

# City of Durham Parish Council

**Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 19:00 in the Main Hall, Durham Town Hall.**

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

**Also present:** Parish Clerk Adam Shanley 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 Cllr G Nair and R Hanson.

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

Councillors L Brown, E Scott, D Freeman and R Ormerod declared an interest in the item relating to the new County Headquarters building at the Sands and took no part in the discussions on this item.

Councillors E Scott and D Freeman declared an interest in item 8 on the Agenda and took no part in the discussions on this item.

## **3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022**

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

## **4. DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR ARNOLD SIMPSON ON THE ROLE OF THE DURHAM CHARTER TRUST**

The Chair advised that unfortunately Councillor Arnold Simpson has been called away on another duty and is therefore unable to take part in a discussion on the Charter Trust with the Parish Council at this meeting.

Cllr E Ashby highlighted that the Charter Trust has a longstanding history in the City and it may be preferable for Members to have a briefing note setting this out ahead of any discussion.

The Clerk also highlighted that the formation, legal framework and role of Charter Trusts is a complex matter – with only a few (including Durham) still in existence across the country. The Clerk suggested that it may be preferable for Members to receive a briefing from a constitutional expert on this matter.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk should arrange for such a meeting to take place for Members to understand better the framework and workings of the Trust.

## **5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

John Ashby advised that he was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items.

## **6. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **• Planning Committee**

Cllr L Brown presented the minutes from the Planning Committee meetings held on 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2022. There being no queries from Members, Cllr L Brown moved on to Committee updates.

### **Update on the use of the new County Headquarters building at the Sands**

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council had received a briefing from Durham University on 24<sup>th</sup> March where representatives of the University had set out the University's hopes to purchase the new County Headquarters building at the Sands, subject to planning permission being granted.

The Clerk advised that a planning application has now been submitted for a Change of Use of the building from office use to educational establishment and the Planning Committee is set to consider this application on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022, where the Committee will also receive a presentation from the University's planning representatives on the merits of the application.

The Clerk reminded Members that the University had set out that a decision on the planning application is expected in early July and that the sale of the building would only include the building itself and the land which the building sits on. This does not include the former common land/ coach park at the Sands nor the new multi-storey car park.

Members expressed their hope that this application may be an opportunity to address some shortcomings in the building itself, e.g. the environmental impact and external appearance of the building.

The Clerk advised that the Environment Agency will be a key consultee on the application.

The Clerk also highlighted that the University has also indicated that it is still their intention to develop the previously proposed site for the new business school (the former Durham City Baths site).

### **• Environment Committee**

Cllr C Lattin presented the minutes from the Environment Committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022. There were no queries from Members from these minutes.

### **• Licensing Committee**

Cllr S Walker presented the minutes from the Licensing Committee meetings held on 7th February, 21st March and 4th April 2022. There were no queries from Members from these minutes.

- **Business Committee**

Cllr E Scott presented the minutes from the Business Committee meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021.

Cllr E Scott took the opportunity to highlight that there has recently been a new scheme from Central Government launched to deal with the issue of vacant units on the high street. Cllr E Scott advised that this was very positive news as the region is set to receive £163million from central Government, of which £70million is for revenue projects. Cllr E Scott advised that she is continuing to make the case for a tourist bus for the City and its surrounding areas, in order to help boost visitor numbers to the county.

Cllr E Scott also advised that Prince Bishops Place has recently been purchased by the owners of the Riverwalk in Durham City. Cllr E Scott advised that she had had a number of meetings with the Riverwalk and they have an exciting vision for Prince Bishops; with clothing and furniture retailers hopefully going into the centre.

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

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

The Chair welcomed the news yesterday that the SWaN hub has now received funding from most of the major stakeholder organisations in Durham to continue after Summer 2022. The Chair advised that this hub is offering an invaluable and life-saving service to our City and commended all those officers involved in its creation and smooth running. The Chair advised that he felt that this has been an excellent example of partnership working between the different organisations. The Chair updated Members that a further bid for Government funding is to be submitted next month and the Parish Council looks forward to seeing the outcome of this.

