

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 24th March 2022 at 17:00 in the Main Hall, Durham Town Hall.

Present: Councillors L Brown (in the Chair), E Ashby, V Ashfield, N Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, C Lattin, G Nair, R Ormerod, S Walker and H Weston.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley, Mr Owen Cleugh (DCC Public Protection Manager) and Mr John Ashby (member of the public).

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

Apologies were received from Councillors A Doig, E Scott, G Holland and R Hanson.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24TH FEBRUARY 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2022 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr John Ashby advised that he was attending the meeting to contribute to item 10 on the Agenda.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

Planning Committee

Cllr L Brown presented the minutes from Planning Committee meetings held on 11th and 25th February 2022. There being no questions from Members, Cllr L Brown moved on to Committee reports.

- **Verbal update on the former coach park following a joint meeting with DCC**

The Clerk advised that he, the Chair of the Parish Council and representatives of the City Freeman had met with Cllr Amanda Hopgood, Leader of Durham County Council and the Head of Corporate Land and Property at DCC in order to discuss the situation at the former coach park.

The Clerk advised that the Cllr Hopgood had confirmed that there is a third party interested in potentially acquiring the new HQ building at the Sands. Cllr Hopgood had also confirmed that any sale of this building would not include the former coach park at the Sands and that this would be retained in County Council ownership.

The Clerk advised that no commitment was given at the meeting on the future use of the former coach park land.

The Clerk also advised that the Freemen had specifically asked about a legal instrument to protect the land against any future development. Cllr Hopgood advised that the protection against development would be in the form of retaining the land in Council ownership. The Freemen have expressed disappointment at this as they fully expected some legal mechanism to protect against further development creep on this land.

Cllr Hopgood has asked the Head of Corporate Land and Property to have a further discussion with DCC legal about various options for the land. The meeting had concluded with both Parish Council and Freemen representatives being disappointed with this update.

A follow up meeting is expected to take place on 31st May 2022 to discuss further developments.

- Report on the production of a Conservation Area Management Plan

The Clerk reminded Members that, in setting the Council's budget for financial year 2022-23, the Parish Council has approved a fund of £10,000 towards the production of a Conservation Area Management Plan.

The Clerk advised that the principal aim of the Management Plan is to improve the understanding of the conservation area and establish a positive strategy for its preservation and enhancement. The Clerk advised that it will include a costed Management and Maintenance Action Plan which specifies the resources which will be required to maintain the upkeep of the conservation area over the longer term and ensure that it is a shared and deliverable vision. A monitoring framework will be included to measure success. The plan will promote a proactive culture for conservation within the local community by which the historic environment will be safeguarded for the enjoyment of future generations. In the process, this can enable appropriate economic growth and bolster cultural identity through emphasising the local distinctiveness of the area.

The Clerk also advised that the Management Plan will outline the risks which are currently facing the conservation area, set out policies and proposals for the area's improvement through regeneration, design and development guidance, tree management and green infrastructure enhancement and development, monitoring and enforcement. The aim of this management plan is to provide guidance through policy statements to enable the effective management of change and secure the preservation and enhancement of the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Clerk advised that the management plan will be a joint piece of work between the Parish Council and the County Council. The £10,000 funding was originally proposed by DCC in 2021 following discussions with officers.

The Clerk advised that Durham County Council has asked the Parish Council for a formal undertaking that it is committed to the £10,000 funding over 12 months, with a view to agree the job spec by 8th April 2022.

The Clerk advised that the intention is to recruit an expert in this field and that person will work internally within DCC and their sole responsibility will be to see this through from start to finish.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has asked to be involved in the interview/ recruitment process for this individual. DCC has confirmed that there are no HR/ procedural issues with this and they are happy for us to be involved.

The Clerk advised that DCC is aiming to produce a document to go out to public consultation by the end of 2022, with the intention of moving to adoption by the end of March 2023. DCC is yet to decide if this document should be a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the County Durham Plan or simply adopted as guidance. The Parish Council's Planning Committee has expressed a hope that this may be adopted as an SPD.

