

# **CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a meeting of the City of Durham Full Parish Council held on Thursday 24 January 2019 at 19:00 in the Lantern Room, Durham Town hall, Market Place, Durham, DH1 3NJ.**

**Present:**

**Cllr E Scott** in the Chair

Councillors E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, J Atkinson, E Brown, S Cahill, R Cornwell, R Ormerod, C Reeves, M Ross, G Holland, D Freeman and A Doig

No members of the public attended the meeting.

## **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and approved by Council for Cllr J Elmer

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members.

## **3. Public participation**

No members of the public attended the meeting and therefore no representations were received.

## **4. Approval of the draft Minutes of the Council meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018.**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following changes:

The reference to "J Ashby" be amended to "E Ashby" under Item 13 of the Agenda.

## **5. Committee updates**

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

### **Planning Committee**

Councillor R Cornwell provided an update on behalf of the Parish Council planning Committee. Cllr Cornwell advised that the Parish Council had recently been acknowledged in the local press for their support of recent planning applications such as Durham Miner's Hall. Cllr Cornwell also advised that the Committee had objected to the Revolution Bar application.

Cllr Cornwell advised that concerns in relation to the County Hall HQ move were ongoing and the letter from Richard Buxton Solicitors had been sent to Durham County Council along with other bodies. Cllr Cornwell advised that since this had been done, Kier (the developer) had submitted further updates to the planning portal. He advised that this would be added to the Agenda for the extraordinary meeting of the Full Parish Council to decide on a reply to the amends.



Cllr Cornwell also advised that he, Cllr J Ashby and the Clerk had recently met with representatives of the Durham Freeman, who owned the land known as The Sands and that they too shared the Parish Council's objections to the proposals.

### **Environment Committee**

Councillor V Ashfield provided an update on behalf of the Environment Committee to the Full Council.

Councillor Ashfield advised that at their most recent meeting, the Committee had heard from Dave Wafer (DCC) and had discussed the issue of Church Street. The Committee felt that more information on plans for Church Street is needed. Cllr V Ashfield also provided an update on the bus station situation at Hallgarth Street. It was felt that there is no wider vision for the area and some proposals felt reactionary rather than having a wider vision.

Cllr D Freeman advised that there was nothing DCC could do to amend the bus route and bus operators are free to choose their own bus route. He also advised that he had made representations to Highways about this issue.

Cllr J Ashby advised that he was concerned that under current proposals the traffic situation at Hallgarth Street would become worse not better.

Cllr E Scott confirmed that Dave Wafer would be attending the March Full Council meeting to discuss the issue with the Parish Council.

Cllr V Ashfield finished by advising that she had arranged for the next meeting of the Environment Committee to take place at St. Leonard's School where it is hoped that pupils of the school could get involved with discussions and the Committee can get their views on the development of a new skate park.

### **Licensing Committee**

Councillor L Brown provided an update on behalf of the Licensing Committee to the Full Parish Council.

Cllr L Brown advised that the application for Bar 33 had been allowed. She also advised that issues with a local pizza company were also ongoing.

Cllr L Brown also provided an update on a recent application to allow alcoholic beverages to be delivered 24/7 in the Parish Area. Cllr L Brown advised that the Committee were concerned about this, had objected and this application would be going to a hearing. The Chair asked the Clerk to circulate the details of the application to all Councillors.

### **Finance Committee**

Councillor A Doig provided an update to the Full Parish Council on behalf of the Finance Committee. Cllr Doig advised that at the 11<sup>th</sup> January meeting of the Committee, Committee Chairs had brought along information about provisional spending priorities for their Committees and this would be discussed further under Item 11 of the Agenda.



## **6. Update from Chair.**

The Chair formally welcomed the new Clerk to his role and asked Parish Councillors to be mindful of his time given the different ongoing demands.

The Chair also reported that the search for an office had been narrowed down to three different options and that she had had a very positive discussion with the Assets team at Durham County Council about one of the options – the first floor of the Clayport building in the centre of Durham. The Chair reported that she hoped that this would be a viable option for this to become the office space for the Parish Council. At present we are waiting to hear back about this from DCC.

The Chair also reported that there would be an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council to discuss the Pre-Submission Draft of the County Durham Local Plan and to invite various local groups along to speak with the Parish Council to let us know their views. The Chair stressed that this would not be the meeting whereby our final response as a Parish Council would be decided.

Cllr R Cornwell advised that the starting point for our response should be the representations made at the Preferred Options stage of the consultation of the Plan. Cllr J Ashby advised that it was also important not to be constrained by the responses made at Preferred Options stage and other representations were also possible.

The Chair also reminded Councillors that any responses to consultations on behalf of the Parish Council needed to be agreed as a full Parish Council rather than done individually.

## **7. Community Engagement Task Force Group update.**

It was **agreed** that Cllr J Ashby be appointed as the Parish Council representative on the Lived Environment Sub Group.

There was some concern about the work of the different task forces and how often they meet and what their agreed outcomes were. Cllr A Doig advised that the group he was on had not yet met and discussed actions of the task force.

Cllr E Ashby advised that the economic sub group had met DCC officers, BID, Space Officer and Business Durham to identify gaps in the work already being done.

The Chair asked that this item be added to the Agenda for the April Full Council meeting to assess what further work had been done.

## **8. Grant awarding policy**

The Clerk advised that the necessary amends had been made following the last Full Parish Council where this policy was considered. These included:

- Removing reference to a maximum that can be allocated to each grant application.
- Removing the word "committee" under "the application process"
- Indicating that "the aims of the grant policy" are in draft form at present
- Removing "Animal welfare charity" under the area covering "City of Durham Parish Council will not fund the following:"
- Removing "Only one application per year will be accepted from any organisation"
- Adding "The Council will only ever consider a maximum of two applications for funding from the same organisation."



