

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Thursday 10th June 2021 at 11:00am via Zoom.

Present: Councillors A Doig, V Ashfield, R Hanson and H Weston.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley.

Cllr A Doig in the **Chair**

1. Election of Chair of the Finance Committee

Cllr D Freeman was elected Chair of the Finance Committee. Proposed by Cllr A Doig and seconded by Cllr V Ashfield.

2. Election of Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee

Cllr A Doig was elected Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee. Proposed by Cllr V Ashfield and seconded by Cllr R Hanson.

3. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr D Freeman. In his absence, Cllr A Doig chaired the meeting as Vice-Chair.

4. To receive any declarations of interest from members

Cllr A Doig declared an interest under item 8 of the Agenda in relation to the award of grants to local community and voluntary organisations; specifically the applications from St. Cuthbert's Hospice, Alington House, Shakespeare Hall, Merryoaks WI and St. John's Brownies and took no part in the discussion or vote on these applications.

5. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 11 January 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th January 2021 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

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

None received.

7. Update on grant funding awards 2020-21

The Clerk reminded Members that in a number of cases (Durham Hospital Radio, St. Oswald's Institute and SNCF), the Council had approved to extend the timeframe in which each organisation could spend their funding until December 2021, in view of the difficulties caused by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The Clerk reported that he had written to each organisation and they had confirmed that the allocated funding would be spent within this extended timeframe.

The Clerk also reminded Members that he had circulated correspondence from the Blind Life in Durham group, who had asked whether the approx. £430 grant could be re-allocated towards allowing the group to meet virtually and have online interactive sessions with their members as opposed to funding room hire, given that the group is unable to meet physically and there is some concern that a number of their members are feeling isolated during the pandemic. The Committee unanimously **agreed** to support this alternative use for grant funding from the Blind Life in Durham.

8. Grant funding awards 2021-22 – report included.

Members **agreed** the grant funding awards for 2021-22 as follows:

Organisation	Project	Amount requested	Amount agreed
Harbour	<p>Funding to help clients who have left a domestic abusive relationship and they have found their own safe place to live, often starting from scratch.</p> <p>We would use the grant to purchase essential items for people engaging with our organisation.</p> <p>Monies would be allocated to clients whose daily living costs being equal or very close to their income, leaving little spare for buying essential items. Each client would be assessed individually and we would allocate a maximum spend on per client of £250 to enable us to help at least 6 families or individuals.</p>	£1,500	£3,000
St. Cuthbert's Hospice	<p>Refreshing and repairing the gardens of the Hospice as a place of tranquility. Also re-designing to make the gardens suitable for bereaved children.</p>	£2,250	£2,250
Alington House	<p>Refurbishment of the Main Hall of Alington House</p>	£1,500	£1,500
Boccia Durham	<p>To purchase 5 extra sets of boccia balls and extra referee equipment x 4 (one for each court) to help all our members compete at the highest level they choose to achieve. We would like to also purchase a ramp and stool but the boccia balls need to be the priority.</p>	£2,000	£2,028
Durham Hospital Radio	<p>The current project is a mixture of improvements to the DHR studios and also the siting of ceiling speaker systems in a number of areas within the hospital in order to improve the quality of the service to the patients and their families. The project would allow for the installation of an additional studio in the DHR location providing more flexibility for the presenters for training and broadcasts in a safer working socially distant environment. The ceiling speaker installations in 5 areas would allow the station to reach a wider audience within the hospital. Improvements of studio soundproofing is also included in the project.</p>	£3,000	£3,000

