

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Tuesday 22nd June 2021 at 13:00 via Zoom

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

Also present: A Shanley (Clerk), Mr Graham Sout (Parish Council retail consultant), Ms Emma Hignett (Totally Locally Durham) and Mr Paul Howard (Durham BID Manager).

1. Election of Chair of the Parish Council's Business Committee

Cllr E Scott was elected as Chair of the Business Committee. Proposed by Cllr G Holland and seconded by Cllr E Ashby.

2. Election of Vice-Chair of the Parish Council's Business Committee

Cllr R Ormerod was elected as Vice-Chair of the Business Committee. Proposed by Cllr E Ashby and seconded by Cllr E Scott.

3. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Govind Nair.

4. To receive any declarations of interest from members

None received.

5. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 9th February 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2021 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

None received.

7. Discussion with Paul Howard, new Durham BID manager about his priorities for the City

The Chair welcomed Mr Paul Howard to the meeting and to Durham and asked him about his priorities over the next year for the City.

Paul thanked the Parish Council's Business Committee for the opportunity to meet with them. Paul advised that he has worked in place management and BIDs for a number of years and has recently moved from the North West.

Paul advised that the last few months have been extremely difficult for lots of businesses in the City. Paul advised that he is currently reviewing the BID's business plan and advised that he hoped to be able to increase the number of events in the City, in order to add to the vibrancy of the City centre. Paul advised that he is in the process of setting up an events sub-group for the BID.

Paul thanked Graham Soutl for his time in meeting him prior to this meeting. Paul advised that he and Graham have discussed a number of ideas over the coming months. The Chair very much welcomed the prospect of more frequent events for the City.

The Chair asked how Durham could fill more empty units in the City. Paul advised that the retail sector is struggling at present but there is a resurgence of independent retailers happening. Paul advised that whilst there is a surplus of retail units, more people are moving back into the City centres which typically have lower rent costs than large shopping centres. Paul advised that more and more independents were coming into Durham.

Cllr R Ormerod asked if the same techniques to improve the retail offer in town centres work everywhere or if this needed to be tailored to specific areas. Paul advised that some ideas and some ways of working work very well no matter the town centre but there is certainly a factor of tailoring that approach. Paul advised that Durham is very unique and students add a lot to the local economy and vibrancy of the City.

Cllr G Holland highlighted that excess retail space in Durham is being used for accommodation to the upper floors and planning is looking very positively on this and asked Paul about this. Paul advised that he felt that this was absolutely critical to the future of the City centre.

Cllr E Ashby asked who is on the board of BID and asked if their role was to set targets e.g. the number of businesses signed up to the BID. Paul advised that businesses don't sign up to the BID but rather if they are in a certain geographical area and the rental value of the property is a certain level, they are automatically part of the BID and pay the levy. Paul advised that businesses would be asked to vote on whether to retain the BID next year. Paul advised that the key aim of the BID is to provide businesses value for money in return for their levy. Paul also advised that he is currently working on the membership of the board of the BID.

Paul advised that he felt that parking and access are major factors for the City.

The Committee asked about the summer visitor economy of the City. Cllr E Ashby advised that the large PBSA Student Castle has a certain percentage of accommodation for visitors of the City.

The Chair proposed that the Committee engages more with the private rented sector of the City, which was supported by the Committee.

8. Update on changes at Durham County Council under the new Administration

The Chair advised that she has recently become the Cabinet Member for Economy and Partnerships at Durham County Council since the election in May. The Chair advised that this portfolio also included tourism and public transport.

The Chair advised that she would like to introduce a much more strategic approach for the regeneration of the City. The Chair advised that she is currently working alongside the Director of Service at DCC to a) publish an economic statement in September setting out the situation in Durham and b) set out an economic strategy for the City. The Chair advised that the City does not currently have a masterplan, which she felt is an omission.

The Chair advised that a key priority for her in her new role is a culture-led and tourism-led regeneration of the City.

Graham Soult advised that he is frequently being contacted about the lack of creative businesses in the City and hoped that this could be a real priority. The Chair agreed with this and felt that there is also no exhibition space in the City.