Cllr R Cornwell expressed some concern about the point of not funding groups with restricted memberships. Cllr A Doig suggested that this be re-worded to state "groups who do not have a lawfully agreed restricted membership".

Cllr E Ashby also asked that the wording of the funding conditions be amended to state "The Council will not consider applications from the same organisation for a third consecutive year."

The Clerk also asked Councillors whether they would like to apply a funding window with the policy. It was agreed that the funding window should be April – June in the year.

The Parish Council **agreed** to adopt the policy.

#### **9. Section 106 agreement consultation**

Councillors considered the Waddington Street Centre Section 106 funding application. Cllr R Cornwell commended the organisation for the excellent work they do for a worthy cause, however he advised that the planning committee were not able to support this as the request did not match the Section 106 agreement for the use of funds for arts and crafts. The application seemed to be for IT equipment rather than for arts.

The Chair advised that the money was coming from unspent arts money and the IT equipment would also be used for arts and crafts projects.

Cllr E Ashby advised that she felt that a S106 Officer from DCC ought to come and speak with the Parish Council so that Parish Councillors could understand more about the process.

It was **agreed** to support the application. 8 Councillors in favour, 5 abstentions.

#### **10. Ground maintenance/ street scene working group report.**

Councillors considered a report from the Ground maintenance/ street scene working group, which was requesting a sum of £1,000 towards snow clearing equipment for volunteer students who would clear snow away from vulnerable residents' houses in times of bad weather.

The Clerk advised that he had contacted our current insurers who confirmed that the Parish Council is covered for the items required for snow clearance under their public liability clause. If this work is to be carried out under Council supervision, then the Parish Council will need to add this to our current policy at a cost of either £66.24 Including IPT (pro rata) or £76.75 Including IPT (annual). Otherwise if students are being provided with the equipment and allowed to get on and do this as a group of volunteer students independently, they will need to see what insurance they have available through their Students Union. The Clerk advised that the working group would need to look at who will line manage this work and will report back on this further.

It was **agreed** to delegate the decision on allocating the £1,000 towards this project to the Chair of the Parish Council and the Chair of the Environment Committee.



## **11. Working spend for 2018/19 and indicative spend for 2019/20**

Cllr A Doig advised that the Chairs of each Committee had attended the recent Finance Committee meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January and had agreed the indicative spends as set out in the report.

Cllr R Ormerod advised that this was a very good report and thanked Cllr A Doig. Cllr A Doig thanked all Chairs of the Committees who attended the Finance meeting.

It was **agreed** to accept the indicative spends as outlined in the report, with 1 abstention.

## **12. Precept**

Councillors considered what level to set the precept at for the next financial year. Cllr J Ashby advised that the precept could only be increased on the basis of achievements from the Parish Council.

Cllr R Ormerod advised that he felt it was right that the level of precept remain the same as the previous year.

Members agreed that they felt that the council tax property charge ought to be kept at 2018/19 level of £150,000 which would mean that, on the basis of the 2019/2020 Council tax base provided by the County Council which shows an increase of chargeable properties, the precept for 2019/20 would therefore be £152,124.

## **13. Response from Durham University in relation to the rental rises for student accommodation.**

Councillors expressed disappointment at the response from Durham University in relation to the letter sent condemning the rise in rental costs for student accommodation. It was agreed that Cllr C Reeves should draft a reply to the letter and run this past the Clerk before sending in response to the University.

## **14. Integrated risk management plan consultation.**

Councillors considered their response to the integrated risk management plan consultation in relation to the Fire and Rescue Service for Durham. It was agreed that Option 3 was the preferred option as this was backed up by a lot of statistical evidence. That said, some concern was expressed about the impact this option would have on response times and the fact that the number of fire engines servicing Durham City would be reduced. Cllr E Ashby also advised that he was particularly concerned that the reduction of fire engines is taking place at a time when the City is subject to a number of large Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) buildings which are often four or more storeys in height, will be densely populated, often with students from overseas, and in locations where there is not always easy access other than from the front.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk should draft a response to the consultation and this would be agreed in writing.

## **15. Local Government Pension Scheme**

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council, as a registered employer, is legally obliged to offer a workplace pension to its employee. The Clerk advised that he was keen to be added to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Figures in terms of costs to the Parish Council are set out in the working budget for 2018/19 and in the indicative



costs for 2019/20. These figures are set out according to the current working pattern of 25 hours/week.

The Clerk advised that Town and Parish Councils don't need to sign any admission agreements in order to put their employees in the LGPS. They are automatically allowed to participate in the LGPS if they decide they want to. The Clerk advised that normally DCC would expect them to pass a resolution setting out which employees or class of employees should be allowed access to the scheme, and we would ask for a copy of the relevant minute from the meeting this was agreed at. The Town and Parish Councils pay a pooled rate in the Durham Fund – at the moment, this is 19.1% of pensionable pay. Payments would be administered by Durham County Council as per the service level agreement between the Parish Council and DCC's payroll department.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk would pay a contribution rate based on his salary and the City of Durham Parish Council would pay the 19.1% of pensionable pay.

*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 were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved 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 were asked to leave the room*

#### **16. Appointment of Internal Auditor**

Councillors considered three options for the appointment of Internal Auditor and formally agreed the appointment of Auditor C.

There being on further business, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Signed,



Chair of City of Durham Parish Council.  
28 February 2019