DMC 4 Durham CIC	<p>1. A contribution towards the costs of creating and airing a monthly podcast from Totally Locally Durham involving local people, local businesses and local community initiatives to promote what the city has to offer.</p> <p>2. A contribution towards a series of family events on Summer Sundays in August on a variety of themes to attract additional footfall into city centre.</p>	£2,000	£2,000
Durham Community Association (Shakespeare Hall)	Purchase of a Printer/copier/scanner and 4x hand dryers	£966	£966
Durham Fringe	<p>From our analysis, audiences for the Fringe Festival are likely to come from within 45 minutes of the City Centre. To attract the most diverse audience possible we want to keep ticket prices as low as possible.</p> <p>To achieve this, the Festival is seeking funds from supportive organisations and individuals to help us reduce our ticket prices from £8.00 to £5.00. The cost of this price reduction, on the assumption that we sell 50% of tickets to performances, is £18,000.</p>	£1,000	£1,000
Merryoaks WI	To purchase a Cloud Book, mobile projector and 4G router, allowing members to fully benefit from the presentations given by monthly speakers and our own discussions and presentations on WI resolutions and proposals. At present we are reliant on the speaker having their own equipment which is not always the case.	£550	£550
St. John's Brownies	The unit has been open since 1930 and this year wishes to mark 91 years of St John's Brownies with a special birthday celebration.	£250	£250
St. Margaret's Centre	The replenishment of consumable materials used in the craft room, woodwork and horticulture departments at the centre.	£1,000	£1,000
St. Nic's Church	To develop a "friendship café" in order to tackle loneliness in the City with a social justice emphasis built around it, involving activities etc and enabling support from DCC and others.	Whatever contribution is available.	£0
The Finchale Group	Funding of an access path to the Finchale Gardens - a place of peace and tranquillity in an industrial estate.	£1,000	£0
		Total agreed	£17,544

9. Internal audit report for the financial year 2020-21

Members noted a successful outcome of the internal audit of the Parish Council and agreed to take forward all outstanding actions identified within the report. The Committee thanked the Clerk for his work throughout the year on behalf of the Parish Council.

10. Financial position at the end of 2020-21

The Parish Clerk provided a summary of the Parish Council's finances over financial 2020-21 as follows:

The Parish Council's sole source of income for the Financial Year 2020-21 was its precept, which generated an income of £154,488.

A refund of VAT paid in the Financial Year 2019-20 was paid to the Council. This totalled £7,743.89.

A refund of the £250 deposit was also made to the Council from the Spitfire company originally contracted for the Battle of Britain event as they cancelled on us at the last minute and an alternative provider had to be found.

Total expenditure for the Financial Year 2020-21 was £157,138. Covid-19 has clearly had an impact on some of the operations of the Parish Council and the ability to deliver on projects such as the Youth Environment Working Party where Council committed a budget of £5,000 towards eradicating single plastic usage. This fund, along with other payments of £31,000, have been ringfenced from the previous financial year in order to support their delivery in this financial year.

The pandemic has also created savings during the financial year, with £5,500 saved through office rental costs and the Parish Council working via Zoom – this form of operation has created not only financial savings but significant time savings for the Clerk and Councillors when attending meetings, etc.

In spite of the pandemic, the Council largely continued with its programme of work, with Committees such as the Business Committee, Planning Committee and Environment Committee delivering projects to improve the Parish.

The Parish Council committed a significant, additional proportion of its funds for 2020-21 to supporting local voluntary and community organisations, with the small grants budget increasing to £24,475 and a new Covid-19 business resilience fund of £30,000 being established to support local businesses in the City with the additional costs of making their premises Covid-safe as the Country came out of the first lockdown. In many cases, the funding from the Parish Council in the way of grants has been a lifesaver for many of the local organisations we cherish in the city.

This financial year, the Parish Council has agreed a budget of £174,040.00, with the underspend from the previous financial year funding the additional expenditure required given the decision to freeze the precept for the third year in a row.

An independent internal audit of the Parish Council's finances, and operations has been carried out and the auditor has again commended the Parish Council on its good governance and management arrangements and has also commended the Parish Council for continuing with its programme of work during what has been an unprecedented and difficult year for everyone.

The Chair thanked the Clerk for this report.

11. Dates of future meetings

The Chair advised that the date of the next meeting of this Committee would be communicated 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 several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

**Chair of the Parish Council's Finance Committee
(11th January 2022)**