The Clerk advised that the scope of the Conservation Area Management Plan will include:

- A review of the current conservation area boundary.
- A revision of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal accordingly in line with any boundary revisions and updated policy position.
- A review of current management proposals and the development of a full Conservation Area Management Plan.
- To undertake engagement and consultation with DCC, partners, interested parties and public.

It may be that this management plan leads to an amendment within the neighbourhood plan which is deemed so significant, it would require a round of public consultation. The Clerk recommended that the Parish Council's Planning Committee be delegated responsibility to oversee this work on behalf of the Parish Council.

Members unanimously **approved** the allocation of £10,000 towards the production of the Conservation Area Management Plan and **agreed** to commit to a formal undertaking with DCC for this funding.

Members unanimously **agreed** to delegate responsibility to the Parish Council's Planning Committee to oversee this work on behalf of the Parish Council.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 24th February 2022 as follows:

The Chair expressed her gratitude at seeing the new Ruth First mural unveiled on Providence Row this month. The Chair advised that she thought the event was absolutely fantastic and took the opportunity to thank everyone involved in this hugely successful project. The Chair advised that she understood that the video of the unveiling on the Parish Council's social media page has been viewed over 3,000 times and expressed her happiness at seeing such a positive reaction.

The Chair also her happiness at the update that the PFI Manager of the University Hospital of North Durham has now signed off the mosaic the Parish Council has had

commissioned and this has been delivered to the hospital for installing. The Chair advised that she is looking forward to seeing this unveiled and a press release to follow.

The Chair reminded all Members unable to attend a meeting of the Parish Council to please inform the Clerk as soon as possible ahead of the meeting so that we can ensure Committees will be quorate.

The Chair welcomed the news that the Locality grant funding for Neighbourhood Planning has been extended by the Government. The Chair advised that this is particularly relevant for the work which the Parish Council is undertaking on the Conservation Area Management Plan.

The Chair reminded Members that there is to be a University briefing immediately after this meeting regarding an update on University estates and property. The Chair expressed her disappointment that representatives of DURF and community engagement task force groups did not receive an invitation to this meeting.

The Chair advised that the former DLI museum is set to be brought back into public use once more. The Chair advised that the Parish Council looks forward to seeing plans progress on this.

The Chair expressed a huge congratulations to all those involved in the Durham City of Culture 2025 bid. The Chair advised that it is incredible news to hear that Durham has been shortlisted to the top 4 and our bid will be progressing to the next round.

The Chair expressed a very big thank you once more to all those involved in the enormous work of putting on events for the Jubilee this year. It is a huge undertaking, largely led by the Parish Council and the Durham Markets Company and the Parish Council is delighted to be working with Colin and his team once more on events as they really know how to put on a great show in Durham.

The Chair offered her warm congratulations to Councillor David Freeman on becoming the next Mayor of Durham City.

7. PLANNING FOR THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS 2022

The Clerk set out a timetable of events currently being worked through as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations this year.

The Clerk advised that the agreed partnership and additional resource for organising the event provided by Durham Markets Company is working extremely well and this has proven to be an essential resource to the Parish Council for these events. The Clerk reminded Members that this is being funded from the budget allocated to an assistant for the Clerk and not directly from the agreed events budget.

The Clerk highlighted that the events for the Jubilee weekend (2nd – 5th June 2022) would be kickstarted with the lighting of a beacon at 9:45pm on Thursday 2nd June. The Clerk advised that all partners involved in the Jubilee organising committee are keen to see that the City has a beacon lighting event on 2nd June 2022.

The Clerk advised that the Freemen have commissioned an artist blacksmith to produce a 4 metre high permanent beacon for the City and that he and Cllr E Ashby, along with

relevant DCC officers, have had a site visit at Wharton Park (the Freeman's desired location for the beacon) in order to assess the suitability of this site.

The Clerk advised that the Freeman are extremely keen that the beacon be located in the centre of Windy Hill in Wharton Park and have reduced the original height of the beacon (originally ordered at 5.6 metres) to 4 metres so as to benefit from the Parish Council's Permitted Development Rights (as set out in schedule 12 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015).

The Clerk advised that the proposed location is subject to DCC agreement (Clean and Green who manage the site, Planning and Conservation) and the Parish Council will need to consider that this location has an impact on a view to the World Heritage Site.

