

# **CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at 13:00pm via Zoom**

**Present:** Councillors C Lattin (Chair), V Ashfield, L Brown, D Freeman and R Friederichsen.

**Also present:** Parish Clerk A Shanley, Dave Lewin and Steven Muse (Durham County Council) and Mr Matthew Phillips (member of the public)

## **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Councillor C Lattin was elected as Chair of the Environment Committee. Proposed by Cllr L Brown and seconded by Cllr D Freeman.

## **2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Councillor V Ashfield was elected as Vice-Chair of the Environment Committee. Proposed by Cllr C Lattin and seconded by Cllr L Brown.

## **3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr R Hanson.

## **4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

None received.

## **5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

## **6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Matthew Phillips advised that he was attending the meeting to hear discussions on item 7 of the Agenda.

## **7. DISCUSSION WITH DCC HIGHWAYS ON PROPOSALS FOR CHURCH STREET, DURHAM CITY.**

The Chair welcomed Dave Lewin and Steven Muse to the meeting.

Steven Muse advised that he was the Project Manager in DCC's Transport and Infrastructure team. Steven advised that DCC is hoping to secure some Department of Transport Transforming City's funding towards a re-configuration of the signalised junction next to Whitechurch in Durham City. Steven advised that the focus of this project is to improve this area for pedestrians.

Steven presented the existing layout of the area to the Committee. Steven advised that the islands are often at capacity and the main aspect of this proposal involves the removal of these islands and replacing this pedestrian area to the mainland/ footways.

Steven advised that the proposal also involves the widening of pedestrian crossing points. Steven advised that the scheme would also include an additional traffic lane to the two lane (East to West) approach. Steven advised that this would improve the number of vehicles which get through the lights.

Steven advised that this proposal would allow the Council to get the cycle time for the lights down from 150 seconds to 120 seconds and this allows a more frequent, green period for pedestrians.

Steven advised that whilst the scheme was focused on pedestrians; allowing for a more dispersed pedestrian flow to the pedestrian routes whilst not having a detrimental impact on waiting times for vehicles.

Steven advised that a funding bid would be submitted by Autumn of 2022 and, if successful, the Council would look to develop this in early 2023.

Dave Lewin highlighted that the number of pedestrians using the space in the morning far exceeds what there is capacity for at present. Pedestrians would love the islands but have more frequent green lights to walk.

Cllr L Brown asked how much grass verge is going to be lost as part of the scheme. Steven advised that approximately 2m will be lost.

Cllr L Brown asked if the lights would be four way phasing. Steven and Dave advised that the phasing of the lights will be unchanged as part of the scheme.

Cllr L Brown also asked if the University is putting in any funding for this proposal. Steven advised that no funding had been discussed with the University.

The Clerk asked how the scheme would improve air quality in this part of the City. Steven advised that he hoped that the pedestrian improvements would encourage more residents to walk as opposed to using a car. Steven also advised that the lights would be replaced with LED lights which are more environmentally-friendly.

Dave also advised that more green lights would ensure that there is less queuing and therefore less engine-idling in this area.

Matthew welcomed the news that more green lights would be coming in for pedestrians but questioned whether such a radical change to the junction is necessary in order to achieve this.

Matthew advised that he felt that this scheme would make the desire lines for pedestrians worse than the current arrangements.

Matthew also advised that he felt that the environmental benefits from this scheme are debatable. Matthew expressed the concern that less queuing time for traffic may encourage more vehicles to come through this route.

Matthew advised that this area is part of a priority area identified through the Council's LCWIPs and advised that he was concerned at the impact of this scheme on the safety of the right-hand turn for cyclists. Matthew asked that the scheme be looked at again to allow for a safer scheme for cyclists which is a priority for the urban area. Matthew advised that 5% of students cycle to the University.

Steven advised that he felt that the removal of the islands is a benefit to cyclists. Steven also advised that the scheme allows for a protected right-hand turn. Steven committed to speak with the designer of the scheme to see if there is any more that can be done to improve the scheme for cyclists.

