

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Monday 11th January 2021 at 13:00 via Zoom.

Present: Councillors A Doig (Chair), E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, R Ormerod & E Scott

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley

Cllr A Doig in the **Chair**

1. Welcome and apologies

None received.

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 26 November 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2020 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 on current financial position of Council 2020-21

The Clerk presented the current financial position of the Council for 2020-21. The Clerk advised that it is expected that the Parish Council will finish the current Financial Year (2020-21) with expenditure totalling (approximately) £172,196.93 and therefore (approximately) £108,100 remaining in the bank account.

Of the remaining £108,100, the following need to be ring fenced for the next financial year:

General Reserves	£45,000
Contingencies	£15,000
Licensing budget	£1,500
Durham in Bloom expenditure	£7,500
Admin support role – including salary, National Insurance contributions and workplace pension	£15,000
TOTAL	£84,000

Members **approved** this ring fenced expenditure and considered this commitment at the budget setting item of the Agenda.

6. Parish Council budget for the financial year 2021-22

Members agreed to propose the following budget for the financial year 2021-22 to Full Council:

Planning Committee

Item of potential expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Professional support in responding to planning applications	4,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Production of two Supplementary Planning Documents (Trees and a Design Guide)	4,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2021-22 AGAINST PRIORITIES	8,000.00

Business Committee

Item of potential expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Professional support for independent businesses in Durham	10,000.00
PRIORITY 2: E-commerce website for Durham City Businesses	4,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2021-22 AGAINST PRIORITIES	14,000.00

Licensing Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Licensing training conference	1,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Award for best run licensed premises	500.00
PRIORITY 3: Enhanced police drug search of licensed premises	600.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2021-22 AGAINST PRIORITIES	2,100.00

Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Being a voice for the City	
Young People's Environment Working Group	£5,000
Climate lobbying	£1,500
PRIORITY 2: Noise abatement	
Evening Wardens	£3,000
PRIORITY 3: Clean Air, Clean and Green City	
Improve unmaintained Footpaths, unadopted and green areas	£10,000
Encourage Walking, Cycling & Sustainable Travel (active streets)	£1,000
Durham in Bloom and planting	£10,000
PRIORITY 4: Heritage	
Adding content to the Heritage App	£3,000
Creation of a map for the Seven Hills Trail	£1,000
Creation of new blue plaques in the parish	£2,000
PRIORITY 5: Appearance of the City	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA with DCC	£10,000
Easter and Christmas Frontages Awards	£5,000
PRIORITY 6: Climate Emergency	

Encourage a green infrastructure	£2,000
Encourage electric vehicles	£1,000
Reduction in Plastic Use	£1,000
Explore and encourage sustainable food	£1,000
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2021-22 AGAINST PRIORITIES	56,500.00

Full Council

Item of Expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Administration of Parish Council (rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website, other expenditure)	15,000
PRIORITY 2: Training budget	3,000
PRIORITY 3: Events (Remembrance events and Christmas)	6,000.00
PRIORITY 4: grants for local community and voluntary organisations	20,000.00
PRIORITY 5: Staffing costs – including salary, National Insurance contributions and workplace pension	49,440.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2021-22 AGAINST PRIORITIES	93,440.00

Committee	Proposed expenditure (2021/2022) against priorities (£)
Planning Committee	8,000.00
Licensing Committee	2,100.00
Environment Committee	56,500.00
Business Committee	14,000.00
Full Council	93,440.00
TOTAL POTENTIAL PROVISION IN 2021-2022 AGAINST PRIORITIES	174,040.00

7. Parish Council precept request 2021-22

The Clerk referred Members to item 6 on the Agenda for consideration of budget priorities for 2021/2022.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council's precept request must be submitted to Durham County Council by the end of January 2021.

