

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 27th April 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, E Scott, D Freeman, R Hanson, R Friederichsen, N Brown, G Holland, S Walker and H Weston.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and 4 members of the public.

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

Apologies were received from Councillors G Nair and R Ormerod.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillors D Freeman, L Brown and E Scott declared an interest in the report at item 5 regarding objections and call-in requests on planning applications.

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

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

In agreeing the minutes of the meeting of 23rd March, it was noted that the membership of Parish Council Committees (as agreed under item 11 of the minutes) would only remain as such until the annual meeting of the Council in May.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr John Ashby advised that he was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items, but particularly the report under item 5 regarding objections and call-in requests on planning applications.

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

Mrs Linda Lovell advised that she was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items.

Mr Jack Ballingham identified himself as the Chair of the Durham University Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and advised that he was attending the meeting to hear and contribute to discussions under item 7 of the Agenda.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Planning and Licensing Committee**

Councillor G Holland presented the minutes from Planning Committee meetings held on 17th and 31st March 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee updates.

- **Report on objections to planning application and calls to Committee: DCC Central and East Planning Committee**

In introducing his report, the Chair highlighted that it had been brought to the attention of the Parish Council that there has been concern at DCC about (i) the number of objections to planning applications and requests that the applications are brought before the Central and East Planning Committee by the City of Durham Parish Council Planning and Licencing Committee and (ii) objections to planning applications where the application – invariably involving HMOs – appears to fall within the formal requirements laid out in the County Plan (and especially in relation to Policy 16.3).

The Chair advised that he was keen to address this in some way with a formal approach to DCC and this had led to the report before Council this evening.

Councillor G Holland welcomed this report and expressed his unhappiness at the claim that the Parish Council appeared to be calling every application to the Central and East Area County Planning Committee. Councillor G Holland highlighted that the City of Durham Parish Council area was different to any other with very many planning factors e.g. a World Heritage Site, a surrounding green belt, significant development pressure and more to consider. Councillor G Holland advised that the right of call-in was an important provision for Parish and Town Councils which is enshrined in the County Council's constitution and that the City of Durham Parish Council has every right to call an application in to Committee and stand in solidarity with local residents.

Councillor D Freeman advised that, as Chair of the Central and East Area County Planning Committee, he was not aware of any such disquiet regarding the City of Durham Parish Council calling in applications.

Councillor L Brown advised that she had heard of some unhappiness about this but felt that this was entirely unjustified given the sheer volume of applications across the County disproportionately happening in the City of Durham Parish area.

Councillor E Ashby highlighted that other applications – not just change of use to C4 applications – took place in the City of Durham Parish area and the Parish Council is entirely justified in commenting on all such applications if they do not meet the test of the local development plan.

Mr John Ashby advised that approximately 28% of all of the planning applications in the Central and East Area were from the City of Durham Parish Council area. John cautioned against seeking any flexibility in the approach officers take when considering change of use applications for example as a consistent policy throughout the county is needed. John highlighted that flexibility may be taken by some developers as a sign that policies were not being applied as rigidly as they must.

John highlighted that all of these arguments had been run through the Examination in Public and the 90% upper limit had been a victory for campaigners such as the Parish Council.

The Chair advised that it was clear that this report needed some further work before a formal approach is made to DCC on this important issue. It was therefore unanimously **agreed** that the report be deferred to the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee for further work.

- **Environment Committee**

Councillor C Lattin presented the minutes from the Environment Committee meeting held on 14th March 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee updates.

- **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 an advert had now gone out inviting all applications by the end of the month. Thereafter, the Clerk advised that there would be a shortlisting exercise and interviews are scheduled to take place in mid-May for this role.

The Clerk advised that he would keep the Council updated on how this progresses.

- **Business Committee**

Councillor D Freeman presented the minutes from the Business Committee meeting held on 31st January 2023. There were no queries from Members.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 23rd March 2023.

The Chair advised that he would like to put on record his thanks once more to everyone involved in the extraordinary amount of work put into the Coronation events for next week. This has been a terrific partnership effort led in no small part thanks to the Parish Council. It has been a great example of everyone pulling together, acquiring external funding and building good will between the partners. The Chair remarked that everyone in Durham is really looking forward to a series of events worthy of this historic moment in our nation's history.

The Chair also expressed how pleased he was to read the grants report on today's Agenda. The Chair remarked that it is great to see this funding go towards so many worthy local causes in our City and to see the difference it is making to our local environment and the lives of residents across the parish. The Chair advised that he was particularly pleased to see the masterplan for St. Nic's Churchyard and took the opportunity to thank Councillor Ashfield once more for her work on this. This has been an issue for some years now and it is great to see this project progressing.

