

# CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Full Parish Council held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 18:00 via Zoom.**

**Present:** Councillors E Scott (Chair), E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, L Brown, S Cahill, R Cornwell, A Doig, J Elmer, D Freeman, G Holland, R Ormerod and M Ross.

**Also present:** Parish Clerk Adam Shanley, Sarah Coop and Helen Marriage (both from Artichoke).

## **1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING**

No apologies were received.

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

Cllr L Brown declared an interest in item 9 on the Agenda and took no part in the discussions on this item.

## **3. DISCUSSION WITH ARTICHOKE ON DURHAM LUMIERE 2021 AND PROPOSALS FOR SECTION 106 PROJECTS**

The Chair welcomed Sarah Coop and Helen Marriage to the meeting.

Sarah began by advising Members that it is the intention for Lumiere to take place as normal this year in November. The 7<sup>th</sup> such festival to take place in Durham.

Sarah advised that the total cost for delivering Lumiere in Durham is £2.2million; a lot of this is funded by the County Council and by the Arts Council, as well as (usually) approximately 70 other outside sponsoring organisations. Sponsorships range between £500 and £100,000. Sarah recognised that gaining sponsorship this year is difficult as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Helen advised that the programme for Lumiere has grown this year and Artichoke is working with the local community on this year's festival. Helen advised that Artichoke finds Durham to be a fascinating place and there is a great collaboration for planning the festival.

Sarah advised that Artichoke would also like to apply for some of the Section 106 funding which is available for public art money in the Elvet and Gilesgate electoral division for two permanent art installations.

Helen advised that Artichoke were looking at two potential sites for the installations – one being between Milburngate and Riverwalk and the other being between the new County Council HQ building and the passport office.

Helen advised that one of the installations is called "Lampounette" and is a tall feature resembling a table desk light. This is intended for the Freeman's Quay

area. Helen recognised that this area is particularly sensitive. The other installation comes from the international artist Julian Opie called "Shaída Walking". This installation is intended between Milburngate and Riverwalk.

Cllr John Ashby highlighted that the area between Milburngate and Riverwalk does not have pedestrian access.

Cllr Liz Brown asked why a lot of the permanent installations from Artichoke were located in the Freeman's Quay/ Walkergate areas. Helen advised that Artichoke would like to spread the installations across the City, however planning control doesn't allow for this because of the protections for the Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

Cllr Roger Cornwell asked if he recalled correctly that a similar installation to that of the lampouette was installed some years ago in the waiting room of Durham Railway Station. Helen commended Cllr Cornwell on his great memory. This was an installation from 2011 and this has gone on to be exhibited in other locations. Helen assured the Council that the lampouette installation is robust enough to survive outdoors.

#### **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None received.

#### **5. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

#### **6. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

##### **Planning Committee**

Cllr Roger Cornwell presented the Planning Committee minutes from the meetings held on 19 February and 5 March 2021. There being no questions from Members, Cllr Cornwell moved on to Committee reports.

##### **- Parish planning statistics 2020**

Cllr Roger Cornwell presented the planning statistics from 2020 as follows:

**281** planning applications were validated in 2020. Four were withdrawn before they could be considered and four could not be considered in the early days of Lockdown 1. Consequently...

**273** were considered by the Committee.

**184** (67.4%) were noted as being either generally acceptable or not raising issues beyond the immediate application site.

**15** (5.5%) were supported

**4** (1.5%) were commented on but not objected to

**70** (25.6%) were objected to. Of these ...

**14** (5.1%) were called to Committee. However, not all of these came to Committee as nine were refused under delegated powers, i.e. the officers agreed with the Parish representation.

**56** (20.5%) were objected to but not called to Committee. 30 were approved (one of these on appeal), 9 were refused, 11 were withdrawn and 6 are pending consideration.

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### **Committee appearances in 2020**

(These included applications carried over from earlier years.)

Parish Councillors made representations to the Central/East Planning Committee on eight occasions to challenge officer recommendations to approve and were successful five times.

Parish Councillors made representations to the County Planning Committee on two occasions to challenge officer recommendations to approve but were unsuccessful both times.

The Chair thanked Cllr Cornwell and the Planning Committee for their excellent work on these matters.

#### **- Update on the progress of the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan.**

The Chair advised that the referendum version of the Neighbourhood Plan had now been agreed and printed.

