

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of the City of Durham Full Parish Council held on
Thursday 20 December 2018 at 19:00 in the Lantern Room, Durham Town
hall, Market Place, Durham, DH1 3NJ.**

Present:

Cllr A Doig in the Chair

Councillors E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, J Atkinson, E Brown, S Cahill, R Cornwell, J Elmer, R Ormerod, C Reeves, E Scott (attended the meeting later).

Five members of the public also attended the meeting.

1. Presentation from the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue authority

The Chair welcomed Chief Fire Officer Stuart Errington to the meeting. Mr Errington attended the meeting in the absence of Dominic Brown, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, to explain more about the ongoing consultation on the integrated risk management plan 2018-2019.

The Chair advised that 10 minutes were allocated for presentation and a further 10 minutes were allocated for questions from Members.

Mr Errington began his presentation by saying that putting public safety first remains at the heart of everything he and his fire crew do as a service to the people of Durham County. Mr Errington advised that recent tragedies such as that which occurred at Grenfell Tower last year served as a poignant reminder of the critical role the Fire Service plays for any community.

Mr Errington advised that whilst Durham Fire Service is currently in a slightly more financially sound place than other parts of the country, the last few years have seen some of the most significant cuts to the fire service. Mr Errington advised that this therefore meant that to continue offering a top rate, cost effective fire and rescue service to the people living, working and visiting County Durham and Darlington, his service must adapt around the spending restrictions.

Mr Errington advised that, at a time when the fire and rescue service, along with other public-sector organisations, faces an uncertain financial future, it is essential that the service has an effective medium-term financial plan in place. This means the service needs to work towards balancing the budget over the medium term, taking account of expenditure and of future central and local funding. Mr Errington provided details of the financial plans for 2018/19 to 2021/22, advising that there was an assumption that council tax will increase by 2.95% in 2019/20 and 2.0% in 2021/21 and 2021/22. Mr Errington also advised that central Government funding would be cut and, as a result there would likely be a significant shortfall in funding from 2019/20. Mr Errington explained that this had caused some uncertainty in terms of job security and pensions and the service continued to lobby central Government and Fire Unions on this point. In order to balance the budget, Mr Errington advised that the Durham Fire and Rescue Service needed to identify £0.448 million of savings in 2019/20 rising to a further £0.735 million in 2021/22.

The Service has undertaken a full review of emergency response to identify further savings options and this is the subject of a consultation at present. Mr Errington advised that a consultation event would be taking place on 15th January and he would circulate details of this to the Clerk to distribute to Councillors.

Mr Errington advised that the service used a number of data sources to analyse best response times and Durham and Darlington Fire Service were viewed as one of the leaders in the country with a standard response time of 8 minutes from receipt of an emergency call.

As part of the consultation and through analysis of the data they retain, the Fire Service had identified 3 options which involved collaboration with other services. Mr Errington advised that these were as follows:

Option 1 - Have firefighters on duty at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe for 12 hours during the day. At night time only the existing on call firefighters will be called into work within 5 minutes of being alerted to the incident.

Option 2 - Have firefighters on duty at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe as described in option 1. In addition, to cover 12 hours over night, move the second fire engine and crew from Durham to Newton Aycliffe and the second fire engine and crew from Peterlee to Seaham, this will maintain staffing that can respond immediately at these stations

Option 3 - Have firefighters on duty at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe as described in option 1. In addition, move Durham's second fire engine and crew permanently to Spennymoor to replace the current arrangements. This means they would be there to offer an immediate response 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Both Durham and Spennymoor would then have identical resources when responding to incidents. This is CDDFRS's preferred option

Mr Errington advised that a large amount of data had been used to come up with these options. He also advised that Darlington was the busiest station the service had and Durham was the most resourced station.

Mr Errington finished his presentation by encouraging all Members to participate in the consultation and to come along to the consultation event on 15th January.

The Chair thanked Mr Errington for his presentation and invited Members to ask any questions following this presentation.

