

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 23rd March 2023 at 19:00 in the Lantern Room, Durham Town Hall. Durham. DH1 3NJ

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

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor H Weston declared an interest in item 7 on the Agenda and took no part in the discussion or vote on this item.

Councillors V Ashfield and L Brown declared an interest in item 10 on the Agenda and took no part in the discussion or vote on this item.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 23RD FEBRUARY 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor G Holland remarked generally that he was aware of some criticism of the City of Durham Parish Council regarding a high level of call-in requests by the Council. Councillor G Holland advised that he did not recognise the criticism personally and highlighted that the City of Durham parish receives a high volume of the County's planning applications. The Chair **agreed** to draft a note for Full Council in April on this matter.

Councillor G Holland presented the minutes from Planning and Licensing Committee meetings held on 17th February and 3rd March 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee reports.

- Report on the Conservation Area Management Plan

Councillor G Holland reminded Members that the Parish Council is a funding partner with the County Council to support the production of the Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP). To support this work, the Parish Council has funded the project to a cost of £10,000 to date and has agreed a further £5,000 in financial year 2023/24 for this work.

In December 2022, Rebecca Taylor was appointed as the Senior Conservation Officer to lead on this work at DCC.

The Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan project will include a review of the existing appraisal, conservation area boundary and Article 4 Direction, which was previously undertaken in 2015, prior to the adoption of the current local planning policy framework.

Following a review of the Conservation Area, new provisions, in the form of a CAMP will be produced. The purpose of the CAMP is to provide a management framework for the future conservation of the city and will include a Management and Maintenance Action Plan, which identifies the resources which will be required to maintain the upkeep of the conservation area over the long term.

A comprehensive engagement strategy has been produced which involves cross-departmental collaboration within the County Council and with key external stakeholders. Several stages of public consultation will then be undertaken for the conservation area review and the production of the CAMP.

Councillor G Holland highlighted that the review of the existing Durham City conservation area and the production of a CAMP are necessary steps towards assisting the delivery of regeneration aspirations within Durham, whilst ensuring that change is managed in a way that conserves or enhances the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the Outstanding Universal Values of the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site.

Councillor G Holland also highlighted that the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee considers this to be a crucial piece of work to undertake and will continue to engage with officers to see the document through to its delivery.

Members unanimously agreed to note the above report and to continue to engage positively throughout the consultation process of producing this Conservation Area Management Plan.

• Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the minute from the Environment Committee meeting held on 14th February 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee reports.

- Report from the North End Allotment Association AGM

The Clerk presented the minutes of the most recent North End Allotment Association AGM held on Sunday 12th March 2023.

The Clerk advised that this report served as a reminder of the enormous amount of work the Allotment Association does to manage this excellent site and, in so doing, reduce the work of the Parish Council significantly.

The Clerk reminded Members that, in 2019, the County Council in line with the government policy, handed the North End Allotments over to the City of Durham Parish Council. However, the solicitors have informed the Clerk that the legal work relating to the handover is not likely to take place by the land registry until October 2023. Once this is finalised new tenancy agreements will be issued from the Parish Council. The allotment management team will work closely with the Parish Council on this matter and will update the allotment's constitution, letterheads, etc accordingly. The Clerk also advised that he had communicated the decision of the Council to maintain DCC's current Allotment Policy for this site.

The Clerk and Councillor V Ashfield advised that they have visited the site several times and helped with the site inspections and follow up paperwork. The Parish Council and Cllr Victoria Ashfield and Cllr Liz Brown were very happy to provide support and funding in 2021, and were impressed with the completed work on the shelter, hedge planting and water butts.

The Clerk also highlighted that the Association is seeking to increase its plot rental charges for the forthcoming financial year. The new charges for the annual subscription to the Association will rise to £23.00 in 2024 and the rent for a half plot has risen to £7.00 and £14.00 for a full plot (£30.00 and £37 respectively). Members unanimously endorsed this increase.

- **Report on the Service Level Agreement with Durham Police for an enhanced policing of the City centre.**

The Clerk highlighted that the SLA with Durham Police had now been agreed by both parties and the new police officers were due to commence at the beginning of April as per the agreement.