The Chair also advised that, as part of the safer streets (Violence Against Women and Girls) bid development phase, the Police and Crime Commissioner's office has circulated an email consulting the Parish Council on the proposed plan for the funding, which, if successful, will benefit Durham City and Darlington. The Chair reminded Members that the Clerk has circulated details of the proposals and the majority of Members have since responded to confirm that they are happy for the Parish Council to be named as a consultee in the bid submission.

The Chair highlighted that DCC officer Andrew Megginson was an officer who was very heavily involved with the set-up of the Safety hub, the funding bid and the mountain of paperwork involved with this. The Chair expressed regret to see an excellent officer like Andrew leaving DCC but wished him well in his new role at the Treasury in Darlington. The Chair advised that Andrew has been an

outstanding officer and took on a very significant role as ASB Chair. The Chair advised that the Clerk has already contacted Alan Patrickson – Chair of the City Safety Group – to ask who will replace Andrew as Chair of this important group.

The Chair highlighted to Members that the Clerk has arranged for D2025 banners to be in situ at the meeting today. The Chair advised that the Parish Council is extremely excited at the news that Durham has been shortlisted to the top 4 in the City of Culture bid and looks forward to seeing this progress. To support this, the Chair advised that he would like to take a quick photo after this meeting and put out an official statement from the Parish Council formally backing the bid.

On recruitment, the Chair advised that Democratic Services at DCC are looking at providing an experienced minute taker for Parish Council meetings. The point of contact at DCC has advised the Clerk that he will be back in contact about this next week.

The Chair also advised that it is very good news to see that the recruitment of a Senior Conservation Officer to deliver on the Parish Council's joint project of the production of a Conservation Area Management Plan for the City is now in process and the job advert has today gone live. The Chair advised that it is hoped that interviews can take place at the beginning of June this year with a view to recruiting a suitably qualified candidate as soon as possible.

The Chair made the following statement of fact to the Council and, in doing so, asked that there be no follow-up discussion or embellishment to this:

*On 31 March this year, Durham County Council issued a Decision Note from the Council's Governance Solicitor who had considered a complaint from Councillor Ashfield and Councillor Ashby concerning the alleged conduct of Councillor David Freeman of the City of Durham Parish Council in accordance with Durham County Council's Procedure for Local Assessment of Complaints. The matter was subject to local Resolution according to that procedure. The Parish Council has no legal authority to be involved in the complaint, the procedure or the outcome. It is; however, a matter of fact and I can state that:*

*The decision notice is produced to record the decision taken following initial assessment and includes the main points considered, the conclusion and the reasons for that conclusion. It will be available for inspection at the offices of the Council for six years beginning with the date of the decision.*

## **8. RECOMMENDED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROVISION FOR THE SNIPERLEY PARK DEVELOPMENT**

Councillors G Holland and R Friederichsen provided a report to Council, which set out a number of essential renewable energy and energy efficiency provisions for the Sniperley Park development.

Councillor G Holland advised that the UK's energy security, following the war in Ukraine, is looking increasingly precarious and it is therefore essential that new developments embrace a number of key components, in order to ensure their long term sustainability into the future.

Councillor G Holland encouraged Councillors to demonstrate leadership on this vital matter by calling on such provision, and to engage on it with the city's neighbouring Parish Councils and Durham County Council.

Councillor R Friederichsen advised that this report has been endorsed by the Parish Council's Planning Committee and seeks to offer guidance to the Parish Council concerning improved energy efficiency and security, recognising national and international aims on energy provision, energy efficiency, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Councillor G Holland highlighted that the Sniperley Masterplan has yet to be finalised and the size of this proposed development will have a strong impact on a shared commitment to sustainable housing development in both Durham City and the wider County. To reflect this commitment, Councillors G Holland and R Friederichsen proposed that the following list of solutions should be implemented in full for the Sniperley development:

1. An Energy Assessment for the entire site designed to minimise energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions with all properties satisfying the 2030 operational energy and embodied carbon targets set by the RIBA 2030 Challenge which identify the optimal set of energy solutions to minimise energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
2. All homes and buildings to be built to EPC A rating standard as a minimum.
3. No connection of the site to the national gas network.
4. Photovoltaic panels / and battery storage in all homes and buildings.
5. Ground and/or air source heat exchange systems for all homes and buildings.
6. District heating system using any potential geothermal energy.
7. All houses to have electricity supply points for electric cars.

