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Tuesday 22nd October 2019 at 11:00 in Room 1, Alington House. 4 North Bailey, Durham DH1 3ET

Present: Councillors E Scott (in the Chair), V Ashfield, E Ashby, G Holland and R Ormerod

Also present: A Shanley (Clerk) and Mr Graham Soutl.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Cllr E Scott declared that she is a member of Durham Business Club.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 27th AUGUST 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27th August 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. DISCUSSION WITH MR GRAHAM SOULT, RETAIL CONSULTANT AND MEMBER OF DURHAM BUSINESS CLUB ON PARISH COUNCIL ROLE IN PROMOTING LOCAL BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed Graham Soutl, retail consultant and member of Durham Business Club to the meeting. The Chair advised that Graham was in attendance to discuss what the City of Durham Parish Council could do to promote local businesses in the area.

Graham began by briefly outlining the work he currently does in Chester-le-Street and the impact this has had on the High Street in that area. Graham also advised that he was providing one to one help to retailers in Chester-le-Street on how to grow their businesses. Graham also advised that he was being funded by a number of letting agents to fill retail units in Chester-le-Street.

Graham advised that there were a number of things the Parish Council could do to promote businesses in the area; specifically, the Parish Council could use social media to promote businesses and help them to amplify their messages, make relationships with retailers and get to know their needs and also advise any prospective new retailers that they could gain professional support from an expert on how best to sell their goods and services to customers.

Cllr G Holland advised that he felt that A-board advertising had a big role to play in advertising areas such as Fowler's Yard. Cllr E Scott advised that she felt that Durham needed an "INDYDurham app" much like that which is available for areas such as York.

Cllr R Ormerod advised that he felt that areas such as York had done a very good job in supporting their Independents and he felt that Durham should look at these areas as examples.

Cllr G Holland asked what the Parish Council could do to reduce rents for businesses, such as supporting a profit share only rent whereby the landlord would receive 20% of the profits as the rent. Graham advised that he had seen this work successfully in other areas.

Cllr G Holland also advised that he felt that empty units should pay double the rates in order to encourage landlords to get a new retailer in the unit.

Cllr V Ashfield and Cllr G Holland advised that what they felt was missing in Durham is training for (in particular) employees of independents on how to provide an excellent customer experience.

Cllr E Ashby advised that a problem in Durham is that stores often closed at 17:30pm and there is a need to encourage retailers to remain open later.

The Chair thanked Graham for his time and coming to speak with the Business Committee. At this point, Graham left the meeting.

6. PLANNING FOR PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS SEMINAR IN JANUARY 2020

Members agreed that the Parish Council should host a Business Seminar at the end of January and this should take place early morning at 08:00am at the University's current Business School.

It was agreed that the Clerk should seek special guest speakers for the event – Dame Margaret Barbour, Jonathan Ruffer and a speaker from the Learning Curve Group were suggested as speakers for the event.

Members agreed that the Seminary should focus on the topic of "What does Durham need to become the most successful retail centre in the UK?"

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair advised that the next meeting of the Parish Council Business Committee ought to take place at the end of January along with the Business Seminar.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Business Committee