Cllr R Friederichsen highlighted that no mention of cyclists was made during the presentation to the Committee and expressed disappointment at this and the lack of reference to the Council's LCWIP. Steven again committed to speak with the designer of the scheme to see if there is any more that can be done to improve the scheme for cyclists.

Cllr R Friederichsen also asked if there is to be a round of further public consultation on the scheme. Steven advised that there is a very tight timeframe for funding for this scheme and therefore any delays associated with public consultation for this scheme could be detrimental to the scheme.

Cllr V Ashfield also asked that both walking and cycling be considered as part of any scheme which is geared towards active and sustainable travel. Steven highlighted that the Council would need to take account of the national cyclist design guide with any scheme.

Cllr C Lattin highlighted that the majority of pedestrians in this area are University students and therefore the University should be putting in some funding for this.

Cllr D Freeman thanked the officers for their presentation and advised that he felt that the scheme was great, much-needed and a vast improvement on the current arrangements.

At this point, the Chair thanked Steven Muse for his time and Steven left the meeting.

Cllr R Friederichsen asked if Dave Lewin would support the plans from SPACE for Durham for Church Street. Dave advised that a scheme was proposed some years ago and was overwhelmingly rejected by residents. Dave advised that he would not be able to support the proposals from SPACE for Durham because of resident feedback from the 2018 scheme, the impact on Hallgarth Street and the speed of traffic increasing in any one-way scheme.

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that the support he was seeking support to develop ideas for Church Street and highlighted that the Elvet Residents Association were

very supportive of a one-way system on Church Street. Dave advised that he was unable to support this scheme as it would raise expectations on a proposal which is not deliverable for the area.

Cllr R Friederichsen asked if Dave would be able to engage further with residents on any proposals for Church Street. Dave advised that he would not be able to give this commitment as all proposals he was aware of for Church Street have been considered, consulted on and rejected.

At this point, the Chair thanked Dave Lewin for his time and Dave left the meeting.

## **8. REPORT BY PARISH COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN ON ACTIVITIES IN THE CITY**

The Clerk advised that the Neighbourhood Warden had again been invited to the meeting today but had not responded to this invitation. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council's SLA with Durham County Council for an enhanced Neighbourhood Warden service needs to be renewed in July and therefore this would be discussed at the June Full Council meeting. The Clerk advised that he hoped to be able to present an annual report of what had been achieved over the last year as part of this SLA.

## **9. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:**

### **9a. To decide:**

#### **I) Progressing the proposal on Providence Row by local students and green wall at Allergate/ East Atherton Street**

Cllr V Ashfield advised that she was engaging with local students on the wildflowering of the land on Providence Row.

The Clerk and Cllr V Ashfield also **agreed** to visit the resident at 18A Allergate to discuss options for greening the wall at East Atherton Street and report back at the next meeting.

#### **II) Update on the work to improve the River Wear – including report by Cllr R Friederichsen and any progress on the report from Durham Cathedral**

Cllr R Friederichsen presented a report to the Committee on the River Wear. Cllr R Friederichsen asked for Members' support to have a report commissioned by an expert to establish the knowledge base for future strategic adaptation of Durham's management of the river Wear in the context of climate change.

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that the rationale for this project is comprised of four key aspects as follows:

1. The Committee has heard that current pollution problems will be exacerbated by climate change and is committed to protecting the river Wear.

2. There is a need to, in the words of the Environment Agency, “adapt or die” (see Environment Agency, press release dated 13/10/21) which with regard to rivers means adapting to a reality in which “River flows will be more extreme. Peak flows are expected to be up to 27% higher in the 2050s, while in the summer months river flows could be 82% lower by as soon as 2050.”
3. The City of Durham Parish Council is expanding its work with the Wear Rivers Trust, the parent organisation of which is expert in adaptation and mitigation as regards UK rivers (see Climate change | The Rivers Trust)
4. The City of Durham Parish Council currently lacks a long term adaptation strategy as regards managing and protecting the River Wear

It was highlighted that the report by Durham Cathedral on the River Wear had not been received, in spite of a number of requests for this, and that the scope of this report was still as yet unknown.