Cllr R Cornwell asked about the £600K shortfall in funding for one of the options explored as part of the service's financial planning and queried why the fire service element of the council tax bill rates had not been increased to ensure that this gap in funding was filled. Mr Errington advised that the rates had been increased as much as they could be by law and there was a restriction on the level of increase the fire service could apply due to Government policy.

Cllr J Ashby advised that there was a lot of statistical evidence to show that option 3 was the preferred option as part of the consultation, however asked what would happen to the service if further cuts came from central Government funding. Mr Errington advised that this would have a huge impact on the service and could jeopardise the services ability to respond to emergency calls in the timeframe required, putting the public at greater risk.

Cllr J Elmer asked about the services ability to increase the rates and queried who the appropriate body was to allow the fire service to increase rates further to meet the

funding gap. Mr Errington advised that this is a central Government decision and he and his colleagues continue to do a lot of lobbying of Government and of central Government to allow for an increased funding of the service.

Cllr V Ashfield asked about the impact of Government cuts specifically on Durham to date. Mr Errington advised that the service had had to deal with a 50% reduction in funding and this had meant that roles had had to be taken out of the Durham and Darlington Fire Service. Despite this however, Mr Errington advised that the DDFS were still widely regarded as one of the best in the country.

Cllr E Ashby asked whether any of the options presented to the Council this evening included capital funding e.g. for a new fire engine for instance. Mr Errington advised that this did not include such funding.

The Chair thanked Members for their questions and thanked Mr Errington for attending the meeting and presenting this information to the Parish Council.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved by Council for Cllrs G Holland, M Ross and D Freeman.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members.

4. Public participation

The Chair welcomed those members of the public who were present at the meeting and invited any questions.

A local market trader attended the meeting to express her objections to planning application DM/18/02369/FPA relating to the proposed move of the County HQ. The trader advised that she felt that the opposition to the proposed move of County Hall was a view shared by her fellow market traders. The trader advised that she had real concerns about the impact the proposed move would have on the local environment and the economy. In particular, the trader was concerned about moving the coach park further away from the Centre of Durham as she felt this would have a negative impact on her stall. She, like all of the other market traders, are dependent on local tourism and shoppers coming in to the centre of the city to shop. The Trader also expressed that she felt that the coach park moving further away from the centre will have a negative impact on the disabled. The trader advised that she felt that the County Council should be looking to expand car parking provision to support local traders and businesses.

The trader highlighted that hundreds of local residents had backed a petition against the proposed move.

The Chair thanked the lady for attending the meeting and expressing her views. The lady was encouraged to make her views known via the County Council planning portal too.

5. Approval of the draft Minutes of the Council meeting held on 22nd November 2018.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following changes:

Cllr Jonathan Elmer be added to the Minutes as having attended the meeting.

The Minute relating to the City Safety Group Presentation regarding attending meetings be altered to state "meetings where matters of relevance are discussed"

The Minute relating to Councillor V Ashfield not agreeing to HR advice be elaborated on to specify "HR advice regarding number of hours"

Cllr E Ashby also made the point that she felt that the number of members of the public attending the meetings should also be noted for future Minutes. The new Clerk advised that he would ensure this was done going forward.

6. Committee updates

Updates were provided from the Environment, Finance, Licensing and Planning Committees as follows:

Environment Committee

Councillor V Ashfield advised that the Minutes of the Environment Committee meeting, held on 29th November had not yet been signed as there were 3 amendments to make to these Minutes.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that a working group is to be established to look into the matter of potentially purchasing a snow plough/ grass cutting machine for the Parish. Councillor V Ashfield advised that the working group should consist of Members of the Environment Committee (if they wished to participate in this group), the Clerk, Chair of Finance and the Chair of the Parish Council. It was **agreed** that the working group be established and the Clerk and Cllr V Ashfield look to set up a meeting.

Councillor E Ashby asked that from now onwards all Environment Committee meetings be clerked. The new Clerk advised that this would be fine.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she had discussed the timings of the meeting with the new Clerk and it was envisaged that the new timings of the Environment Committee would be 17:30pm on 15th Jan, 19th Feb and 19th March. The Clerk is to organise a suitable venue.