The Clerk advised that the remaining aspect of the SLA to be finalised is the new Coordinator role for this Operation. The Clerk advised that a Coordinator had previously been recruited for this post but had now left this post for a new role. The Clerk advised that he and the Chair of the Parish Council had met with the Police and Crime Commissioner earlier this month in order to arrange the recruitment of a suitable officer for this post and this is being done.

The Clerk advised that he would keep Members updated on this new role as part of the SLA.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 23rd February 2023 as follows:

- The Chair expressed his delight at the news that Durham Fire and Rescue service have been named the best in the UK for the second year in a row at this year's Public Sector Transformation Awards. The Chair remarked that

this accolade is all the more amazing against a backdrop of £10million in budget cuts to the service over the last 12 years. The Chair proposed that the Parish Council writes to the Chief Fire Officer and formally record our thanks and congratulations to the Service as a Council.

- The Chair also put on record his congratulations to two Members of the Parish Council:

Firstly, a very big congratulations to Councillor Carole Lattin on being named Volunteer of the Year at this year's Environment Awards. Carole works hard on projects such as Pelaw Woods, Dragoville Park and the Chair expressed his delight to see Carole receive this recognition.

Secondly, the Chair offered his congratulations to Councillor Victoria Ashfield for all of her work in acquiring nearly £50,000 in funding towards improving the St. Nic's Churchyard project. The Chair remarked that getting funding – especially these days – for these types of projects is no easy task. Well done Victoria and we look forward to seeing this area improved soon.

- The Chair also expressed his delight to read the news that Durham County Council has been awarded funding for 150 new Electric Vehicle Charging Points across the County. With diesel and petrol cars very much on the way out, the Chair remarked that it is imperative that we are as proactive as we can be on this issue. The Chair advised that he was aware that the Parish Council has already agreed to fund a number of these charging points across the parish. The Chair also remarked that he understands that the Parish Council's Environment Committee is writing to Councillor Mark Wilkes to ask about the allocation of EV charging points for the City on this project.
- The Chair reminded Members that there are a number of important Supplementary Planning Documents out for consultation at the moment. The Chair advised that he is aware of the extraordinary amount of work being done by the Planning and Licensing Committee on these documents and thanked the Clerk for hosting a coffee afternoon with partners to coordinate our responses to these consultations. The Chair reminded Members that this will be taking place in Adam's office on Wednesday next week.
- The Chair expressed his sadness to hear of the deaths of Councillor Beaty Bainbridge, Chair of the County Council. The Chair remarked that Beaty was a great character and a familiar face around County Hall. We send our condolences to her family at this sad time.
- The Chair also expressed his sadness to hear of the passing of Mary Hawgood just before Christmas last year. The Chair reminded Members that Mary was Mayor of Durham City between 2004 and 2005, was a leading light in the establishment of St Cuthbert's Hospice, was awarded the MBE in 2011 for services to the community, she lived in Crook Hall until 2000 with her husband John and successfully campaigned for the establishment of this Parish Council. As such, the Chair recommended that the Parish

Council marks Mary's passing in some way and asked Members to contact the Clerk with any ideas they may have.

- The Chair thanked all those who took part in the recent planning and licensing training events. The Chair remarked that both events were well attended and thanked Jo-Anne and David for their support in putting these events on for Councillors and residents.
- The Chair expressed his disappointment that, after dozens of emails to the County Council, the multi-storey car park at the Sands is continuing to cause issues with the lights being left on throughout the night. This is particularly disappointing given the cost of energy, the impact on light pollution, the adverse impact on the environment and more. The Chair suggested that the Parish Council highlights this through a press release.
- The Chair also expressed his disappointment to hear that the recent application for 9 executive homes at Mount Oswald had been approved, in place of what was originally conceived as being an exemplar of environmental development with 5 passiv houses for the site. The Chair expressed his disappointment to see developers breaking their promises on developments such as this and expressed his amazement that the case appears to have been approved on the basis that Durham needs more executive homes. More affordable and greener housing is what is really needed.
- The Chair advised Members that a walkthrough of our new heritage trail took place earlier today with David Miller. The Chair advised that he was very pleased to see the finished product and thanked David for all his work on this.
- The Chair also highlighted that Members have a copy of the Wear Rivers Trust leaflet in front of them this evening and that he was pleased to see how informative it is as well as the call for volunteers in helping to deal with the significant issue of invasive non-native species along the riverbanks.
- The Chair reminded Members that the Parish Council's grant funding window officially opens from 1st April running until June this year. The Chair remarked that supporting local community and voluntary organisations in the brilliant work they do for the City is a key role of the Parish Council and reminded Members that the Council is due to hear about this year's funding and the difference this has made at our next Full Council meeting.
- The Chair also reminded Members that the Clerk has arranged for a photographer to attend before the April Full Council meeting to do the official photos for the new website. The Chair again reiterated his request that Councillors make a special effort to attend this at 6pm. The Chair advised that the Clerk will put out a further reminder about this nearer the time.

