

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on 9th November 2021 at 13:00pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors C Lattin (Chair), V Ashfield, S Walker, R Freiderichsen, D Freeman and R Hanson.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Mr Martin Hiles and Mr Tim Hudson.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12th OCTOBER 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2021 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings, subject to the amendment that the sentence "*Members expressed a desire to write again to the County Council to request that the Parish area be used as a test case for non-usage of pesticides, in order to take action on the ecological emergency*" be amended to "*Members expressed a desire to write again to the County Council to request that the Parish area be used as a test case for non-usage of glyphosates, in order to take action on the ecological emergency.*"

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Martin Hiles and Mr Tim Hudson advised that they were attending the meeting in order to participate in the discussions at item 5a. I).

5. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

5a. To decide:

I) **Update on plans to improve the riverbanks and weirs in Durham City – river clean up volunteers.**

Mr Martin Hiles welcomed the excellent work carried out by the County Council on the clearing of both the riverbanks and the work being carried out at the Weir underneath Milburngate Bridge. In doing so, Mr Hiles identified that the Cathedral was not aware of the works taking place and offered that this is an example where communications could be improved between the relevant partner organisations involved in these issues. Martin advised that he hoped that a steering group for the river could be established.

Martin advised that the river litter pick is set to take place next Wednesday with 10-15 volunteers involved, the fire and rescue service involved and some local hotels supporting this activity.

The Clerk advised that action has been taken on the Weir at Milburngate following a series of meetings between partners which have taken place over the course of a number of months. The Committee expressed its thanks to Durham County Council for carrying out this work.

The Clerk advised that he had been made aware today that ecologists have advised against taking action of some of the felled trees within the river itself owing to the otter using these to fish from. The Clerk advised that the relevant organisations must be guided by the ecologists' assessment on these matters.

Martin advised that he hoped that the river litter picking activity could become a regular activity and advised that there is much love locally for the river.

Martin advised that the ecology issues need to be weighed against the potential damage to the weirs caused by the trees.

Martin also advised that the clearing of the trees at the prebend's weir would be relatively easy and inexpensive and would involve the funding of fuel, hot drinks, etc for volunteers. Martin advised that the trees could be pulled to the St. Leonard boat club site and cut up from there. Martin advised that he would be able to get a team together to do this.

It was **agreed** that the team of volunteers should await clearance from the ecologists on the removal of the trees at prebends.

The Clerk advised that he would seek a copy of the latest ecologist's report on the trees in the weir.

Mr Tim Hudson commended Durham for its fantastic volunteers and highlighted that many who have volunteered to help with the activities to improve the river are professionals who know a lot about these issues.

The Chair thanked Martin and Tim for their time. At this point, Martin and Tim left the meeting.

II) Launching the Parish Council's Best Business Christmas Frontage Awards 2021

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has once again agreed to host its popular Best Business Christmas Frontage Awards this year.

The Committee **agreed** that the event should go ahead as usual this year with judging taking place on 7th December at 4pm and the winners invited to the Parish Council's Christmas civic event on 9th December too.

It was **agreed** that Cllrs Ashfield and Lattin would be part of the judging panel together with other partners.

III) Terms of Reference for the Environment Committee's Climate Lead

The Chair reminded Members that the Parish Council had agreed in September that the Terms of Reference for the Climate Lead role of the Full Council would be drafted and proposed to the January Full Council meeting.

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that he would be looking to draft his own Terms of Reference for this role, for these to be proposed to the Parish Council's Environment Committee meeting in December and then proposed to Full Council in January.

The Chair thanked Cllr R Friederichsen for his work on this.

IV) Consideration of training provider for carbon literacy training

Cllr R Friederichsen presented a report on carbon literacy training to the Committee. Cllr R Friederichsen advised that this report follows on from the Full Council decision on 27 September 2021 delegating to the Environment Committee's Temporary Climate Lead to organise climate literacy training for all Parish Councillors and staff and for the training to take place as soon as feasible.

In consultation with the Carbon Literacy project, Cllr R Friederichsen advised that he had contacted three suitable training providers and had received a total of three options for the training from two training providers.

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that all three options could be feasible but the key advantage of options 2 and 3 from the report is that their training would draw on the practical in-depth expertise of the Centre for Alternative Technology and would enable the Parish Council to benefit from this expertise over the coming years.

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that he felt that option 2 offers the best longer-term value and recommended this to the Committee.

The Chair and Cllr V Ashfield expressed concern at the training being on a full day.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk should discuss the training with the Chair of the Parish Council and a doodle poll for later next year should be circulated in order to fix a date which worked for as many Councillors as possible.

V) To agree a 'legacy of COP26' project with the agreed funding from Council.

The Committee congratulated the organisers of the COP26 event in Durham City on a successful event. The Chair proposed that the £1,500 agreed towards Climate lobbying should go towards a legacy project of COP26. Cllr V Ashfield advised that there were a number of key and immediate actions coming out of the event. For instance, a number of local schools were not aware of the Parish Council's Terracycle project. It was **agreed** that the £1,500 funding should be allocated towards providing Terracycle boxes to local schools in order to support their recycling activities.

VI) Proposal to tackle single use plastics in Durham

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has identified tackling single use plastics as a key priority for this financial year.