Finance Committee

Councillor A Doig provided an update from the previous Finance Committee meeting. Cllr Doig also advised that the Finance Committee required more members to become a more operational committee. It was agreed that Cllr E Scott, Cllr R Ormerod and Cllr E Ashby would become Members of this Committee.

Cllr Doig reminded Members that the next meeting of the Finance Committee would take place on 11th January at 16:00pm and encouraged Members to come along to this meeting as the draft budget for 2019/20 would be discussed at this meeting. The new Clerk stressed the importance of all Committee Chairs attending the meeting so as to go through each Committee budget.

Licensing Committee

Councillor L Brown provided an update following the first Licensing Committee meeting.

She advised that she had been elected Chair of the Committee with Cllr E Ashby elected Vice Chair.

Councillor L Brown advised that the Committee had to date considered two applications; with one objection to a premise's opening hours on a Sunday and one other application noted without representation made.

Planning Committee

Councillor R Cornwell provided the Council with an update following the planning committee meetings in November.

Councillor R Cornwell also advised that the consultation on the boundary for the Neighbourhood Plan was ongoing and ends on 31st January. He advised that the boundary had passed scrutiny without any issues, however Cllr R Cornwell stressed the importance of supporting the proposed boundary in the consultation.

Councillor Cornwell advised that a meeting had been arranged with the Freeman on 9th January to discuss their interest in the Sands as part of the County HQ application. Cllr Cornwell advised that he, Cllr J Ashby and the Clerk would be attending this meeting with the Freeman.

Councillor Cornwell requested that the Council suspend standing orders and requested that the matter of the legal letter from the Council's solicitors be discussed in closed session due its confidential nature. The Chair agreed to this.

7. Update from Chair.

The Chair reported that a request had been received from Citizens Advice asking to introduce themselves and their services to the Council whilst also asking if there are things the Parish Council and Citizens Advice can do together. He Chair asked if the Parish Council wished to invite Citizens Advice representatives to have a discussion with us at a future meeting. It was **agreed** that the CAB ought to be invited to a future meeting.

8. Durham City Access for All Group

The Chair reported that correspondence had been received from the Durham City Access for All Group, requesting that the Parish Council consider whether it is able and willing to nominate one of its councillors to be a member of our Group. The Group were keen to alert the Parish Council to aspects of accessibility in the city which might otherwise not receive the attention they deserve.

Cllr C Reeves advised that she felt accessibility is an extremely important issue and she hoped the Council would consider this carefully. The new Clerk advised that, in the search for a new office space, one of the main criteria is disabled access to our meetings.

Cllr V Ashfield proposed that Cllr Cahill be the Parish Council representative on the group. This was unanimously **agreed** by the Council.

9. Bid to secure an asset of community value

Councillors were asked by a local community group to consider making a bid to secure the former R.W.D Motor Body Repairers building as an asset of community value. The interim and new Clerk advised the Council on what this would mean in terms of a process.

As a representative of the group was unable to attend the meeting to make the case for such a bid, Cllr R Cornwell asked that the Council defer this matter until such a

time as a representative could attend the meeting and make further comments on this. This was **agreed** by the Council.

10. funding available to celebrate Armed Forces Day (UK)

Cllr E Scott advised that funding is available for 50% of the costs of an event which the Parish Council may wish to hold to celebrate Armed Forces Day (UK) in 2019. She advised that there is time to consider what format the event should take and whether the Council wishes to make an application for funding.

Cllr E Ashby advised that the Council ought to research the different sorts of events taking place for this day before committing to a proposal. She also advised that other community groups such as BID and Durham Markets City may also wish to be approached about this.

Cllr A Doig asked that the Council look to see what other local Parish Councils are doing to celebrate the day.

11. Suggested grant awarding policy and application form

The Chair asked Councillors to consider the grant awarding policy and application form.

Councillors asked that the following amends be made to the awarding grant policy:

Remove reference to a maximum that can be allocated to each grant application.