The Clerk advised that the issue of ongoing maintenance responsibility and whether the County Council will accept this has yet to be confirmed. The Freeman have recently indicated that they would expect the Parish Council to assume responsibility for the beacon in the event that the County Council is unable to do so.

The Clerk advised that, in order to progress this, a further site visit with relevant DCC representatives, the Freeman and the Parish Council has been arranged for 25th March.

The Clerk recommended that a formal decision on whether to allow this to fall under the Parish Council's Permitted Development Rights be delayed until after this site visit and consultation with relevant officers in planning and conservation, etc.

Cllr E Ashby highlighted that this element of the Jubilee weekend had caused the Clerk a significant amount of work.

Members commended the work done to date on the Jubilee celebrations but **agreed** that the Parish Council should not assume maintenance responsibility for this permanent beacon.

Members also **agreed** to await feedback from the joint site visit of 25th March and thereafter make a decision in writing as to the suitability of the siting of the beacon and this falling under the Parish Council's Permitted Development Rights.

8. EMERGENCY FUNDING PROPOSAL FOR DURHAM CITY'S SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AT NIGHT (SWAN) HUB

The Chair welcomed Owen Cleugh (DCC Public Protection Manager) to the meeting in order to talk through the proposal of emergency funding for the SWaN hub with the Council.

Owen thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak with them today. Owen advised that, in Summer 2021, the Home Office invited applications for the latest round of Safer Streets (SS3) funding. The initiative was aimed at implementing improvements for the safety of public spaces. Shortly after release, another funding opportunity linked to Safer Streets was launched. This opportunity was specifically aimed at the Safety of Women and Girls at Night (SWaN).

Owen advised that, in November 2021, it was announced that the SWaN bid had been successful. Owen highlighted that the SWaN bid had four key elements

1. The appointment of a co-ordinator to oversee and deliver the project
2. Delivering vulnerability training to key staff working in the night time economy and situational awareness training to University Students
3. Deliver a Comms campaign highlighting the issue of safety of women and reporting of sexual harassment
4. Deliver a night hub on a Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights which could provide a safe space for women should they feel at risk or vulnerable. The Hub would also be manned by staff of DCC who would also assist others in the night time economy when required

Owen advised that, since opening on the 5th February, the hub has proven to be a positive and necessary facility for Durham City on the busiest three nights of the week (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday). Working between the hours of 8pm and 3am they have provided necessary support, assistance, and guardianship not only to females in a vulnerable or at-risk state, but also males in a similar situation.

Owen advised that staff have provided support to several individuals who have had suicidal thoughts and have built up a strong rapport with all of the key licensed premises in the city. Owen advised that it is no exaggeration to say that this hub has saved lives.

Owen advised that officers have engaged positively with many groups to remind them of the need for considerate behaviour when travelling through the city. Staff often walk areas of the City Centre that are resident to students to remind them of the resident-led *Shhh...* campaign and report on other issues such as street cleansing, street lighting, highways etc. Owen also advised that this presence in the city also has a very positive impact with the other areas such as taxi services, takeaways, hotels and shops.

Owen advised that, now that the hub is operating, it would seem a retrograde step for it to end in March as the SWaN funding comes to an end. Owen advised that staff are liaising with a number of organisations and agencies with an interest in the hub continuing. The Police are also hoping to have a permanent presence in the hub going forward. The costs of operating the hub are circa £10,000 per month.

Owen highlighted that there is a Safer Streets 4 funding bid due to be released for June 2022. It is hoped that this could be an opportunity to look at a longer term fund for the continuation of the hub as this project will run until September 2023 but until that funding can be applied for and agreed, funding is needed to ensure its continued operation.

Owen advised that DCC would continue to manage the operation of the hub, but this is intended to be a partnership arrangement and DCC would therefore welcome the support of as many key agencies as possible to maintain this worthwhile facility in the city.

At present, DCC staff are looking for circa. £60,000 worth of funding to ensure that the hub can continue until further funding streams can be accessed.

The Clerk advised that he and the Chair of the Parish Council met with Owen and his colleagues on 16th March to discuss this further and it is hoped that the Parish Council might be able to provide £10,000 worth of funding towards the continuation of the hub.

