

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Thursday 15th September 2022 at 13:00 via Zoom

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

Also present: A Shanley (Clerk), Mr Colin Wilkes (Durham Markets Company), Mr Richard Toynbee (Prince Bishops Place) and Councillor C Lattin.

The meeting began with a one-minute silence in memory of our late Monarch Queen Elizabeth II

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr G Nair.

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 5th July 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2022 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

Mr Colin Wilkes advised that he was attending the meeting with an interest in all agenda items, specifically item 9 on the Agenda.

Mr Richard Toynbee advised that he was attending the meeting with an interest in all agenda items, specifically item 9 on the Agenda.

Councillor C Lattin advised that she was attending the meeting as Chair of the Environment Committee in order to discuss item 8 with the Committee in more detail.

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

The Clerk advised that Graham Sout was unavailable for this meeting today but a written report on Graham's work has been circulated to the Committee in advance of the meeting. The Chair asked all Members to direct any questions on this report to the Clerk and/or Graham Sout.

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

The Chair advised that she is soon to be meeting (in October) with the new owners of Prince Bishops. The Chair advised that the new owners appear to be very inclusive and keen to work with partners in the City.

The Chair also advised that she will be meeting with the business seeking to take over the former M&S building. The Chair advised that she could now confirm that this building will no longer be student accommodation, as previously understood to be the case.

The Chair also highlighted the difficulties caused as a result of increased energy bills for local businesses. The Chair advised that this will undoubtedly put a great deal of pressure on businesses in a way which has not been seen before.

Cllr E Ashby highlighted that there are issues with the mess at the end of Fowler's Yard and asked if this could be looked into by the County Council. The Chair advised that Cllr Mark Wilkes is looking into this issue and she would seek an update on this.

7. Producing a targeted survey for private sector landlords in Durham City

Cllr E Ashby reminded Members that the Parish Council had previously attempted to host a roundtable meeting with private sector landlords. Cllr E Ashby highlighted that this hadn't been successful insofar as getting landlords to attend the roundtable meeting was concerned.

Cllr E Ashby advised that she felt that a targeted survey to landlords may be a more appropriate first step of engagement with landlords and proposed a draft survey to the Committee.

The Committee **agreed** that the Chairs of the Planning and Licensing, Business and Environment Committees should be asked to form a working party to look into this and report back to a future meeting of this Committee.

8. Proposal by the Parish Council's Environment Committee to request a voluntary contribution from landlords towards the Parish Council precept

The Chair welcomed Councillor C Lattin to the meeting to discuss the proposal of requesting a voluntary contribution from landlords towards the Parish Council's precept.

Councillor C Lattin advised that the Environment Committee were very keen to pursue this with the aim of allocating more funding to projects which address environmental issues caused by a high density of student properties within a particular area.

The Clerk reminded Members that this had previously been discussed at a Full Council meeting and it had been agreed that the Chairs of the Environment Committee and Business Committee should discuss this in more detail.

The Chair asked where the funding would go once acquired from landlords. Councillor C Lattin advised that this could go towards more officer time in clearing up waste and/or more Neighbourhood Warden time.

Cllr E Ashby advised that she is not in favour of this scheme. Cllr E Ashby advised that this proposal would cut across the positive approach the Parish Council is hoping to make to landlords.

Cllr E Ashby advised that residents should be encouraged to contact the landlords with issues such as bins as opposed to contacting the Parish Council on this.

Cllr E Ashby also expressed concerns at the workload expected of the Parish Clerk in administering such a scheme.

Cllr G Holland advised that he was very much in favour of this scheme but also asked that Durham University also be asked to make a similar financial contribution. Cllr G Holland highlighted that there is clearly an urgent need for this, given that the University is no longer funding a police liaison officer and a neighbourhood warden.

It was **agreed** that this proposal should be discussed at the meeting of the Chairs of the Planning and Licensing, Business and Environment Committees and then put to a further meeting of this Committee.

9. Update on events in the City planning

The Clerk updated Members that the Platinum Jubilee events – with the support of all 4 local County Councillors in the parish – had cost the Parish Council a total of £3,000 and had gone very successfully.

The Clerk also advised that the book festival had cost £3,500 and took the opportunity to thank the Durham Markets Company for their tireless and excellent work on this event.

The Clerk advised that planning for the Remembrance Day event was well underway and he would keep the Committee updated on how this progresses.

The Clerk advised that he had recently met with Richard Toynbee regarding the Paw Patrol event for the half-term holidays in October. The Clerk advised that a two-day event with Paw Patrol characters could support footfall into the City centre and would cost the Parish Council a total of £1,600. The Committee **agreed** to support this proposal going to Full Council.

The Clerk advised that he would soon be meeting with colleagues to discuss Christmas events planning in the City centre and would keep the Committee updated on how this progresses.

The Committee thanked the Clerk for his update and work on these events.

10. Update on the work of Durham BID

The Clerk advised that Paul Howard had sent his apologies for this meeting and advised that he was presently working on the ballot for the renewal of the BID.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Scott'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council Business Committee
(9th November 2022)**