- The Chair thanked everyone involved in the extraordinary amount of work for the beacon handover event on Monday 27th March and asked all Members to let the Clerk know if they are able to attend this event.
- The Chair also thanked the Clerk for all his work for the Coronation in May. The Chair remarked that it is excellent to read about all the plans for this event and that he was delighted to see that the Parish Council's application to the National Lottery was a success.

7. PROPOSAL TO REQUEST A VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION TO THE PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council's Environment Committee has highlighted that a huge increase in resources is required to deal with the environmental issues associated with such a high student population in a compact city centre.

The Clerk also reminded Members that, in the Summer of 2022, the Environment Committee proposed that the Parish Council formally requests a voluntary contribution from local landlords towards the Parish Council's precept in order to meet this resource need. At the time, it was anticipated that any additional funding acquired from this appeal to landlords will be directed towards additional bin provision, warden and/or officer time to deal with bins and other issues.

The Clerk highlighted that this proposal did not receive full support when presented in July 2022 and it was agreed that the decision on this should be deferred until after the Chairs of both the Environment Committee and the Business Committee had met to discuss this. The Clerk also highlighted that it was agreed that this proposal would thereafter be revisited by Full Council in early 2023.

The Clerk also advised that the Parish Council's Business Committee has been engaging further with the private rental sector in the City and had recently launched a survey for landlords; to which only three landlords had responded.

The Clerk reminded Members that this was discussed at the February Full Council meeting and it was unanimously agreed to defer a decision on this item until the Chairs of both the Environment Committee and Business Committee had had the opportunity to meet and discuss a way forward with this proposal.

Councillor C Lattin advised that she had met with Councillor R Ormerod and they had both **agreed** that the request should be submitted, provided the following:

- That any communication should not go out too soon after the most recent communication (survey) to landlords.
- That a sympathetic landlord be approached as a starting point with a view to getting the supporting this initiative by the Parish Council and encouraging others to take part.
- That any monies raised should not be for general expenditure but for a targeted purpose where landlords may see some mutual benefit, e.g., an

additional Neighbourhood Warden to tackle the issue of waste directly with the tenants.

Councillor C Lattin also thanked the Clerk for circulating a draft letter to all landlords in advance of this meeting so that Members might appreciate what this request would look like.

Councillor E Ashby expressed her concerns about this proposal and felt that this could undermine the important work of the Business Committee in engaging further with local landlords. Councillor E Ashby also expressed concerns at the workload implications administering such a request might put on the Parish Clerk.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she supported this request and felt that this was long overdue. Councillor V Ashfield advised that, as part of the proposal, the Parish Council would be publishing which landlords have contributed to this scheme so that the Parish Council might "name and proclaim" the good landlords willing to contribute to the City.

Councillor C Lattin expressed her support for this proposal, highlighting the difficulties with Green Move Out day last year and the enormous burden this places on local services provided by the Parish and County Councils. Councillor C Lattin expressed regret that this could not be a mandatory scheme so that landlords paid the same amount as local residents do.

Members voted in favour of this proposal (6 votes in favour, 2 abstentions and 2 against) and it was therefore **agreed** that the request should be made to landlords.

8. PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE NATIONAL YOUTH MARKET COMPETITION IN DURHAM CITY 2023

The Clerk highlighted that the Young Traders competition is a national annual event created by the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) for young people aged 16-30 who have an existing business or who wish to trial an idea for a product/business in front of real customers.

