

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Monday 27th September 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 Soutl (Parish Council retail consultant), Mr Colin Wilkes (Durham Markets Company and Mr John Lowe and Mr David Miller (members of the public).

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 June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2021 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

Mr David Miller advised that a number of local traders on North Road had come together to request that a review be undertaken by the County Council on the current operations on North Road as a result of the construction of the new bus station. Mr Miller advised that a number of traders were unhappy at the current arrangements and felt that this was adversely impacting on their trade as a result.

Mr David Miller advised that the majority of these traders are small independent businesses which ought to be supported by the Council.

Mr David Miller advised that the concerns have been set out in a letter from Sandra Robinson, a local trader on North Road.

Mr David Miller advised that this letter set out a number of requirements for review:

Firstly, that the traders have not been consulted on the current arrangements at North Road.

Secondly, nobody seems to know how long these arrangements will be put in place.

Thirdly, the current location of the bus stops is adversely impacting congestion in the area.

Furthermore, the impact of the development and its arrangements are causing an adverse impact on the cleanliness of the street and the health of its occupants.

David also advised that pedestrians are using the road as opposed to the footpath in order to avoid the construction.

The Chair advised that she has sought a response from DCC on the matters raised.

The Chair advised that the Parish Council was always concerned that the construction phase would cause disruption to the traders in the area.

The Chair addressed the issue of the temporary pause of works on the site. The Chair advised that, during the second stage of ground investigations to the site, it was discovered that there were some hydrocarbons as part of the site. It has now been confirmed that the levels are very low and therefore work can recommence safely. The Chair advised that the stability of the gable end of the neighbouring Manse building on North Road is also a key concern, particularly given that the next stage of works is piling which can cause a lot of vibration. There needs to be some certainty on the integrity of the wall. The Chair advised that there is a meeting tomorrow with party wall surveyors to try to resolve this issue.

The Chair advised that she understood that the temporary bus stops on the site are the biggest inconvenience to traders. The Chair advised that the Council's Highways team has reviewed this situation and are genuinely convinced that the current locations for these stops is the best possible solution. The Chair advised that Highways believe there are a lot of school children congregating on North Road because of diminished school bus services. The Chair advised that she has asked for the movement of people on North Road to be reviewed on a regular basis. The Chair also advised that the continued closure of the Elvet Bridge is also a factor in this and the bridge is due to be reopened.

The Chair advised that the Council is unable to remove the hoardings around the building.

The Chair advised that the County Council is pursuing the issue of electric buses but the new fleet will not be in place as soon as traders would like. A formal request has however been made to all operators that they do not allow their engines to idle when the bus is stationary.

The Chair advised that "no pedestrian waiting" markings are going to be introduced to North Road as requested in the letter from the traders. In addition, the Council is going to have "North Road businesses open as usual" signage installed to the top of North Road.

The Chair also advised that she has asked for an increased cleaning regime to North Road too.

The Chair advised that she has also asked for a regular (possibly monthly) letter drop to all traders, including points of contact, in the affected area so that traders are kept up to date on the development.

Mr David Miller welcomed the actions taken by the Chair.

Cllr R Ormerod asked that the location of existing bus stands be reviewed.

Cllr E Ashby also highlighted that the AAP has recently received central Government funding for post-Covid regeneration. Cllr E Ashby suggested that one of the local traders contacts the relevant officer at the Durham AAP about this to see if any funding could be accessed to support the traders.

Mr John Lowe advised that the City of Durham Trust fully endorsed the letter from the traders and thanked the Chair for her action to date to try and resolve this issue for the traders.

Cllr N Brown also asked if security staff for the bus station were still on site and, if so, asked if they could help manage the congestion of people on the footpath.

At this point, Mr David Miller and Mr John Lowe left the meeting.

5. Discussion with Colin Wilkes, Durham Markets Company Manager on Uniformed Services Fun Day, Halloween and Bonfire Safety event proposal

The Chair welcomed Mr Colin Wilkes to the meeting. Colin presented a proposal to host a Uniformed Services Fun Day (USFD), Halloween and Bonfire Safety event in Durham City.

Colin advised that the purpose of the event is to hold the regular USFD community interaction day over half term but to encompass within it a focus on safety surrounding Halloween and Bonfire events.

Colin advised that the Markets Company is focussing on the 4 main blue light services in this regard, police, fire, ambulance and St John's but is also looking to enhance the family attraction by hosting a number of free events with a Halloween theme to encourage families back into the city centre and to enable them to enjoy events safely.

