

# CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 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), Ms Alice Wilkes (Durham Markets Company), Mr Colin Wilkes (Durham Markets Company), Mr Paul Howard (Durham BID) and Mr Graham Soutl (Canny Insights).

### 1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr 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 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 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 Soutl on work in Durham City

The Chair welcomed Graham Soutl to the meeting.

Graham advised that the reopening of Moon on Silver Street has been a key focus for him over the last few weeks. Graham advised that this was an important step forward for Silver Street which is suffering from a number of vacant units at present. Graham advised that Moon's shop frontage adds greatly to the street scene on Silver Street.

Graham also advised that he had been working with a new business for Durham called "Coarse" which is a fine dining restaurant business. Graham advised that he had secured £20,000 worth of cutlery and furniture for the business free-of-charge from another business looking to get rid of this.

Graham advised that work is ongoing in the former Topshop unit and he expected the unit to be filled by a new business by August 2022.

Graham advised that he had an excellent meeting with Mary Foy about the City in April 2022. Graham advised that Mary is supporting Moon with the work they are doing to collect for Ukrainian refugees.

Graham reminded Members that the mobile bookshop Collected was launched in April this year too which is positive news.

Graham advised that he gave the judges for the City of Culture bid a tour of Durham and introduced them to Elvet & Bailey as a great independent business.

Graham also reminded Members that the Woodman Inn pub had now reopened and highlighted that his announcement on social media about this was his most viewed post in that month, generating over 13,000 views on Facebook.

Graham also welcomed the reopening of Crook Hall and advised that he had already had a meeting with the team at the National Trust and felt that this would make an enormous difference to the City; attracting more daytime visitors.

Graham advised that Bean Social is carrying out a very high profile crowdfunding campaign in order to save the business and to keep it trading in North Road. Graham advised that he had been promoting the crowdfunding campaign by Bean Social and to date they had raised £8,000.

Graham advised that he was aware of a number of businesses who were keen to take on a business unit in the City and this was a real positive for the City.

Graham also highlighted that businesses were facing increased costs at the moment and he regretted the closure of the Butcher's Deli on Saddler Street.

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

The Chair advised that North Road had been a real concern for her in her work as Portfolio Holder but advised that, having asked for a year that a review of bus stops be undertaken to improve the situation on North Road for traders during the construction of the new bus station, this is now being undertaken by the Council. The Chair advised that the new bus station should be completed by July 2023.

The Chair advised that the Council has been asked to financially compensate businesses in the affected area of the new bus station construction. The Chair advised that this simply isn't possible however she had asked the economic development team at DCC to put together a package of support for businesses e.g. better signage on North Road, grant money for businesses to improve their frontages, promote the training on offer by DCC for businesses.

The Chair welcomed the two new units at Silver Street being fitted out for new businesses on this street.

The Chair also advised that she had a meeting set with the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Durham University Prof. Claire O'Malley who is working with students on an initiative to improve the street scene of North Road.

The Chair advised that the practical completion date for the new Milburngate development has been pushed back to the end of July.

The Chair advised that the Government had provided Durham County Council with some brief feedback on the City of Culture bid. The Chair advised that the Government were very complimentary about the bid from Durham and a key piece of feedback received centred around the passion of local people. The Chair advised "readiness" had won the bid ultimately for Bradford. The Chair advised that Bradford already has its own company established to deliver on the bid projects. The Chair advised that the partnerships which had been developed throughout the bid process were extremely positive as well as the huge amount of press coverage and exposure delivered for Durham as a county.

## **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 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. Proposal to support the Children's Book Festival and Family Fun Day**

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has agreed a total budget of £22,000 for this financial year towards hosting events in the City. To date, thanks to the support of the contribution towards Jubilee events from the four County Councillors, the only event expenditure from this financial year is approximately. £3,000 directly from the Parish Council for the Jubilee events.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council and the Durham Markets Company have established a very close working relationship to deliver events for the City. As such, the Parish Council has received a request for support to once again host the Durham City children's book festival in 2022 from the Markets Company.

Colin Wilkes advised that, with the support of the Parish Council, the Markets Company held the first children's book festival in 2021, ably assisted by local children's author Jenny Pearson.

Colin advised that the single event was very well received with a mix of authors and illustrators throughout the city centre alongside free children's entertainment. The restrictions imposed by Covid last year limited some of the numbers but nevertheless the feedback was such as to encourage the Markets Company to try and go bigger and better this year.

Colin advised that this year the Markets Company is looking at a two-day event which they hoped Jenny and her colleague Sam will still be able to headline even though they are on a book tour at the moment, but the other authors and illustrators will be local and up and coming which will give them an opportunity of an audience to showcase their talents to, an opportunity which perhaps they would not normally get until they were more well known.

