

# CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021 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 Sout and Mr Colin Wilkes.

### **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 1 December 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

The Chair welcomed Mr Colin Wilkes to the meeting who advised that he was attending to discuss the Totally Locally website proposal.

### **5. Discussion with Colin Wilkes, Durham Markets Company Manager on Totally Locally website proposal**

Mr Colin Wilkes advised that there is currently a Totally Locally website in operation for Durham but that this had not been updated for quite some considerable time. Colin advised that the Covid-19 pandemic makes it more important than ever before for local independent businesses to promote themselves to customers. Colin advised that he felt that independents were key to the recovery and vitality of the City centre and we should do everything possible to promote these businesses. Colin proposed that the Parish Council undertakes to have the website refreshed and updated and asked Members if they would support this.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Business Committee had agreed funding towards the production of a website for independents. Colin advised that Totally Locally is a recognised brand both in Durham and across the UK.

Colin also highlighted that Durham University is pushing the Durham Digitale app. Colin advised that this could potentially be a useful tool for everyone and he hoped that the app could also be promoted via the website.

Members **agreed** to support the production of a Totally Locally website. The Clerk advised that he would contact appropriate

### **6. Consideration of feedback and action points arising from business roundtable meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021.**

The Chair advised that the following feedback was received at the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 business roundtable meeting:

- Better and more frequent communications from Durham University (e.g. when there is an Open Day and likely increased demand for businesses).
- More small scale events which draw people into the City from the local area and more widely – this was mentioned on numerous occasions.
- A much more positive social media campaign about visiting and shopping in Durham City.
- Improvements to North Road – lots of people being put off by the ASB happening here.
- Neighbouring areas in County Durham made to feel a part of the City too.
- More business forum meetings such as the one organised by the Parish Council.
- Better use of places such as Old Elvet Bridge for events, etc.
- A website to promote all local independents.
- Better marketing of the City and its independents offer.
- For the City to become more dog friendly.
- Free after 3pm parking
- For Planning and Licensing to make decisions on applications more speedily.
- A closer collaboration between small independents to support one another (e.g. all those who sign up for a tenancy with Bill Free Homes were offered a free bottle of wine with a meal at one of the local restaurants).
- The Chamber of Trade becoming more active again.

It was **agreed** that Cllr E Ashby, as the Parish Council's representative on the Durham University Community Engagement Task Force's economic sub-group, would discuss communications about events with the sub-group.

It was **agreed** that the Parish Council should take a more active role and involvement with City centre events, as agreed by the Parish Council.

It was **agreed** that Graham Sout, on behalf of the Parish Council, should continue with his positive social media campaign promoting the City and its independents.

Members **agreed** that the development of a new bus station is a big improvement to North Road, Cllr R Ormerod advised that he felt that North Road does boast a good range of independent businesses and Cllr V Ashfield advised that the Environment Committee is continuing its work to improve the general street scene of North Road through, as one example, the work being carried out for Durham in Bloom.

Members **agreed** to recommend to Full Council the creation of a website for local independent businesses under the Totally Locally banner.

It was also **agreed** that the Clerk should again write to DCC calling on them to introduce "Free after 3pm" car parking.

It was also **agreed** that the Parish Council should host more business roundtable events with local independents (perhaps on an annual basis).

## **7. Report by retail consultant Graham Sout on work in Durham City**

Graham advised that he will be providing the Parish Council with a written report in due course. Graham advised that he had not been going into Durham recently with the lockdown having happened. Graham advised that he is working primarily virtually with businesses, supporting them to promote themselves to customers, particularly trading online.

Graham advised that 5 new businesses have contacted him since the roundtable event and he is working on supporting these businesses.

## **8. Proposal for International Women's Day in March 2021**

The Chair reminded Members that 8th March 2021 will mark International Women's Day and the Chair presented a proposal for a project for International Women's Day 2021.

The proposal being to create a video to promote all of the female business owners in Durham City. The Chair advised that this video will hopefully include a short statement by herself as Chair of the Parish Council, welcoming International Women's Day and highlighting why this is significant.

The Chair also advised that it is also hoped that female business owners in the City will provide the Parish Council with a short video to say what business they own and what International Women's Day means to them – each video will be combined to the overall video. The Chair advised that it is hoped that this will not only help to promote this important day but also help to promote the businesses themselves in the process.

The Clerk advised he would produce this video share this via social media. The Clerk advised that there will be no costs associated with the creation of the video, only his time to produce this.

Members **agreed** to support International Women's Day and also **agreed** to the creation of the promotional video as set out in the report provided.

## **9. Consideration of event for Easter 2021**

The Chair reminded Members that the need for more events in the City to support businesses was recently highlighted as a main issue at the Parish Council's roundtable discussion with over 30 local independent businesses.

The Chair advised that Colin Wilkes had recently contacted the Parish Council regarding an event for Easter 2021.

The first concept for the Easter event was an Easter treasure trail. The Chair advised that, depending on the direction of travel on the PM's 'road map' on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, and assuming non-essential businesses will be open for Easter, then this family Easter trail round Durham City Centre could encourage families to revisit Durham City Centre and reinforce the message of supporting your local independents in a fun and positive way.

The second concept for the Easter event was the production of a knitted poppy display. The Clerk advised that the Merryoaks WI has contacted the Parish Council to see if there is anything which they can do to support an Easter event this year. The Clerk reminded Members that Merryoaks WI carried out a lot of work between April and November last year on the production of the Parish Council's knitted poppy display at the Town Hall.

The president of the WI has indicated that she felt that this was a most positive project for members of the WI to stay active on a community project during lockdown.

The Clerk advised that he has discussed this further with the president of the WI and the proposal of producing a knitted daffodil display.

In conjunction with this idea, Cllr E Ashby asked that this proposal also include support for the Marie Curie charity. The daffodil not only being an iconic image of Easter but also the official flower of the charity itself.

The Clerk reminded Members that a budget of £1,000 has been agreed for the forthcoming financial year towards an event for Easter.

Members **agreed** to support both proposals for the event in Easter.

#### **10. Dates of future meetings**

The Chair advised that the date of the next meeting will be announced in due course.

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 style with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Business Committee**