All Members endorsed the report and thanked Councillors G Holland and R Friederichsen for their work in pursuing this.

Cllr V Ashfield advised that she felt that the report set out exactly what was needed for the Sniperley development and was happy to second the proposals in the report.

Cllr E Ashby advised that she would like to take this report to the University's Community Engagement Task Force's economic sub-group to raise this matter in this forum too.

Members unanimously **agreed** the position that the above energy solutions should be implemented in full at the Sniperley Park development and all other developments in the county.

Members unanimously **agreed** that Cllrs G Holland and R Friederichsen should liaise with the Parish Councils of Framwellgate Moor and Witton Gilbert to invite them to endorse the City of Durham Parish Council's position.

Members unanimously **agreed** that the Clerk should write to Cllr Mark Wilkes, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change at Durham County Council, to relate the Parish Council's paper and urge him to take action in accordance with it.

## **9. PLANNING FOR THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS 2022**

The Clerk advised that planning for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee is going extremely well and that the Parish Council, together with the Durham Markets Company, is continuing to take a leading role in the organisation of Jubilee events this year.

The Clerk also advised that regular meetings with key partners are taking place and this has resulted in a timetable of very exciting events for the City over the Jubilee weekend and beyond.

The Clerk particularly highlighted that, as promised at the last Parish Council meeting, a site visit with key officers at DCC had taken place with the Freemen and the Freemen have now agreed with the County Council that the new permanent beacon for the City – as gifted by the Freemen – should be sited at the top of Jubilee walk next to the DLI museum. The Clerk also advised that the County Council has agreed to take on all subsequent maintenance responsibility for the beacon too.

The Clerk advised that there will be a need for the Freemen to submit a planning application for this beacon as they were keen that this be over 4metres in height (the Parish Council's permitted development rights for such beacons only extending to a maximum height of 4metres). The Clerk advised that, due to the statutory timeframe of submitting such an application and approval being granted, the new permanent beacon will not be ready for the 2<sup>nd</sup> June deadline, at which point, across the nation, communities will be lighting beacons for Her Majesty to kickstart a weekend of celebrations.

As a result, the responsibility is therefore going to fall to the Parish Council to arrange the lighting of a temporary beacon at a suitable location in the City. The Clerk advised that he and Cllr E Ashby were already in discussions with relevant parties on this and the Clerk hoped to update the Council soon on an appropriate venue for this to take place in the City.

The Clerk highlighted that Colin Wilkes, Alice Wilkes and Cllr E Ashby have been working tirelessly to put these events together and the Council thanked everyone involved in the organisation of these events.

The Council thanked the Clerk for this report and for his work on these events.

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

The Clerk reminded Members that there is a need to review the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Committee Terms of Reference and Council policies on an annual basis.

The Clerk advised that the Council usually agrees the establishment of a Working Group to review these documents each April, with recommended amendments coming forward for ratification at the Council's annual meeting in May.

The Clerk therefore advised that there is a need for Members to agree the membership of the Working Group.

Cllr E Ashby proposed that, in light of the significant work on both the Planning and Environment Committees, the Terms of Reference for both Committees be amended, such that the membership for both Committees be increased from 6 to 7 Members. This proposal was seconded by Cllr V Ashfield. 2 Members voted in favour of this proposal, 6 Members voted against this proposal and 5 Members abstained from voting. This proposal was therefore not agreed.

It was **agreed** that Cllrs A Doig, R Ormerod and S Walker should form a Working Group to review these documents and recommend any amendments to the May annual meeting of the Council.

## **11. STAFF TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUGUST 2022**

The Clerk reminded Members that, at the last Full Parish Council meeting, Members approved a pay award for local government services ('Green Book') employees for 2021-22 for him of 1.75%.