Cllr G Holland advised that he felt that the Town Hall needs to be made much more open to the public. Similarly, Cllr Holland advised that he hoped that the DLI museum could be brought back to Durham as was prior to its closure. The Chair advised that she agreed and hoped that the Town Hall in particular could be made more user-friendly. The Chair also advised that DCC is currently commissioning a review of the DLI museum and she hoped to have an update on this in due course.

Cllr E Ashby wished the Chair well in her new role and highlighted that Bishop Auckland is becoming a real culture capital of Durham and asked if people like Bill Bryson could be contacted to provide funding for the City in the same way that others are doing in Bishop Auckland. The Chair advised that she is intending on discussing this more with Jonathan Ruffer to know more about the work taking place in Bishop Auckland and to see if this could be applied to the City.

Cllr N Brown asked about incentives for businesses to take a unit in the City. Paul advised that he felt the key priority should be on removing barriers for businesses in the City. Paul advised that nationally BIDs are pushing for the Government to finally sort out the issues of business rates.

Cllr R Ormerod wished the Chair well in her new role and highlighted that the lack of devolution in this part of the North East is a big issue. Cllr R Ormerod advised that he felt that the Town Hall is very under used, it used to be used as a coffee morning venue and a concert centre.

9. Report on the recent 'Future of British High Streets' event held on 28th April 2021

The Chair thanked Cllr E Ashby for representing the Parish Council at this event. Cllr E Ashby provided the following report to the Committee:

Summary: The Future of British High Streets: Supporting the Recovering from Covid-19 – you will be contributing to discussions on how to reinvent our high streets in a post-pandemic and big retail world. You will learn from leading case studies and hear from experts in the field, allowing you to develop a comprehensive strategy to support your high street and local community.

Strategic Headline Sponsors

- 1 Using Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence to Regrow Our Town Centres. Clive Hall, Chief Operating Officer, Place Informatics.
- 2 Community Vision: Accurate, real-time measurement data to help councils reopen high-streets safely. Ben Ward-Cochrane, Industry Manager, Local Government, Huq Industries.
- 3 Mapping Patterns: Using BigData to Measure Success Since Reopening on April 12th and exploring Common themes.

Keynote speakers

- 1 Recovering from the Pandemic: Renewing and Reshaping High Streets Matt Vickers MP (Stockton South), Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group for Retail.
- 2 The Covid-19 Recovering Framework: Supporting Places throughout the Crisis Professor Cathy Parker, Co-Chair, Institute of Place Management.

Case Studies

- 1 Building High Street Support Zones to Support Local Businesses and Engage the Local Community Alice Taylor, Councillor – Kirkley Ward, Lowestoft Town Council.
 - 2 Supporting Town Centre Businesses and Creating New Opportunities Carol Pyrah, Executive Director, Historic Coventry Trust.
 - 3 Encouraging Meaningful Community Engagement in Regeneration Planning Sharon Strutt, Head of Regeneration, London Borough of Redbridge.
 - 4 Monitoring Footfall and Foot-flow Data to Inform the Pandemic Response and Long Term Regeneration Plans in Nuneaton Chris Wade, Director, The People and Places Partnership.
- Also: Footfall Monitoring Solutions Tim Drayton, Service Delivery Manager, PFM Footfall Intelligence

Comments: A very interesting and thought provoking day with an understandable focus on the use of data re footfall etc. Some of the IT presentations were highly technical but this was balanced by the case studies. Unfortunately the Zoom format greatly reduced the chance to discuss these with speakers during the breaks. 35 Local authorities of various levels and size were represented, some with 2 or 3 delegates each.

There was so much information throughout the day – I have 10pp of notes and have asked for the speakers' slides and have also copied the Event Guide to the Clerk. Much importance was given throughout the day to the role of data collection and its use in both growing and shaping the behaviour of visitors to town centres. As an example – below are my notes on one of the case studies.

Lowestoft Town Council

An example of Heritage Led Regeneration. Town that's had it tough for decades. Aging population but looking up due to investment in wind energy and a marine research base. Funding for new infrastructure. Tourism kick started.