Cllr R Friederichsen also advised that he hoped that the Committee could also consider hosting a public awareness event as well as an event to celebrate volunteers who are looking to work on the river.

Cllr L Brown expressed concern at the proposed expenditure for the report as set out and felt that the funds should instead be allocated towards practical actions which are known to improve the river already, e.g. supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust on their WINNs project.

Cllr Victoria Ashfield proposed that a follow-up meeting of the Riverscape Community group takes place as soon as possible, offering the Parish Council’s full commitment of £6,000 towards river improvements. As part of this investment, a report on the River Wear and an event may be part of what is agreed, depending on feedback from partners at this meeting as well as activities such as supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust. This was **agreed** by the Committee.

#### **9b. To complete:**

##### **I) Planning a City-wide litter picking event**

The Clerk highlighted that the City-wide litter picking event had been delayed following an initial approach to Parish Councillors about this in May. The Committee **agreed** that the event should be re-scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022 and asked the Clerk to circulate details of this.

##### **II) Update on the ecological emergency resolution and the use of glyphosates in the City of Durham parish area**

The Clerk advised that he was awaiting a response to the letter to the Leader of Durham County Council on this issue and would update the Committee as soon as a response has been received.

##### **III) Emergency Community Plan for Durham City**

The Chair advised that she has received very little feedback to the plans for an emergency community plan for Durham City from Members of the Committee. The Chair highlighted that this is not a project which can be delivered by one individual.

The Committee agreed to engage with the organisation Durham Churches Together to see if Churches across the parish might be used as hubs for the community to provide power, heat and light in the event of an emergency.

The Chair asked for 6 months to progress such a plan alongside Cllr V Ashfield and the Committee **agreed** this as a way forward.

#### **IV) Progressing the blue plaques scheme – including proposed unveiling of existing plaques.**

The Clerk advised that the blue plaques have now been delivered and he was working with relevant landowners to arrange the installation of each blue plaque. The Clerk confirmed that the plaque for the Market Hall had already been installed and that the Daisy Edis plaque was being installed in the next few weeks ahead of an unveiling event organised by the nominators for this plaque and the owners of the 142 Gilesgate. The Chair encouraged Members to attend this event and thanked the Clerk for his support of this.

The Clerk also highlighted that the Parish Council has **agreed** funding for a further 2 plaques in the parish and that this would be considered at the new Full Council meeting. The Committee **agreed** that they'd like to see a blue plaque installed at 20 Allergate.

#### **9c. To note:**

##### **I) Verbal report from Cllr C Lattin on a recent meeting with the management of Maiden Castle, Durham City**

The Chair advised that she had recently met with Durham University to discuss the issue of light pollution from Maiden Castle which she has highlighted as an issue previously. The Chair advised that she had received assurances that the lights are turned off when Maiden Castle is closed but the perception from the public may be that they are left on all night as they are put on again – particularly over Autumn and Winter – when the lights are switched on for training early in the mornings. The Chair also advised that all lights are being changed to LED lights.

The Chair advised that an additional rubbish bin would be installed at the other end of the bridge too.

##### **II) Update following the carbon literacy training delivered in May 2022**

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that the training had been very good albeit the attendance from Councillors was disappointing. Cllr R Friederichsen advised that he and the Chair were meeting to discuss the next steps from this training.

### **III) Installation of Mosaic art work at the UHND**

The Clerk advised that the mosaic art work for the UHND had now been delivered and he was awaiting approval for a photo and press release from the hospital.

### **IV) 7 Hills of Durham project update**

The Clerk highlighted that the 7 Hills of Durham project was proving to be extremely popular with visitors from feedback received from the Town Hall.

### **10. AOB**

Cllr D Freeman advised that County Councillors have now received copies of the new bin stickers discussed at previous meetings of the Environment Committee and he would share these with the Committee.

Cllr V Ashfield advised that the trees for the Clean Air event had now been received and advised that she would drop these off in the Market Place.

### **11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022 – 1pm

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022 – 1pm

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

Signed,



**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee  
(12<sup>th</sup> July 2022)**