Remove the word "committee" under "the application process"

Indicate that "the aims of the grant policy" are in draft form at present

Remove "Animal welfare charity" under the area covering "City of Durham Parish Council will not fund the following:"

Remove "Only one application per year will be accepted from any organisation"

Add "The Council will only ever consider a maximum of two applications for funding from the same organisation."

It was **agreed** that Councillors should submit their amends to the Clerk in writing and he could circulate the amended version in writing to Councillors and this could be formally agreed at the January Full Parish Council meeting.

12. Report on electronic communications and e-mail usage.

The Clerk advised that he felt this policy is important for the Council to consider. He advised that currently Council communication is achieved mainly through e-mail and Council meetings and Councillor interaction. The use of digital and electronic communication enables the Parish Council to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Parish Council and between the Parish Council and the people, businesses and agencies we work with and serve.

The Clerk advised that a suggested policy pertaining to electronic communication was provided with this report. Should the Council agree to accept this policy, the Clerk advised he would be responsible for the administration of this policy on behalf of City of Durham Parish Council.

The Clerk advised that, at present, the Parish Council has a website which is hosted by Durham County Council (DCC) on their server using WordPress at a cost to the Parish Council. This is essential for publishing Agendas and Minutes.

Some Councillors are also presently using personal e-mail accounts to carry out their duties on the Parish Council and must be aware that the same rules pertaining to the Freedom of Information Act and GDPR also apply to their personal e-mail accounts.

The Clerk advised that he felt it to be important that Councillors undertake to setting up Parish Council specific gov.uk e-mail accounts in order to keep Parish Council business and personal e-mails separate from each other.

Cllr R Ormerod advised that he felt that the proposed domain name for the e-mail accounts was perhaps a little too long. The new Clerk and Cllr R Cornwell advised that there was a precedent for Parish Councils using this sort of domain name and the domain name "durhamcity.gov.uk" was already owned by someone else.

Cllr R Cornwell advised that the policy should be adopted but for all communications, not just electronic communications. The Council **agreed** to adopt this policy on the basis of this amends.

It was also **agreed** that the Clerk set up.gov.uk e-mail accounts for all Councillors and himself as proposed.

Councillors also **agreed** to commit to avoid the use of personal/business/party political email accounts for parish council business from such time as the new gov.uk email accounts are set up.

13. Section 106 agreement consultations

The Chair advised that the parish council had been asked to provide comments in relation to an application recently submitted to the County Council by The Waddington Street Centre seeking approval for the allocation of monies presently being held in the Authorities 106 account.

The Chair reported that such monies are available for this proposed use within the electoral division.

Cllr J Ashby advised that he felt that more information was needed on this matter before a decision could be made.

Cllr ~~E~~Ashby also asked that a Section 106 Officer be invited to a future Parish Council meeting to further discuss Section 106 and what it means in planning terms, so Councillors can have a better understanding of this.

It was **agreed** that the decision on making any comment on this be deferred.

14. Future meeting dates of the Full Parish Council meeting.

The following dates were **agreed** for 2019:

24 January, 28 February, 28 March all in the Lantern Room Durham Town Hall, Market Place Durham DH1 3NJ.

Due to the confidential nature of the following items, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public will be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the LGA 1972 Act and section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. At this point in time the press and the public will be asked to leave the room.

15. Future banking arrangements.

Councillors considered accounts from a number of different banks operating in Durham. It was **agreed** that the Parish Council should seek to set up its own bank account with Lloyds Bank and that all Chairs of Parish Council Committees be made signatories for the account and the Clerk be the administrator.

16. Report on potential office space for the Parish Council

The new Clerk advised that he had done some research into different office spaces in Durham as a future base for the Parish Council.

Councillors considered a range of different options and it was decided that three specific properties be considered as potential office spaces for the Parish Council.

It was **agreed** that the Chair and the Clerk be given delegated authority to find the new office for the Council and report back at a future meeting on the matter.

There being on further business, the meeting closed at 20:42pm

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Smith', written over a faint, illegible printed name.

Chair of City of Durham Parish Council.

24 January 2019