

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Wednesday 11th May 2022 at 13:00 via Zoom

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

Also present: A Shanley (Clerk), Mr Colin Wilkes (Durham Markets Company), Paul Howard (Durham BID) and Mel Metcalf (Durham Pride).

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor N Brown.

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 22nd March 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd March 2022 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

None received.

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

The Chair advised that Graham Sout is unable to join the Committee meeting today but that he was intending to submit a written report to Members on the work he has been undertaking as retail consultant in the City. The Chair asked Members to submit any queries on this report via the Clerk for Graham to assist.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Graham for his work and support as part of the City of Culture bid.

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

The Chair advised that Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay visited Durham last week as part of the City of Culture bid. The Chair also advised that the judges for the City of Culture bid visited the City on Monday and she felt that this had gone very well with all those involved in the bid showcasing the best of Durham during the visit. The Chair took the opportunity to thank all partner organisations involved in this bid.

The Chair advised that she felt that a successful bid would really help to give the City a boost. The Chair advised that the final announcement will be made on 26th May 2022 for the City of Culture award.

The Chair advised that the County Council is currently undertaking a retail gap analysis of the City. The Chair advised that the intention of this analysis is to support the work in trying to promote the City to specific businesses.

The Chair also advised that the Durham Markets Company and the Towns and Villages team have been working together to improve the outdoor market stalls, which are in desperate need of renewing.

Colin Wilkes advised that he hoped that he would be successful in securing a new stock of 25-30 gazebos for the outdoor market. Colin advised that he hoped that this would provide a more uniform and attractive image of the outdoor market.

The Chair advised that additional funding has been agreed at the County Council to improve footpaths and pavements and Durham City has been highlighted as an area in need of some improvements. The Chair highlighted that there are a high number of broken paving stones in the City centre.

7. Progressing a follow-up roundtable meeting with landlords in Durham City

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council had attempted to host a roundtable meeting with landlords in Durham City at the end of January 2022. The Clerk advised that, whilst there had been a very good turnout from key stakeholders, such as Durham University, Durham County Council and Durham Students Union, only one landlord had attended the roundtable meeting.

The Clerk advised that invitations had been sent to all of the major landlords in the City but very few responses had been received.

The Committee noted that invitations sent out via letter and email to landlords may not be the best form of communication to arrange this type of meeting.

The Committee agreed that the Parish Council should attempt to host a further roundtable meeting with landlords, in light of the significant role of the private-rental sector in the City.

It was **agreed** that a follow-up roundtable meeting with landlords should be arranged for later in the Summer 2022.

The Clerk took the opportunity to thank Cllr E Ashby for all her work in visiting some of the major landlords around the City and discussing this follow-up invitation with them.

Cllr E Ashby expressed the hope that the next landlord roundtable meeting can include a very clear Agenda, which could include things like an award of best landlord scheme, etc. and to really engage with some of the larger landlords who have a presence in the City.

8. Promoting a mixed retail business offer in the City centre

Cllr E Ashby expressed a desire that the Parish Council does all it can to promote a mixed retail business offer for the City centre.

Cllr E Ashby highlighted a number of retail gaps in the City, for instance there are few retail spaces offering children's clothes, vintage clothing, antiques etc. Cllr E Ashby advised that she felt that the focus should be on addressing these retail gaps as well as in increasing footfall to the City.

Cllr E Ashby advised that reports in the press are highlighting that shoppers are moving back to the high street for their shopping as opposed to online shopping. Cllr E Ashby advised that she felt that this is important as there is a need to retain business units for a retail offer as opposed to takeaways and licensed premises.

The Clerk advised that he had received a briefing that 11 businesses were queueing to acquire the one remaining unit left at Fowler's Yard. The Clerk highlighted that these businesses are arts and crafts businesses and not leisure and food. The Clerk asked how those businesses could acquire another unit in the City.

Paul Howard advised that this was due to the fact that the rent discrepancy between Fowler's Yard and the rest of the City is substantial because the Council owns Fowler's Yard. Paul advised that there is a need to encourage landlords to reduce rents across the City.

The Clerk highlighted that the former Topman/ Topshop units are set to become an independent book retailer on Silver Street. The Clerk also highlighted that 5 units at Riverwalk are set to become one large unit and will be an Asian food store and will therefore retain the retail use.

9. Update on events planning

The Clerk set out a timetable of events currently being worked through as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations this year.

The Clerk advised that the agreed partnership and additional resource for organising the event provided by Durham Markets Company is working extremely well and this has proven to be an essential resource to the Parish Council for these events. The Clerk reminded Members that this is being funded from the budget allocated to an assistant for the Clerk and not directly from the agreed events budget.

The Clerk highlighted that the events for the Jubilee weekend (2nd – 5th June 2022) would be kickstarted with the lighting of a beacon at 9:45pm on Thursday 2nd June. The Clerk advised that all partners involved in the Jubilee organising committee are keen to see that the City has a beacon lighting event on 2nd June 2022 and he is working with Durham University on planning for this.

The Committee agreed that the proposed Clean for the Queen litter picking event in May should be delayed until later in the year.

10. Request of financial support for Durham Pride 2022

The Chair welcomed Mel to the meeting. Mel began by thanking the Parish Council as Cllr Liz Brown represented the Council excellently at the launch event for Durham Pride today, along with Joy Allen, Amanda Hopgood and others.

Mel highlighted that the Pride event in Durham City has been running for a number of years now and in 2019 the event welcomed over 20,000 participants which is a wonderful achievement.

Mel highlighted that the work to organise Durham Pride takes up a whole calendar year and involves a lot of fundraising from various different sources. Mel particularly thanked the Parish Council for its support of £2,000 earlier this year for Durham Pride's youth support work.

Mel explained that, in addition to the costs for running the event, the Pride team were required to pay over £4,000 towards the road closures for the Pride event. Committee Members expressed the hope that the Council may be persuaded to waive this cost for the event.

Mel also advised that several locations for the Pride event had been looked into and the Sands is really the only suitable location for this event. Cllr R Ormerod asked whether the race course had been investigated for future events. Mel advised that the University weren't in a position to offer this for the event and Mel felt that this space wasn't really a City-centre location.

Mel asked if the Parish Council might be willing to provide some financial support for the event itself and the Chair proposed £500 (the limit set out within the Council's Standing Orders without needing to go to Full Council for approval) and Committee Members unanimously **agreed** to support this.

The Clerk particularly wanted to thank Mel for his exceptional work, endless energy and commitment to Pride.

At this point, Mel thanked the Committee for their time and support and left the meeting.

11. Update on the work of Durham BID

Paul highlighted that Durham BID is currently working on a timetable of events for the City over the coming year.

Paul also advised that Durham BID is in the final stages of producing its new website, which will include a business directory as well as a "what's on" in Durham page. Paul advised that the new website is looking fantastic and is a lot easier to navigate from a user perspective.

Paul also advised that he has attended a meeting of *Shopwatch* in the City recently. Paul advised that he is hoping to provide some additional support to this group as it is currently run by the Police and should be more private-sector led.

Paul also advised that the referendum for Durham BID is taking place in September 2022 and he is currently speaking with businesses to make them aware of this.

The Chair thanked Paul for his report.

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
(5th July 2022)**