The Clerk also highlighted that Durham Markets Company has regularly held a local heat and are doing so again on May 1st but are absolutely delighted to have been asked by the NMTF executive to host the North East regional finals on Sunday 2nd July.

Traditionally, these regional finals are held at Newcastle or Stockton so it is a real honour for Durham to be asked to host the final and the Clerk advised that the Markets Company wants to put on a market which showcases the best of young talent in the North East at the same time as encouraging additional footfall into the City Centre at a traditionally 'quieter' time, creating a win-win situation.

In addition, Durham will receive some good positive national coverage with the NMTF organisation and publications, which hopefully might result in some enquires to trade in markets across the County.

This initiative is a fantastic way to encourage young people to seriously consider the merits of becoming a small independent business owner, hopefully in Durham, in a supportive environment with little to no overheads.

For the final, the Clerk advised that the Markets Company would like to provide a great fun family atmosphere with family entertainment, live music and arts and craft activities throughout the day which will be free of charge to encourage families to come into the city centre on a Sunday.

The Clerk advised that the Markets Company anticipates the cost of providing the above to be in the region of £1850.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has agreed a total fund of £25,000 in 2023/24 towards hosting events in the City centre and this event was specifically highlighted as one the Business Committee would like to support.

Members unanimously **agreed** to support this event as set out in the report provided with a contribution of £1,850.

9. UPDATE ON EVENTS PLANNING FOR THE CORONATION IN MAY 2023

The Clerk advised that the planning for the Coronation events in the City over May was going extremely well and advised that the following events were set to be delivered as part of this:

- A commonwealth-themed local arts projects by the Merryoaks WI opposite St. John's Church in Neville's Cross.
- A Coronation Tea Dance event in the Town Hall on Thursday 4th May
- A music entertainment event on the evening of Friday 5th May
- A 'Coronation on the Big Screen' event on Saturday 6th May
- The Beacon lighting ceremony on Saturday evening 6th May
- The 'Big Coronation Party' in the Market Place on Sunday 7th May
- The Big Help Out on Monday 8th
- Durham Cathedral Evensong event on Tuesday 9th

Members thanked the Clerk for all his work on these events.

10. DCC CONSULTATION ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

The Clerk advised Members that an independent review of DCC's current engagement practices has made several proposals to change the way the County Council does things and better meet the needs of residents, communities, Councillors and main partners.

This review primarily focuses on the work of the Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) in Durham.

Since AAPs were established, there have been a lot of changes to local and national policies, so DCC considers that it is the right time to request an independent review to see if AAPs were still fit for the purpose they were created. The Clerk advised

that the proposals have been developed by independent consultants, working with AAPs and partners, over the past six months, having been appointed to carry out a review in June 2022.

The consultants have come up with a series of proposed changes covering:

- model
- boundaries
- funding
- community development

The Clerk advised that, if these proposals are to be adopted, the consultant believes that it will have the following benefits:

- increase the effectiveness and consistency of community engagement across the county
- provide opportunities for more people to affect policy and include the opinions of all our communities
- make it clearer how local needs are identified and considered in the development of wider policies and allow for more meaningful discussion around community issues instead of being often just about funding
- community staff will be able to spend more time in communities and be more responsive to local needs

Members **agreed** to respond positively to these proposals. Members **agreed** that Durham residents have benefitted from the regular opportunity to meet with and hear from public service representatives via Board meetings and also vote for local priorities.

As a means of disbursing public funds more promptly, Members **agreed** that the application forms and the system need refining. However, abolishing or cutting the number of AAP's would make the grants process more remote but not necessarily more efficient.

Members also expressed concerns about the proposed changes from AAP Boards to "community networks" as there was very little detail in the proposals as to how these would operate differently to the current AAP Boards.

Councillor E Ashby highlighted the important role the AAPs had played since 2009 in order to bridge the perceived gap between local communities and the new Unitary authority and provide residents with regular information about, and an opportunity to comment on, how DCC services are provided.

The Clerk **agreed** to draft the response to this consultation in conjunction with Members.

11. TO REVIEW THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Councillor G Nair advised that he would like to resign from both the Planning and Licensing Committee and Business Committee. Councillor G Nair thanked

colleagues for their collective work on these important Committees but advised that, on health grounds, he would need to resign from both Committees.

