

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Tuesday 1st December 2020 at 14:00 via Zoom.

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

Also present: A Shanley (Clerk), Mr Graham Soutl and Cllr L Brown.

1. Welcome and apologies

None received.

2. To receive any declarations of interest from members

None received.

3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 22 October 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2019 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

Cllr L Brown advised that she was attending the meeting to hear discussions on busking in Durham City, as she had seconded the motion presented to Full Council in October on this matter.

5. Report by retail consultant Graham Soutl on work in Durham City

Graham Soutl provided a report to Members about the work which he has been carrying out on behalf of the Parish Council in Durham City since May 2020. Graham advised that he had been working with a wide range of local businesses. In particular, Graham had been focusing on the following main areas:

Retail mentoring/support for businesses, especially on online promotion. The creation of the @IndieDurhamCity social media campaign, attending networking events, property marketing and place promotion.

Graham advised that he had had one-to-one engagement with 25+ independent businesses so far in Durham City– including market traders and he had also promoted many more businesses on social media.

Graham advised that he has been having regular conversations with other local stakeholders – e.g. landlords, agents, creatives, tourism businesses, Visit County Durham, Durham County Council in order to promote Durham City.

Graham advised that he had promoted 7 businesses in particular as part of a “Cover Stars” initiative and this had had a total reach of 29,000 users via Facebook and Twitter.

Graham advised that he was always in regular discussions with the local media in order to promote Durham more and sighted examples of new stores opening soon in the City.

Members agreed that the work which Graham had been carrying out since May had been fantastic and thanked Graham for his work in the City.

At this point, Graham left the meeting.

The Clerk reminded Members that there was a need to consider the renewal of Graham's contract with the Parish Council as it had been initially agreed that this would be for a trial period of 6 months only.

Members **agreed** to recommend to Full Council that Graham's contract be extended until the end of the financial year.

6. Report from local businesses on the impact of the Parish Council's actions to support local businesses

The Clerk provided a report to Members on the feedback received from local businesses who had benefited from the Parish Council's Covid-19 business resilience grant funding as well as the help and support offered by Graham Soult. Businesses offered thanks to the Parish Council for their support during an extremely difficult period; in particular businesses commended the Parish Council for their speed in turning around funding following the application stage. Businesses who had worked with Graham Soult also rated Graham's services highly.

It was **agreed** that a press release should be sent out highlighting the work of the Parish Council in supporting businesses. The Clerk also advised that this would be prominent in the Parish Council's Newsletter in January 2021.

7. Consideration of Business Committee budget for Financial Year 2021-22

Members considered their priorities as a Business Committee for the forthcoming financial year and the following was agreed as the budget proposal for the Committee for 2021-22:

Item of potential expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Professional support for independent businesses in Durham	10,000.00
PRIORITY 2: E-commerce website for Durham City Businesses	4,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2021-22 AGAINST PRIORITIES	14,000.00

8. Busking in Durham City Centre

The Clerk reminded Councillors that it was agreed at the October Full Council meeting that the issue of busking in Durham City would be considered by the Parish Council's Business Committee ahead of formally contacting the Chief Executive of Durham County Council on this matter.

As part of the motion presented to Full Council, Councillors agreed to call on Durham County Council to develop a policy on busking in Durham City centre which prevents damage to business whilst allowing street music to be performed and enjoyed. In formulating the policy, Durham County Council would also be urged to take advice from the Parish Council at all stages.

The Clerk advised that, at the October Full Council meeting, it was recognised that street entertainers, including buskers, can make a valuable contribution to the vibrant culture and atmosphere which exists in Durham City. However complaints can arise if the volume, duration and frequency of the noise is excessive for

residents or local businesses. In July of this year, the local press reported that the County Council had received a complaint regarding busking noise levels.

The Clerk advised that Durham County Council has produced a leaflet which sets out advice on this issue and this is attached to the papers with this Agenda.

It was **agreed** that the Parish Council should write to the Chief Executive of Durham County Council, highlighting the positive aspects of busking in the City, but also asking how Durham County Council carried out enforcement of its leaflet, in the event that some busking does become a nuisance and therefore detrimental to both businesses and visitors of the City.

9. Engagement with local stakeholders in Durham City

Members considered ways in which to engage more with local independent businesses in the City and it was agreed that the Parish Council should host a roundtable discussion at the end of January 2021 with businesses to assess the opportunities and challenges in Durham City at present from a business perspective.

It was also agreed that the outcome and any actions required from that meeting should be reviewed at a business committee meeting in February 2021.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Business Committee