The Chair reminded Members that the grant funding window is still open for applications until mid-June. The Chair asked all Members to please let as many local community and voluntary organisations in our parish know as possible.

The Chair also reminded Members that the annual meeting of the parish is set to take place on 24th May at 6pm in the Main Hall of the Town Hall. The Chair advised that he is delighted to say that all of the worthy winners of the Citizen of the Year Awards have accepted their awards and he looked forward to presenting these awards at this event as well as providing residents with an update of the last year. The Chair asked all Members to please make a special effort to attend this important meeting.

The Chair expressed his disappointment to hear news of the delay to the construction of the new bus station on North Road. The Chair remarked that it seems as though delays to this project have become a regular feature throughout construction and the Chair expressed sympathy for those in the affected area. The Chair advised that it was his understanding from local businesses that the promised regular letter drop to businesses in the area by DCC isn't taking place. The Chair advised that even our own Parish Clerk has offered to deliver these for the Council but has not had a reply to any of his correspondence which is very disappointing.

The Chair remarked that it is also clear from reports into PinPoint and to the Police that the issue of begging in the City is one that is felt by a number of businesses and visitors of the City. The Chair advised that he was sorry to see that Durham County Council decided against introducing a PSPO to tackle this issue and expressed the hope that the Police and Council can work together to get the right solution. The Chair advised that he met with the Police earlier today and they are looking at solutions for visitors to give to organisations who provide support as opposed to the individual begging. The Chair also advised that yesterday's CRAF meeting agreed to a joint letter to Durham County Council to ask that they re-visit this issue.

The Chair advised that he was pleased to read that Arlington Developers are committed to delivering the Milburngate development in the City in spite of the disappointing news that Tolent has gone into administration. The Chair advised that he very much hoped that a completion date for this development is near and we look forward to this scheme finally opening to the public.

The Chair reminded Members that the National Youth Market competition is taking place on Monday 1st May in the City. The Chair wished the Durham Markets Company every success with this event and remarked that this is not only a great

event but gives young people the opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial skills in our City.

The Chair remarked how pleased he was to see that the Parish Council has received a very positive reaction to its voluntary contribution request to local landlords. Local residents have been contacting the Parish Council with messages of thanks and encouragement and it is encouraging to see large landlords such as loc8me, Morgan Douglas, Gabrielle Moore and Frampton & Roebuck come on board with this scheme.

On the matter of student properties, the Chair advised that he was pleased to read that there is to be a high-level meeting of local landlords chaired by our MP Mary Foy next month. Jeremy Cook – pro-Vice Chancellor of Durham University – has asked that a representative of the Parish Council attend this meeting.

The Chair also took the opportunity to thank Councillors Ashfield and Lattin for their negotiations with Terracycle which has achieved a near 25% discount in the unit costs for a Terracycle box and highlighted that the Parish Council has ordered sufficient numbers for the entire year now. The Chair remarked that this has been a hugely popular scheme and one which has put the Parish Council and Boots on the map for recycling.

The Chair reminded Members that May is our internal audit month and the Parish Clerk will be particularly busy sorting all of this for the previous financial year.

Finally, the Chair offered an enormous congratulations to all present on the news today that the National Association of Local Councils has awarded the City of Durham Parish Council Quality Parish Council Status. The Chair highlighted that this makes us one of only 3 local Councils out of 104 in County Durham to receive such an accolade and he advised that this is testament to a lot of hard work over the last five years since the founding of this Council. What a terrific 5-year birthday present for this Council.

7. PROPOSAL FOR A NUCLEAR FREE PLEDGE FOR DURHAM CITY

The Chair welcomed Jack Ballingham to the meeting as Chair of Durham University CND.

Jack thanked the Parish Council for the opportunity to speak with Members on this important issue today.

Jack highlighted that, in January 2021 the United Nations' Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW) entered into force. This Treaty makes the possession and use of nuclear weapons illegal under international law, and has so far been signed by 92 states – half the membership of the UN. While states that have signed the Treaty include Austria, Ireland and New Zealand, the UK, along with other nuclear weapons states, has not.

Jack advised that the International Campaign to Abolish nuclear weapons (ICAN), which has campaigned for the adoption of the TPNW, has established a Cities Appeal. This asks towns and cities across the world to express their support for

their own country signing the Treaty. In the UK 30 towns, cities and other bodies have passed resolutions to sign up to the Appeal, including parish-level councils like Keighley and Aberystwyth, large cities such as Glasgow, Manchester and Leeds, and even the Welsh Senedd and Scottish Parliament. So far there have been no signatories to the Appeal in the North East.

Jack highlighted that the international situation is now more dangerous than it has been for a very long time, particularly with Russia's invasion of Ukraine now in its second year.