Colin advised that he hoped that the Parish Council would support this event, particularly with the assistance towards traders' being able to supply enough free entertainment to attract in families so that, once in town, they can liaise with the blue lights services and learn first-hand how to enjoy the events safely and what not to do – throw stones at fire engines; unauthorised/unsupervised bonfires and trick or treating etc.

Colin advised that the Markets Company would like to include the following as part of the event: -

- Halloween spooky storytelling and, perhaps, walk around parts of the city;
- Bugsnstuff – creepy crawlies
- Halloween themed arts and crafts
- Face painting.
- Treasure trail around independent businesses

Colin also advised that he is looking at traders in the Market Hall entering into the spirit by dressing up that day on a Halloween theme, for which he would offer a prize.

Colin advised that he hopes that Prince Bishops and Waterstones in particular will come on board and he will look to include other independent businesses.

Colin advised that the cost of the entertainment set out above will be in the regions of £850 and he asked if the Parish Council would kindly consider supporting the event to £400.

Cllr E Ashby proposed that the Parish Council provides £500 funding for this event. This was seconded by the Chair and **agreed** by all.

6. Proposal to host a roundtable event with landlords in Durham City

Cllr E Ashby highlighted that, in January 2021, the Council initiated a well-attended and productive roundtable discussion involving a wide cross section of local business managers and owners in the City and proposed that a similar such meeting be arranged with local landlords in the City. Cllr E Ashby highlighted that the private rented sector is a huge sector in the parish.

Cllr E Ashby advised that the aim of this meeting would be to build a participative and positive approach by all parties to understanding and managing the factors influencing the residential property market in the parish.

Cllr E Ashby proposed the following suggested items for the first roundtable meeting with landlords:

Items for a first agenda

1. Welcome and introductions.
2. Brief introduction to relevant Parish initiatives.
3. Identifying any mutual aims for housing supply and the challenges to their delivery.
4. Ways the Parish can support owners' and landlord's positive contribution to the local community
5. Discussion: ongoing communication and ways forward for mutual benefit.

The Clerk reminded Members that this proposal is to be discussed at this evening's Full Parish Council meeting, if approved by Members.

Members **agreed** that the Parish Council should arrange this roundtable meeting at the latter part of January 2022.

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

Graham attempted to deliver his report to the Council on work he has been undertaking over the last few months, however was unable to do so due to technical difficulties. It was therefore **agreed** that Graham should circulate his report electronically to all Members.

At this point, Graham left the meeting.

8. Update from the Chair on her work as Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

The Chair advised that she is now a member of Durham BID's board and she had recently attended the first meeting of the board with the new BID manager. The Chair advised that the businesses on the board were very positive about partnership working and, in particular, there is a recognition that the food and drink industry is a key driver in Durham City's economy.

The Chair advised that more businesses are needed as part of the board.

The Chair advised that Durham BID's main focus is now on hosting more events in the City. The Chair advised that there was a really keen push for Durham City to have its own food and drink festival.

The Chair advised that she had recently attended the opening of the Northern Saints trail. The Chair advised that "champing" (camping in churches) is a growing phenomenon and she hoped to see that Durham City could become the "champing" capital of the world, with its many churches.

The Chair advised that she is extremely keen to do more to promote the use of the Town Hall.

The Chair advised that she is currently in dialogue with Durham University about what more the University can do to add to the economy of the City. The Chair advised that these discussions were very positive.

The Chair advised that the DLI review is now complete and one of the proposals to be discussed and decided on this week is the reopening of the DLI as an art exhibition

space as well as the home of the DLI collection with a café and garden of peace being proposed.

9. Update on events for 2021/22

The Clerk advised that preparations for the Remembrance Sunday parade were well underway and going well. The Clerk reminded Members that the Council has agreed to delegate budgetary and organisational responsibility for this event to him as Clerk.

The Clerk also reminded Members that a budget for Christmas events was agreed in January 2021 and he hoped that the Business Committee could meet with local business representatives in order to discuss plans for the festive season. The Clerk highlighted that this would be in addition to the Environment Committee's Best Christmas Business Frontages awards and the Council's Christmas civic event.

The Chair asked if plans were still progressing for the Queen's Jubilee in June 2022. The Clerk advised that he hoped to have a follow up meeting of the multi-agency group on planning for this event.

10. Dates of future meetings

The Chair advised that the dates for future meetings will be circulated 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
(23rd November 2021)**