The Chair reminded Members that the referendum is due to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and that the Parish Council would be remaining unbiased and factual in all publicity relating to the Neighbourhood Plan referendum.

Cllr Esther Ashby asked how the outcome of the referendum would be decided. Cllr Roger Cornwell advised that this would be decided by simple majority.

#### **- Update on the application to de-register the former coach park at the Sands as common land.**

Cllr Roger Cornwell advised that the virtual test event for the public inquiry had gone ahead as planned though there were a number of issues with technology at this meeting.

Cllr Roger Cornwell advised that the Inspector has now been confirmed as Edward Cussins, who is extremely knowledgeable on common law issues.

Cllr Roger Cornwell also advised that the County Council has employed a barrister to act on its behalf for the inquiry and that the inquiry would also take place over 5 days now, not the 3 days as expected.

Cllr Roger Cornwell also advised that it is now likely that the inspectorate would be live streaming the inquiry online so that the public can view this.

### **- Proposals to tackle car parking issues in Durham City**

Cllr John Ashby highlighted the issues that St Nicholas Community Forum has for many years had to address in relation to the problems associated with the emergence of several 'take-away' uses in Lower Claypath.

Cllr John Ashby advised that the problems in the past have been a combination of lack of planning permissions, late-night licenses (open to 02.30 hrs) and taxi-drivers waiting for custom from the drinking establishments in Walkergate. Cllr John Ashby advised that, thanks to a joint operation between the County Council and the Police, those problems were tackled and solved.

Cllr John Ashby advised that, in the past year, a new problem has arisen about the takeaway drivers on Lower Claypath. Those concerns were communicated to the County Council officer who, with others, had been so helpful and pro-active in tackling the previous problems. The County Council officer had advised that nationally, local authorities and the British Parking Association are calling on government to reverse the decision to remove CCTV evidence as evidence of parking breaches and recommended that the Parish Council lends its support to this and writes to the Transport Secretary on this.

Cllr John Ashby advised that, on the matter of missing yellow lines, it has now been established that the 'no waiting at any time' yellow markings on the kerbs outside Student Castle will be re-instated.

Cllr John Ashby advised that it is clear that the issues highlighted at Lower Claypath also exist in other parts of the City and it is therefore recommended that the Parish Council takes all appropriate action to try and resolve these issues.

Members **agreed** to the following proposals on this matter:

- To write to the Government supporting the re-instatement of the use of CCTV for parking enforcement;
- To task the enhanced neighbourhood warden service for the City Centre with advising drivers in identified 'hotspots' around the Parish that they are committing an offence and asking them to turn off their engines whilst stationary;
- To request additional parking warden resources from the County Council;
- To contact schools to draw attention to the health issues arising from car engines running while the drivers wait to pick up their children; and
- To inform the Member of Parliament of these decisions.

### **• Environment Committee**

Cllr Victoria Ashfield presented the Environment Committee minutes from meetings held on 16 February 2021. There being no questions from Members, Cllr Ashfield moved on to Committee reports.

**- Climate change commitment and plan**

Cllr Victoria Ashfield reminded Members that the Parish Council has made a commitment to combatting the global climate emergency by encouraging a healthy natural environment, improving air quality, promoting zero carbon developments, managing land for nature and reducing waste, so promoting the health and wellbeing of our residents and reduced impact on the global climate.

Cllr Victoria Ashfield presented her proposals for a climate change commitment and plan. Cllr Victoria Ashfield advised that some of these commitments can be met a Full Council level, as it is recognised the Council does not have the powers to achieve many of these aspirations but will have to work with partners to encourage their action. Some of the commitments will be better achieved through the Council's Committees.

Cllr Victoria Ashfield reminded Members that, in March 2019 the Council committed itself to a Climate Emergency Resolution, committing to becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. The Parish Council furthermore committed to creating a carbon audit and a roadmap for achieving this by December 2020 and to include environmental implications (including carbon emissions) in all officer reports from that date.

Cllr Victoria Ashfield advised that, due to the Covid-19 situation, the Parish Council has missed this date but this is now being brought forward as a proposal for the March meeting to enable the Council to achieve this commitment.