In agreeing this pay award, the Clerk advised that a proposal was also put to the Council that Members consider making an additional one-off payment to the Clerk in recognition of outstanding work and support for the Council. At this meeting, the Clerk reminded Members that it was agreed that specialist HR advice would be sought in order that this proposal could be fully considered by Members at this Full Council meeting.

Since the March Full Council meeting, the Clerk has thanked all Members for this very generous gesture but in doing so declined the offer of a one-off payment and the Clerk advised that he has confirmed his intention to do so to the Parish Council Chair.

The Clerk advised that he has indicated in his correspondence that his preference is to be given sufficient time over the month of August to complete his CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) qualification. It is estimated that 250-300 hours is required for this to be completed.

In August 2022, it was therefore proposed that the Clerk be dedicated solely to the task of completing this portfolio and that only the Planning and Licensing Committees sit during this month.

In order to reduce the workload of these committees on the Clerk, the following steps were proposed:

- Where applicable, the Council's planning consultant will take responsibility for drafting all planning responses during August – sufficient funding has been allocated to this year's budget to facilitate this arrangement.
- A member of each Committee be nominated to draft the minutes of each Committee meeting.
- The Clerk's out of office will be on throughout August 2022 and all urgent matters be directed to appropriate Members of the Council.

The Clerk confirmed that both the Chair of the Parish Council and the Chair of the Council's Personnel Committee are content with this proposed arrangement.

Members unanimously **agreed** that a one-off payment will not be made to the Clerk, as per his request.

Members **agreed** to the proposed procedure for August 2022 as set out in the report provided to Council, in order to allow sufficient time for the Clerk to complete his CiLCA portfolio.

In agreeing this, Cllr C Lattin stressed the importance that the Clerk takes his allocated holiday leave during the year also.

## **12. CONSULTATION ON MAKING DRINKING ALCOHOL IN PUBLIC AND AGGRESSIVE BEGGING IN DURHAM CITY AN OFFENCE**

The Clerk advised that Durham County Council has recently launched a public consultation seeking views on the extension of the existing Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Durham City which bans the drinking of alcohol in public spaces. The Clerk also advised that DCC is also seeking views on a potential new PSPO to make aggressive begging in the City an offence.

Members considered the report as provided to Council and unanimously **agreed** to support the continuation of the PSPO banning the drinking of alcohol in public spaces in the City.

Cllr R Friederichsen advised that he had concerns about the proposed PSPO on making aggressive begging in the City an offence. Cllr R Friederichsen advised that this made him uncomfortable and hoped there could be more emphasis on the welfare of vulnerable people who are begging in the City.

Cllr S Walker advised that she felt that aggressive door-to-door sales were an even bigger problem than begging in the City and hoped that this could be tackled in some way. The Clerk advised that he had a number of "no cold callers" stickers for doors and windows should any member of the public find them useful and he would be happy to provide this.

6 Members voted in favour of supporting the proposed PSPO on aggressive begging, 4 Members voted against it and 2 Members abstained from voting on this. The Council therefore **agreed** to support the proposed PSPO.

### **13. REPORT FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS ON PARISH COUNCIL GRANTS 2021-22**

The Clerk reminded Members that in June 2021 the Parish Council agreed to support local voluntary and community organisations in the parish with a grant award. All applications were considered in line with the Parish Council's agreed Grant Awards policy and all successful organisations were advised accordingly of the outcome of their applications.

The Clerk advised that, under the terms of the Council's Grant Awards policy, organisations have up until June 2022 to spend the funds as per their original application. The Clerk advised that he continues to monitor progress on each application and had brought this report to Council in order to allow Members to consider the impact this funding has had on partner organisations.

Members very much welcomed this report as a further example of the positive impact and work of the Parish Council, supporting organisations who help some of the most vulnerable residents, who help improve the public realm in the parish and who help to make the parish an exceptional place to live, visit and work.

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 first name and a surname, followed by a horizontal line underneath.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council  
(26<sup>th</sup> May 2022)**