The Clerk advised that the 2021/22 City of Durham Parish Council Council Tax Base was calculated at 4,412.1. For 2020/21 the Tax Base was 4,430.4. Our Tax Base has therefore decreased by 18.3. The Clerk advised that, if the Parish Council retains its current council tax band D charge of £34.87, it can generate a precept of £153,849.93. This would represent a reduction from 2020/21 which generated a total precept of £154,488.05.

The Clerk also advised that the LCTRS grant payable to the City of Durham for 2021/22 is £622.00. Previously the total amount paid to the Parish Council was £0.

The Clerk advised that, should Councillors decide to retain the current council tax charge, the total income for the Parish Council (from Precept and LCTRS Grant) would decrease (from 2020-21 levels) by £16.12 and would therefore be £154,471.93.

Members **agreed** to recommend to Full Council that the council tax band D charge of £34.87 remain the same for 2021-22.

8. Police, Crime and Victims Commissioner precept request consultation

The Chair advised that the Office of Durham Police, Crime & Victims' Commissioner is currently consulting on the recommendation that the Policing Precept (part of the Council Tax) be increased by the maximum of £15 per year in Band D properties (this will increase and decrease according to a resident's banding). This equates to nearly a 7% increase.

The Chair proposed the following response to Members which was **agreed** to go forward to Full Council for approval:

RE: Consultation open to residents for their view on budget for policing and community services

The Office of the Durham Police, Crime & Victims' Commissioner is currently consulting on the recommendation that the Policing Precept (part of the Council Tax) be increased by the maximum of £15 per year in Band D properties (this will increase and decrease according to a resident's banding) for the financial year 2021-22. This equates to an increase of approximately 7%.

Explanation

The Office of the Durham Police, Crime & Victims' Commissioner proposes that the purpose of this increase includes help to:

- ensure that there will be more officers on the street and in the communities of Durham and Darlington;
- more funding to ensure it has adequate resources to meet its demand from calls for service; responding to 999 and 101 calls in a timely way;
- invest in maintaining officer numbers, victim support services to provide vital support to residents recovering from a range of crime types;
- ensure the force are able to maintain PCSO numbers and a visible neighbourhood policing in communities and also bring forward the force's planned recruitment;
- invest in carrying out in more telephone investigations where possible which save time for both the force and its citizens.

Response

The City of Durham Parish Council is aware of the budgetary reductions to all police forces across the UK, including those to Durham Constabulary. In principle, the City of Durham Parish Council would be minded to approve the proposed increase but it has a number of reservations that would require further information than that provided to date.

The grounds for the increase and the 1-10 rankings for investment are dissimilar, with the former very much reflecting local operational priorities and the latter more shaped by both county-wide and national policing agendas. We understand the demands placed on Police resources when faced with such a wide range of issues in urban and rural communities across the County. However, as representatives of people living in the City, we have become increasingly concerned at the growth in concerns expressed by residents, particularly in relation to:

The inability of the 101 service to respond positively to requests that would normally then engage either with the Police or the University's Covid-19 Marshall resource;
The decline in PCSO support for the City centre since the appointment of the new Chief Constable;
The absence of an effective and visible police presence to address Covid-19 related issues and more general ASB behaviour, notably in the evenings and at weekends.

While a number of the above could be addressed by a more positive and linked-up approach, the City of Durham Parish Council would still be concerned that any approval to raise the precept would then not see the benefits invested in the grounds proposed by the Office of the Durham Police, Crime & Victims' Commissioner for the benefit of the residents of Durham City.

In such circumstances, and until the Office of the Durham Police, Crime & Victims' Commissioner is able to clarify exactly how it intends to allocate the increase and exactly how such allocation will benefit the residents of Durham City, the City of Durham Parish Council is unable to make a decision on the consultation proposal. It invites the Office of the Durham Police, Crime & Victims' Commissioner to provide such information as soon as possible.

9. Dates of future meetings

The Chair advised that the date and time of the next meeting would be announced in due course.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Chair of the Parish Council's Finance Committee
(10th June 2021)**