Jack advised that nuclear weapons are also a local issue for Durham. Britain's nuclear weapons are produced and maintained in Berkshire, but the submarines that carry them are based in Scotland. Moving the weapons between the two places is done by road transport, utilising two routes – one on the west coast, using the M6 and A74, and another on the east coast, using the A1(M), which passes close to Durham.

The dangers of transporting nuclear material and weapons by road are clear, and an exercise conducted by the Ministry of Defence in 2018 (and only recently revealed by a Freedom of Information request) found the response to a simulated accident involving a nuclear weapons convoy in Cumbria was massively insufficient.

Jack advised that local authorities are not themselves notified of the movements of nuclear weapons convoys through their area – Leeds City Council confirmed this was the case in 2016.

Jack highlighted that signing the ICAN Cities Appeal is a way for the City of Durham to join with hundreds of other cities around the world in expressing their opposition to nuclear weapons, as well to lead the way for other towns and cities in the North East to do so as well. It also opens the door to collaboration with other like-minded cities around the world – there are particularly close links between British nuclear-free cities and their counterparts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Jack advised that 'Mayors for Peace', another international group of local governments, was founded in 1982, with its two founding members being Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There are currently 8,240 members of Mayors for Peace around the world, with 88 in the UK – however, there are only currently two members in the North East.

While the Mayor of Durham is not directed by City of Durham Parish Council, Jack advised that the Mayor's membership of Mayors for Peace would be another way for Durham to be at the forefront of promoting peace both regionally and nationally.

Councillor L Brown advised that she understood that Durham City had declared itself nuclear-free in 1982 and advised that the Parish Council may wish to see if this declaration is still extant.

Councillor G Holland advised that he could not support this as he felt that nuclear weapons actually made the world safer not more dangerous and this was echoed by Councillor D Freeman.

Councillor D Freeman advised that he could not support this proposal either as a Parish Councillor or as Mayor and advised that he felt that the Parish Council should not be getting involved in this issue.

Councillor C Lattin advised that she had been campaigning for nuclear disarmament for many years and fully supported this proposal.

The Clerk advised that he had been contacted by a resident of Elvet to say that she supported this and also asked if the Parish Council might consider reinstating the Mural of Peace which once existed in Prince Bishops many years ago in Durham City, if the panels could be located. Councillor E Ashby and Mr John Ashby advised that they owned one of the panels and would be happy to see if the other panels might be located.

Members **agreed** to note the above report and **agreed** to support the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Cities and Towns Pledge, which supports the UN's Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons and by doing so effectively ban any presence of and support for nuclear weapons from our Parish. (Votes were cast as follows: 9 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 2 abstentions).

Members **agreed** to formally request that the Mayor of Durham becomes a member of the Mayors for Peace. (Votes were cast as follows: 7 votes in favour, 3 votes against and 3 abstentions).

Members **agreed** to enquire of DCC if their opposition to nuclear weapons & associated traffic throughout the county -as believed to have been agreed in 1982 - is still extant. (Votes were cast as follows: 10 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 1 abstention).

The Chair thanked Jack for his time today and presenting his case to the Parish Council.

8. 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

The Clerk advised that it had been a real pleasure to be a part of the Operation Golden Orb Working Group with colleagues across the City in order to put on these

events. The Clerk remarked that these events had been the result of much hard work between partner organisations.

Councillor E Scott commended the Clerk on such a fantastic set of events and advised that she was thrilled to see the Parish Council go above and beyond its earlier efforts for the Jubilee last year.

Councillor E Ashby also commended the Clerk for his work as part of this Working Group and advised that she hoped that Members would be attending as many of these events as possible. Councillor E Ashby advised that she would be asking Members to indicate which events they are able to attend and to state a reason for absence at any of the events listed above, in view of the extraordinary work the Parish Council has put into these events.

The Clerk also highlighted Councillor E Ashby's significant contribution to the Coronation events planning and thanked her for her terrific support.

9. REPORT FROM VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS ON GRANTS AWARDED IN FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23

The Clerk reminded Members that in June 2022 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 2023 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.

10. PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO UNDERTAKE AN 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.

It was **agreed** that Councillors A Doig, E Ashby 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. REPORT FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The Chair advised that the Parish Council's Community and Residents Association Forum held its AGM yesterday evening (26th April 2023) and he has once again been elected as Convener of this Forum.

The Chair advised that it was not possible for the Forum to agree its revised Terms of Reference at this AGM meeting and he hoped to have a follow-up meeting with the Forum in due course to go over this once more.

The Chair advised that a draft copy of the minutes of this latest meeting of the Forum would be presented at the next Parish Council meeting.

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

Signed,



**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(25th May 2023)**