It was highlighted that there may be an entirely new set of Councillors on the Parish Council after May who may wish to review this. It was therefore **agreed** that this plan should go forward to all future meetings of the Parish Council's Committees so that they may agree in principle to these commitments.

**- Proposals for Durham in Bloom 2021**

Members agreed to the following proposals for Durham in Bloom 2021:

<b>Durham in Bloom priorities</b>	<b>Estimated costs</b>
Bishops Mitre display in Durham Market Place	£2,500
Floral displays (potentially of the Parish Council logo) on the banks running alongside the steps going up to the railway station	£1,000
Creation of a wildflower meadow at Aykley Heads	£1,000
Hanging baskets on Claypath x 12 @ £40 each	£480
Purchase of bulbs for community planting	£1,000

Wash bridge over A167 and introduce 2xfloral towers at both ends of the bridge.	£1,500
Floral display (potentially of the Parish Council logo) at Gilesgate roundabout	£1,000
Floral planting at Hallgarth Street roundabout	£500
Floral planting at Potters Bank roundabout	£500
Community planting projects with bedding plants to go to Resident Groups / graveyards/ common areas	£1,500
Flower towers on North Road x 2 (outside CEX and outside Sainsbury on corner of Highway)	£1,500
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£13,180</b>

In agreeing these proposals, Members also **agreed** to allocate additional funding to these priorities (over and above the originally agreed £10,000), taken from the fund to improve unadopted footpaths/ area, etc. Members also **agreed** to delegate responsibility to the Parish Council's Environment Committee to deliver these priorities.

- **Licensing Committee**

Cllr Liz Brown presented the minutes from the Licensing Committee meeting held on 4 December 2020. There being no queries from Members, Cllr Brown moved on to Committee reports.

- **Proposal to introduce an A boards prohibition zone in Durham City centre.**

Cllr Liz Brown reminded Members that a disability audit was carried out of Durham City in 2019 and 2020 by an inclusive design consultant. This work was commissioned by Durham County Council's Equality and Diversity Officer, Transformation and Partnerships.

Cllr Liz Brown advised that the aim of this audit is to establish the current level of accessibility in Durham City centre and to identify the barriers and other potential issues which disabled people might experience when visiting the city.

Cllr Liz Brown advised that the audit also includes four levels of prioritised recommendations so that a plan of remedial works can be formulated and implemented in tandem with budgets. Recommendations put forward by the inclusive design consultant are categorised, for example where an issue constitutes a potential health and safety hazard, it is allocated Priority 1. Recommendations are provided for best practice solutions and minimum standards, where appropriate.

Cllr Liz Brown highlighted that the use of A boards by local businesses on the public highway was raised throughout the audits as a recurring issue and the design consultant has proposed that DCC consults with local visual impairment groups to obtain their views on these features. Cllr Brown also advised that the audit also advises that local authority policy should outline the issues and caution

business owners to be judicious in the placement of A-frames, where this is not currently within policy.

Cllr Liz Brown advise that tackling the use of A frame boards in the City centre was allocated priority 3-4 by the audits.

Cllr Liz Brown advised that the Durham Access for All Group has recently met to discuss this and, in their own response to these audits. The Group has highlighted that the placement of 'A' Boards on the public highway creates many issues, in particular the potential to present an obstruction and safety hazard to users. This is a substantial problem for those with mobility impairment, such as the blind and partially sighted, wheelchair users and people with prams/pushchairs.

Cllr Liz Brown advised that the Parish Council's Licensing Committee and Environment Committee have recently considered these audits and the Licensing Committee is proposing that an 'A boards prohibition zone' be introduced to both Saddler Street and Silver Street. A similar prohibition has been introduced in other areas such as the City of York.

It is felt that there is a necessity to ensure that the primary purpose of the public highway is achieved and upheld in Durham City (i.e. to pass and repass without let or hindrance).

Members **agreed** to the introduction of an A boards prohibition zone to those two areas highlighted and also **agreed** to write to the County Council to request that this be considered in light of the recent disability audit of the City.

#### • **Personnel Committee**

Cllr Elizabeth Scott presented the minutes from the Personnel Committee meeting held on 11 June 2019. There being no queries from Members, Cllr Scott moved on to Committee reports.