In addition to the authors and illustrators, Colin advised that the Markets Company is looking to be as inclusive as possible by setting up a space in the St Nicholas' Church church hall which will centre on a quiet chill out inclusive space for children and families to access activities at their own pace. Colin advised that the Markets Company specifically included workshops for children with autism and sensory needs.

Colin advised that the event will run Wednesday 24th and Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August towards the end of the summer holidays and will, in the main, be free at point of delivery. The

only exception to this may be the combined session by Jenny and Sam who feel there should be a small cover charge for their event of say £2.50 per person. If this concept does go ahead, Colin advised that he has suggested that any such payments can be offset against the cost of the purchase of one of their books (one ticket, one discount of that amount).

In addition to the literary aspect, Colin advised that the Markets Company is looking at free face painting, creepy crawlies displays, arts and crafts etc.

Colin advised that the rationale behind the event is not only to encourage children to engage in reading and illustrations in a safe, non-competitive space, but to provide an event in these constrained times which is mostly free at point of delivery and encourage more families back into the city centre with something for them to amuse and occupy their families.

With the event running over 2 days, the cost of putting on such an event has significantly increased. In addition, the Markets Company is looking to provide, this year, a safe inclusive space for children and families who might otherwise have not felt comfortable coming to such an event. To make the event as professional as possible the Markets Company has also provided for audio and large TVs in the marquee to provide a better experience. Colin advised that the proposed expenditure is likely for this 2 day event:

#### EXPENDITURE

Marquee, tables & chairs	£1200 + VAT
Audio equipment 2 days	£1250 + VAT
Authors and illustrators (min 8)	£1500
Safe space display S Nic's 2 days	£300
Face painter, Bugs n stuff, arts and crafts 2 days	£850
St Nic's Church Hall hire 2 days	£TBC
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£5,100</b>

Colin advised that the Markets Company would greatly appreciate financial support from the Parish Council in helping us to put on this event in the region of £3000.

Colin also advised that the Markets Company is also receiving £250 from County Councillor Richard Ormerod and the balance of the funding will come from Durham Markets Company Limited.

Cllr G Holland very much welcomed this event as an important event in the City's calendar and also welcomed the rationale behind this event in promoting children to read as well as welcoming families back into the City. Committee Members agreed with this.

Cllr E Scott advised that she would also be willing to contribute £250 from her County Council funds towards this event and thanked the Markets Company for once again planning an excellent event for the City.

Members **agreed** to recommend to Full Council the acceptance of the £3,000 requested towards this event. Members also **agreed** that the Parish Council should fund any advertising costs in addition to this £3,000 for the event.

Colin thanked the Committee for its ongoing support.

## **9. Update on events planning**

The Clerk took the opportunity to thank all those involved in the terrific set of events for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and remarked that he felt that the partnership working had been fantastic throughout.

The Clerk advised that planning for Remembrance Sunday had already begun and he would be completing the usual planning for this event, along with all of the necessary paperwork, insurance, risk planning, etc. associated with this event.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has committed to supporting Christmas events in the City as part of its events budget agreed in January and that he was hoping to meet with partners to discuss plans going forward. The Clerk also took the opportunity to show Members a mock-up of the new Christmas lights being delivered to Durham City this year. This included a video of the GOBO projection on to the Town Hall. Members very much welcomed this and asked the Clerk to progress this accordingly.

The Clerk advised that he had met with partners – including the Markets Company, Durham BID and Prince Bishops – to look at the diary of events for the City over the next year. The Clerk advised that there is a noticeable gap in October and advised that he had once again discussed the idea of bringing Paw Patrol to the City – an event which drew large attendees when done in Seaham some time ago. The Committee **agreed** to support such an event and asked the Clerk to make the necessary arrangements with partners.

#### **10. Update on the work of Durham BID**

Paul advised that North Road is a key gateway to the City and Durham BID is working to reduce the street clutter present on this Road and generally making North Road a more attractive street in Durham.

Paul advised that the new Life in Durham website is now up and running and encouraged Members to visit the site.

Paul advised that Durham in Bloom judging day will take place on 21<sup>st</sup> July this year. Paul advised that the BID will not be running its usual Windows in Bloom competition as the BID did this during the Jubilee weekend.

Paul advised that July is a busy calendar month for events in the City with the Miners' Gala, Durham Brass Festival and the Fringe Festival. Paul also advised that the BID will be organising a summer-themed event on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2022.

Paul advised that footfall in the City is higher than the national average however is still down from pre-Covid levels. Paul advised that this fluctuates week by week.

Paul advised that the promotion of Independents campaign being run by Durham BID will commence at the end of July and run throughout August.

Paul also advised that he was busy drafting the business plan for the renewal of Durham BID and was looking ahead at the next 5 years.

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

Signed,

G. Scott

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Business Committee  
(15<sup>th</sup> September 2022)**