The Chair thanked Councillor G Nair for his work on both Committees.

It was unanimously **agreed** that Councillor V Ashfield should become the new Member of the Parish Council's Business Committee in Councillor G Nair's place.

It was unanimously **agreed** that Councillor A Doig should become the new Member of the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee in Councillor G Nair's place.

12. REPORT FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Cllr C Lattin provided the following report on the most recent meeting of Durham University's Community Engagement Task Force Live-Environment Sub-Committee:

Report from the meeting held on 13th March 2023

- 1. EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion) Strategy.** This was presented by Natalie Saunders who has been working on the strategy with her team. Focussed on Respect. Classism specifically listed with racism, etc. This strategy is to be woven into all University action. Lots of talk about integrity, boldness and vision, and the university being known 'for our inclusive and respectful culture.' 65 stakeholders were consulted – all within the university. Comments were made suggesting also consulting the wider community which were accepted. Natalie is prepared to give a presentation to CODP if we wish. Walia Kani got permission to forward the presentation to 93% group (students from the 93% who went to state schools)
- 2. Capital projects:**
 - Chemistry refurb £15 million. This includes health and safety work.
 - Dawson Building roof needs repair
 - Business School to start April 2024. Swift boxes raised again by Walia who, sent link to David Loudon.
 - Collingwood recording studio funded by a private donor
 - Rowan House: work (top of science site beside the pond) on hold because of Tolent going bust
 - Hild-Bede update: 240 students on site, 250 at Ernest Place near Tesco. The university have now taken over all of Ernest Place which holds 360 beds. Some 30 or 40 students previously resident there have chosen to stay on. There will be 70 rooms for postgrads. All overseas students now have a guaranteed accommodation offer which this will help deliver. Students will continue to use the riverside site 2023 – 4 and full redevelopment of the site will take place 2024 – 5.
 - Baths and Elvet waterside. The university is still looking at options here. Some work will be carried out soon for health and safety. Essential repairs will be done to make it safe to open the Vennel. Some suggestions of potential use were made but not given much attention. The university is

still 'considering options' but it sounds as if some of the external fabric will be retained because the building is an important defence against flooding.

- On going maintenance programmes. I raised the facts that many residents have complained about the dilapidated state of many university buildings. Hannah Shepherd asked for updates to be included in the university's community newsletter and also for 'consultation and pre-engagement with the community on the Baths.' There was agreement to this.
- 3. **River safety group**: A report was produced in March 2022. Three boat landing stages need work.
- 4. **Cricknet Club Arson**:; bins will be moved indoors
- 5. **Telecoms monopole**: University has done an objection and will do so again at next planning stage. There is another mast application at St Godrics.
- 6. **Bins along riverbanks**: I produced a 'map' showing 12 bins sited on the Maiden Castle and Racecourse side of the river and none at all on the Pelaw Wood and the playing fields side. David Loudon said that the university would discuss with DCC and potentially allow them access across their land to empty the bins. I asked whether the university could not also provide some bins, especially opposite Maiden Castle along the stretch of path past their sports fields. DL said he would consider this. They are also responsible for the Hild Bede boat house and steps and should provide a bin there.
- 7. **Green Space Festival** will be held at Grey 14th June 2023.
- 8. **Warm Spaces**: Hannah reported that although all university premises allowing public access were prepared to be welcoming to those in need of warmth, in practice it had not had much effect because of the lack of consistent information which was provided to the public. Information (dates, accessibility) will be gathered earlier for next winter.
- 9. **Spigot storyboard**: Nothing has happened on this site since the earlier clearing of it. At the previous meeting, the suggestion was made for the installation of a noticeboard and I asked for any developments here. DL said he would look into this.

Next meeting in May possibly Alington House as John Lowe is a trustee.

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.

13. GOOD CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2023 AWARD

Members **agreed** that the Good Citizen of the Year 2023 Awards should be offered to: Inspector Dave Clarke, Ms Alice Wilkes, Ms Alice Severs, Ms Valerie Standen, Mr Barry Gower and Ms Nicola Duckworth

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, appearing to be 'A. M.', followed by a long horizontal line.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(27th April 2023)**