If Members are agreeable to the proposal of providing emergency funding to the hub, the Clerk advised that the Chair had proposed that £10,000 be allocated from the Council's agreed grants fund for 2022/23 of £15,000. The window for the grant awards opens again on 1st April 2022.

The Clerk advised that, if Members are agreeable to diverting this funding to the hub, it is proposed that this be made payable ASAP in order to allow the hub to continue after the end of March 2022.

The Clerk also highlighted that a longer-term strategy for continued funding for this hub may be for the night-time economy trade itself to provide funding to this service. The Clerk reminded Members that support for a late-night levy on premises has been agreed by the previous Parish Council and this may be an opportunity to re-visit this proposal.

Cllr E Ashby advised that she had seen this hub in operation first hand and expressed her gratitude to all of the officers involved in this. Cllr E Ashby advised that she felt it was essential for this hub to continue.

Cllr L Brown asked Owen if any other partners had agreed some funding towards the continuation of the hub as yet. Owen advised that he and his colleagues are in ongoing high-level discussions with stakeholders such as DCC, the Police, the PCC's office and the University regarding funding but nothing had been confirmed as yet.

Cllr V Ashfield expressed her full support for this proposal and thanked all officers involved with this. Cllr V Ashfield said that she felt that there is enough flexibility in the Parish Council's finances – for instance use of the agreed Shhh...11pm – 7am budget as well as the grants budget to allow the Parish Council to support this scheme.

Cllr S Walker expressed her support for the hub but asked if it might be possible to reduce some of the running costs, e.g. the quite significant cost of room hire at St. Nic's church. Owen advised that this is part of ongoing discussions with the church but the bulk of the costs come from staffing the hub itself so there was limited flexibility in reducing these costs.

Cllr R Ormerod expressed his support for the hub but also expressed concerns that £10,000 was a lot of money for the Parish Council. Cllr R Ormerod asked if Owen could give a percentage probability of securing additional funding from other partners. Owen advised that it would be difficult to put an exact figure on this but he is hopeful that funding could be found to continue this scheme.

Cllr H Weston expressed her full support for this scheme and thanked Owen and his team. Cllr Weston advised that parents of those frequenting the night time economy had also highlighted their appreciation for this hub to her.

Cllr N Brown said that she fully supported the proposal of providing this funding to the hub.

Cllr C Lattin also expressed her support for this proposal and said the hub was providing an invaluable service and if £10,000 saved just one more life, it was absolutely worth it for her.

Cllr D Freeman highlighted that no other partner had agreed to provide funding for this hub but said that he was pleased that the other part of this proposal was to support the introduction of a late-night levy on licensed premises.

The Clerk advised that the City has a rapidly growing night time economy and expressed his shock at some of the reports from this hub, which paint a damning picture of how the night time economy operates at present.

Cllr R Ormerod proposed that the Parish Council agree the following recommendations, this was seconded by Cllr E Ashby and unanimously **agreed** by Members:

Members **agreed** to support the safety hub.

Members also **agreed** to the proposal of providing emergency funding of £10,000 – diverted from the Parish Council’s grants fund – to allow this hub to continue.

Members also **agreed** to re-confirm the Parish Council’s support for a late-night levy on licensed premises and to make every effort in supporting its introduction.

9. UPDATE ON PAY SCALES FOR 21/22 PAY SETTLEMENT

The Clerk advised that the Local Government Association has confirmed that agreement has now been reached on the pay award for local government services (‘Green Book’) employees, covering the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The Clerk advised that the overall increase generally is 1.75%, though the first pay point has been increased to reflect the new national living wage rate. The Clerk reminded Members that sufficient funding for this increase was allocated by the Council when the budget was agreed in January 2021.

The Clerk also advised that all other arrears relating to his pay scale were paid earlier in the financial year, as per Council agreement in March 2021.

Cllr E Ashby proposed that a one-off payment be made to the Parish Clerk in recognition of his extraordinary efforts and workload on behalf of the Parish Council. It was **agreed** that HR advice would be sought on this proposal and a report would come to the next Full Parish Council meeting.