##### - **Annual performance review with Parish Clerk**

Cllr Elizabeth Scott advised that she and the Personnel Committee had carried out the annual performance review for the Parish Clerk. Cllr Elizabeth Scott highlighted that the Parish Council is extremely happy with the Clerk's performance in his role and thanked him for the hard work and dedication he shows.

Cllr Elizabeth Scott highlighted that the Clerk has indicated that he wishes to undertake further training for various aspects of his role, as well as some more in-depth planning training, in view of the importance of planning issues in the Parish Council's work.

Cllr Elizabeth Scott advised that workloads are an issue and it is therefore important that the Parish Council looks to recruit an assistant for the Parish Clerk in order to support him in his role and tasks to be undertaken.

Cllr Elizabeth Scott also highlighted that the Personnel Committee felt that the Clerk's role had changed substantially since commencing in 2019 and therefore she would be seeking external HR support in carrying out a review of this role and to recommend an amendment to the Clerk's salary pay scale.

It was **agreed** that this review should be undertaken and any amendments to the Clerk's pay scale should be backdated and paid to the Parish Clerk dating back to the end of his probation period.

- **Proposal to recruit an Assistant Parish Clerk to support the work and functions of the Parish Council**

Cllr Elizabeth Scott highlighted that further resource is needed in order to support the work and functions of the Parish Council and therefore the Personnel Committee is recommending that the Parish Council seeks to recruit an Assistant Parish Clerk for the Council.

Cllr Elizabeth Scott advised that the job role, salary, etc. in front of Councillors for consideration had been produced by the Personnel Committee and the Clerk in conjunction with HR officers at DCC.

Members **agreed** to the recruitment of an assistant Parish Clerk for the Council. Members also **approved** the job description as set out in the report provided. Members also **agreed** to delegate responsibility to the Parish Council's personnel committee to make an appropriate appointment of this role, following successful interview.

## **7. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 25th February 2021.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Parish Clerk for his exceptional work in gathering the full bundle of evidence to go forward for the public inquiry into the common land de-registration application.

The Chair reminded Members that June 2022 marked the 70th Anniversary of the Queen's reign and therefore plans were now beginning on celebrations for the Platinum Jubilee. The Chair advised that the Clerk had made contact with a number of key external stakeholders and it was now agreed that a working group should be formed in order to start the ball rolling with planning for this event.

The Chair advised that work on the Parish Council's new Totally Locally website – a website aimed at promoting to the offer of Independent Businesses in Durham City – to visitors etc. was well underway and the Parish Council looked forward to seeing the results of this.

The Chair advised that a further roundtable meeting is planned with local businesses following the initial meeting and a subsequent meeting of the Parish Council's Business Committee, where follow up actions were agreed. The Chair

advised that the first roundtable meeting with businesses had been a great success with over 30 independent businesses attending and sharing their views.

The Chair advised that the Parish Council had had some initial discussions with stakeholders about the possibility of Durham City hosting a Children's Book Festival, post lockdown. The Chair advised that she expected a report on this to come forward to the next Full Council meeting.

## **8. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COUNCIL POLICIES**

The Clerk reminded Members of the need to carry out the annual review of these important documents. It was **agreed** that a Working Group should be established, made up of Chairs of all Parish Council Committees, in order to carry out this review.

## **9. PROPOSAL TO REINSTATE THE TOWN CRIER IN DURHAM CITY**

The Chair advised that the Parish Council has been asked to consider supporting the reinstatement of the Town Crier to Durham City.

The Chair advised that, traditionally, a Parish or Town Council 'employs' the town crier for a particular area. Durham City has also previously had a town crier.

The Clerk advised that an Honorary Freeman and the Warden of the Butchers Company as well as other Freeman Members have recently recommended a Durham-based individual and previous town crier for this role. The individual has also indicated a desire to take on this role. The individual is a Justice of the Peace and a member of the Operatic Society and already has the necessary traditional costume for a town crier.

The Chair advised that reinstating the town crier could add some attention and interest to selected events in the City, as well as reinstating an important role for an historic city such as Durham.

Members **agreed** to reinstate the role of the Town Crier for Durham City and also **agreed** to launching a competition in order to recruit an appropriate person to carry out this role.

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 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 were asked to leave the room.

## **10. REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Clerk provided an update to the Parish Council from the ASB sub-group meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a smaller, cursive signature.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council  
(22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021)**