Points for success

- a. Know your own story. Look for positives. Counteract negatives. Push back on negatives in social media.
- b. Know the facts. Assume ignorance in others. Be able to apply nat. stats. to your area, keep up with trends e.g. electric cars.
- c. Not everyone wants Heritage Led Regeneration. Push back on these negatives. Data is the answer.
- d. Tackle fear of success by those in poverty i.e. gentrification
- e. Change hearts *and* minds; be persistent, positive and work at good public relations
- f. Recognise family ties and children's' futures i.e. jobs and supporting local economy.
- g. Recognise character change in the town brings fear of incomers with alien ways, being pushed out or losing the kids.
- h. Include EVERYONE on the journey, plain language, everyone's not on line.
- i. Open the town up – buildings opened as 'memory sharing space', have local 'special place' days.
- j. Involve young people – educate them about their past, hands on and active.
- k. Involve everyone – drink tea and chat – don't just drive to and from your office.
- l. Heritage Led Regeneration is a 3 legged stool – Heritage bodies, local business and ordinary people but YOU have to sell the project.

10. Report by retail consultant Graham Soult on his work in Durham City

Graham Soult provided an update to the Committee on his work in Durham City over the last few months.

Graham advised that Indie Durham City is focused on providing support for independent businesses; particularly around making them more digital friendly.

Graham advised that he is promoting Durham City businesses via his social media pages and promotes "Cover Stars" – new and existing independent businesses in the City. Graham advised that 102 businesses have featured on Indie Durham City in 2021 so far.

Graham advised that there had already been 171,000 Indie Durham City twitter impressions in 2021; 171,000 positive messages about Durham.

Graham advised that he has met with a new potential independent retailer in the City. Graham also advised that he has been working to facilitate businesses going into Fowler's Yard.

Graham advised that he felt that the Parish Council's roundtable meeting with businesses had been extremely positive and informative and he has been working with more retailers following this meeting.

Graham advised that he also attended the "Future of British High Streets" event for the Council.

Graham also advised that he has been working with the local press and Members will have seen the recent positive news stories about the City and the resurgence of independent retailers in the ChronicleLive and the Northern Echo.

Graham advised that there are further new businesses coming to the City into some of the empty units.

The Clerk advised that he was aware through the Planning and Licensing Committees of the Parish Council that further businesses are coming into the City.

11. Update on the Totally Locally website – a link to this website can be found here: <https://totallylocallydurham.co.uk/>

Emma advised that Totally Locally Durham has been launched and is now live online. Emma advised that 60 local independent businesses had now signed up to Totally Locally Durham.

Emma advised that Totally Locally Durham had been promoting the national FiverFest; which had brought two very enthusiastic independent businesses to the site. Emma advised that her experience is that a lot of independents are very keen on promoting others in the City.

Members particularly liked the search function on the website for various different products.

Cllr E Ashby asked if a function could be added so that visitors to the site can provide feedback on what they couldn't find in the City on their visit. Emma advised that this would be added to the City.

12. Consideration of upcoming events involving the Parish Council in Durham City

The Clerk reminded Members that, in January 2021, the Parish Council agreed to allocate £6,000 towards events in the City. The Clerk reminded Members that the Remembrance Sunday event is currently being planned as usual this year.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has agreed to co-host a Children's Book Festival in July, at a cost of £1,785 towards event. The Clerk advised that this event will now be a 1 day event only as the Markets Manager is unable to secure a grant from the AAP in time for the event as previously envisaged.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Council has also committed to host some form of a Christmas event outside the best frontage awards competition and the annual thank you to volunteers Christmas party.

The Clerk also advised that a meeting had taken place earlier this month with key stakeholders to have an initial scoping of events for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. It was proposed that the Parish Council budgets appropriately for this event when setting its budget for 2022/23.

13. Dates of future meetings:

Tuesday 17th August 2021
Tuesday 19th October 2021
Tuesday 18th January 2022
Tuesday 15th March 2022

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

Signed,



**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Business Committee
(27th September 2021)**