Members **agreed** to accept the 1.75% increase to the Clerk’s salary payment and also **agreed** to make the necessary arrangements for arrears to be paid in the March 2022 payroll window.

10. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- Report from Community Engagement Task Force – Citizenship sub-group

Cllr V Ashfield provided a report to Full Council from the latest meeting of the CETF Citizenship sub-group as follows:

Homelessness in Durham,

Presentation by Kay Chapman, Durham County Council

This was full, helpful and well received.

It identified ways in which students could be better informed and better protected against aggressive begging.

Student Citizenship Presentation

Rebecca Eves did not give her presentation as the attendance at this meeting was poor. This will be held over to the next meeting.

We had specifically requested that the date be agreed in consultation with the police which it was, but no one attended. Sam Dale agreed to make our disappointment known.

Rebecca reported on the use of the community liaison. JG said they were rarely seen and RE assured the meeting that she has nightly reports.

VA asked if more emphasis on the Parish Council's Pinpoint would help their proactive work and it was agreed that it would.

Update from Members

We discussed:

The University's SLA with the Police which is currently being negotiated by Sam Dale and Rebecca Eves. No details could be given at this point.

Durham County Council – Enhanced Warden Service

Belinda reported that they have been covering matters of homelessness, bins / recycling, noise. It is likely that some fines are about to be given in the Viaduct area.

City of Durham Parish Council

VA reported that at the meeting with the PCC there was general agreement that the usually reported £30,000 from the University was far too little: the police need much more and the community expects much more. This message was heard.

Resident Representatives

JG reported that the matters of bins and noise, while not currently a nuisance where she lives, continues to be reported by other residents.

Next meeting – to be confirmed.

End of the report

- Report from Community Engagement Task Force – Economic sub-group

Cllr E Ashby provided a report to the Full Council on the latest meeting of the CETF Economic sub-group, which took place on 8th March 2022. Cllr E Ashby advised that she attended part of this meeting which focused on a presentation by Sarah Slavin, Managing Director of Business Durham, on The County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy. Cllr E Ashby advised that she would make this presentation available to Members for their information.

End of the report

- **Community Engagement Task Force**

Mr John Ashby provided the following report to the Council in Cllr R Hanson's absence of the latest meeting of the Community Engagement Task Force meeting.

- The Parish Council's reports on the wholly inadequate response from the Police, the University and DCC had been sent to the Secretary of CETF on 10th March 2022.
- In the event, they were not put on the Agenda for the CETF meeting on 18th March, there were just a standard set of updates from partners including Durham University and Residents' Forum (DURF), the Police and the Parish Council.
- DURF is normally represented by Richard Hornby of Gilesgate Residents' Association and Walia Kani of Elvet Residents' Association, but Richard couldn't attend and DURF had agreed that I be substitute for the CETF meeting.
- I realised that there was no prospect of a proper, substantial discussion of the Parish Council's three papers and suggested that this be deferred to a further CETF meeting. The Chair agreed.
- I'm afraid that I didn't raise this with Cllr Hanson beforehand, which was discourteous of me, and he was kind enough to stay silent when I proposed deferment.
- However, the Police update report re-opened the core issue! The Police representative said at length about the problems of ASB in the city, notably the clash of lifestyles between residents and students- he mentioned rugby players a number of times and said it was a difficult issue and he would welcome ideas.
- That annoyed me, so I said that the Parish Council and DURF had submitted many ideas in the Parish Council papers, and that it wasn't OK for rugby players to do what they do – people's lives are being wrecked by sleepless nights.
- The Police rep seemed to not have any knowledge of the Parish Council's consultation paper nor of the Police response to it.
- My conclusion is to pursue DURF's formal suggestions for CETF to concentrate on the University's project of a Civic Engagement Strategy for the high-level organisations and to work with DURF on the related Community Engagement Strategy.
- I think these are important way-markers as to the way things are and might be going.

End of report

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.

11. GOOD CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2022 AWARD

Members agreed that the Good Citizen of the Year 2022 Awards should be offered to: Mr Roger Cornwell, Mr John Ashby, Mrs Joan Nix and Mr Richard Hornby.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive name followed by a long horizontal flourish.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(28th April 2022)**