The Clerk advised that, in addition to the health and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, a real concern arising from Covid-19 - with the increased use of face masks and the significant increase in plastic containers for hand sanitisers – is that this has dramatically increased the use of single-use plastics.

In February of this year, the Clerk advised that Members of the former Environment Committee tried to progress a proposal to have a water refilling station installed in the City, in order to tackle single-use plastic water bottles. This project has been held up by Northumbrian Water and has not progressed further to an initial meeting with NWL.

The Clerk advised that, in addition to continuing to try to progress the water refilling station proposal with Northumbrian Water, it is proposed that the Parish Council investigates establishing a zero waste cleaning station in the City through a local business.

The Clerk advised that, introducing this facility, would hopefully mean that instead of buying products wrapped in plastic, consumers can bring their own containers in store and fill up their household necessities such as washing up liquid and fabric conditioner.

The Clerk advised that consumers would be charged based on a price per millilitres and the Parish Council could fund the initial outlay for the production of the station and materials, with the scheme becoming self-financing thereafter. The Parish Council has a fund of £3,000 towards tackling single-use plastics.

For this to be successful, this would clearly require a commitment from a local retailer to run the scheme. The Clerk advised that he has had an initial and positive discussion with the Durham Markets Manager about this scheme and he is currently investigating if this is a service which could be offered from the indoor market.

If successful, it is hoped that this scheme could be rolled out across the City to make it easy for consumers to tackle their single-use plastic usage.

Members expressed their support for this support and advised that they hoped that the Tesco unit in Student Castle and Scoop (located in Riverwalk) could support this project.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk should pursue investigations with this project.

It was also **agreed** that Cllr R Hanson should investigate this further with Durham University about getting these into student Halls and PBSAs.

VII) Section 106 project – sedum roofed bus shelters

The Clerk reminded Members that, in September 2021, the Parish Council considered opportunities for uses of Section 106 funding available within our parish area. At present, a substantial amount of funding towards both public art and open space enhancement is available within the Elvet and Gilesgate electoral division.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has been very proactive on the use of this funding, with over £4,000 being awarded earlier this year towards the restoration of the Ruth First Mural (Elvet and Gilesgate division) and just under £20,000 being awarded towards the restoration of the Neville's Cross and improvements to the signage along the Battle of Neville's Cross walk (Neville's Cross division).

The Clerk also reminded Members that the Parish Council's Environment Committee has been working for some time now on a proposal to provide green-roofed bus shelters within the parish as part of its aims to clean and green the parish area.

It was proposed that, in order to maximise the benefit of this initiative, the two bus shelters at lower Claypath be the target areas for this work. Both are within a very busy thoroughfare of the City, both shelters are very well-used by residents, visitors and workers in the City and options to green the public realm are limited in this area of the City centre.

More and more communities and cities are following the trend to make their city greener by planting on the roofs of bus stops.

The Committee **agreed** to propose this project as a Section 106 project to Full Council.

5b. To complete:

I) Durham in Bloom priorities for 2021-22 – trees and bulbs planting and wildflower meadow

The Chair thanked all those Members who had volunteered to be involved in the distribution of the thousands of bulbs across the entire parish area. Cllr V Ashfield advised that she also hoped that the bulb planting event with University volunteers at the Gilesgate roundabout may take place on Saturday 27th November.

The Committee **agreed** that the wildflower meadow should be established underneath the trees planted by the Parish Council in February 2019 at the Sands.

It was also **agreed** that the trees from the Woodland Trust should also be planted along the riverbank at the Sands. The Clerk and Cllr V Ashfield are currently chasing up the relevant permissions for this to happen.

II) Progressing the “Hallow Green/Greening the Viaduct 2021” project – including John Street and Bridge Street proposals

Cllr V Ashfield advised that the planters and the plants were now going to be ready for the coming weekend in November in the agreed selected areas. The Clerk, Cllrs C Lattin, V Ashfield and S Walker agreed to progress the planting up of the Viaduct area over the weekend.

The Clerk asked Cllr V Ashfield to advise which fruit trees she’d like for Bridge Street.

It was also **agreed** that the land at John Street should have some bulbs planted in them.

III) Shhh...campaign update

The Clerk advised that the temporary “Quiet Residential Area” signs have now been installed by the Neighbourhood Wardens.

5c. To note:

The Committee noted that the following projects were being progressed as originally agreed and a further update would be coming available for each project as soon as possible:

- I) Installation of Mosaic art work at the UHND
- II) Promoting the cigarette butt campaign
- III) Progressing the blue plaques scheme
- IV) Young People’s Challenge update
- V) 7 Hills of Durham project update
- VI) Progressing the recycling stickers project
- VII) History and wildlife information boards at Riverwalk

6. DISCUSSION ON PARISH COUNCIL STRATEGY FOR 2022/23 – ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

The Committee **agreed** to consider Environment Committee priorities for 2022/23 and to provide feedback to Cllr V Ashfield in advance of the next Environment Committee meeting.

7. AOB

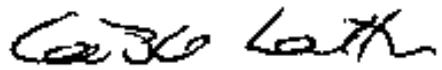
None received.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 7th December 2021

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all those present for attending and for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. J. Lath". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(7th December 2021)**