

# City of Durham Parish Council

**Minutes of the annual meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May 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 Friederichsen, N Brown, R Hanson, G Holland, G Nair, R Ormerod, S Walker and H Weston.

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

## **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

Councillor A Doig was elected as Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing year; nominated by Councillor E Ashby and seconded by Councillor V Ashfield.

There were no other nominations for the role of Chair.

Councillor A Doig duly read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

## **2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

Councillor S Walker was elected as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing year; nominated by Councillor L Brown and seconded by Councillor E Scott.

There were no other nominations for the role of Vice-Chair.

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

None received.

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

Councillor E Scott declared an interest in item 9 on the Agenda and took no part in the vote on this item.

## **5. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

## **6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

Mr Jonathan Lovell advised that he was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items, but specifically Item 9 on the Agenda.

Mrs Linda Lovell advised that she was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items, but specifically Item 9 on the Agenda.

Ms Janet George advised that she was attending the meeting to hear discussions on item 9 on the Agenda.

## **7. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **• Planning and Licensing Committee**

Councillor G Holland presented the minutes from the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee reports.

#### **Proposed research project for planning and licensing arrangements in the City centre.**

Councillor G Holland advised that, at its most recent meeting, the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee had agreed to invite external bids to carry out a one-time piece of research into the current and permitted operating hours of all licenced premises within the City of Durham Parish Council boundary area.

Councillor G Holland highlighted that the Committee requires the production of an evidence document which illustrates any discrepancies between approved operating hours in planning permissions, approved opening hours in licensing permissions, opening hours advertised on premises' websites and opening hours in practice for approximately. 163 licensed premises in Durham City.

The Clerk advised that this research may also prove useful to the Parish Council in the run-up to the review of the County Council's Statement of Licensing Policy in 2024. The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council has an extensive list of all the licenced premises within the city and their respective addresses, through its Ordnance Survey licence.

The Clerk advised that this research will involve the effective use of several online resources, e.g., research on internet into published opening hours of premises, research on Durham County Council planning portal into opening hours in planning permissions as well as potential visits to the Council's Licensing Department at Annand House (DH7 8RS) to go over any licensing documentation for premises.

The work may also include some visits to licensed premises whose opening hours are not available online.

The Clerk advised that an advert requesting bids was placed on the Parish Council's website last week. All bids were requested to include a fixed fee for producing this document as well as time expected to be spent on its production.

All bids were requested to be submitted by no later than 5pm on Wednesday 24th May 2023 via email.

All bids were requested to be supplemented by evidence that the individual has a research background, has experience of data management, is able to navigate their way around the Council's online planning portal and is proficient in the use of Microsoft office tools e.g. Word, Excel, etc.

Councillor G Holland advised that he hoped that this document may be produced by no later than mid-July 2023.

The Clerk confirmed that only one joint bid had been received for this piece of research as follows:

**Time expected to be spent:** 25 minutes/ application

**Fixed fee:** £1,500

**Expected completion date:** 30th June 2023

**Professional background of researchers:**

*Researcher A* has a track record in delivering accurate and well-presented research on time. For instance, she undertook careful research in 2019 into Durham City student HMO planning applications and appeals 2017-2019 and synthesized this data into two charts and produced a report for the City of Durham Parish Council. She is intimately familiar with Durham City and the Durham County Council planning portal.

*Researcher B* is a postgraduate student who brings a first-class degree, a systematic approach to data collection, a sharp eye for detail, and useful knowledge of licenced premises across the city to the research.

Members **agreed** to the production of the evidence document for licenced premises. (Votes were as follows: 12 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions).

Members also **agreed** to approve this research work being allocated to the two researchers as per the bid received. (Votes were as follows: 12 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions).

#### • **Environment Committee**

Councillor C Lattin presented the minutes from the Environment Committee meeting held on 11th April 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee reports.

#### **Proposal to create a community garden space at the top of Lawson Terrace / Laburnum Avenue.**

Councillor S Walker took the opportunity to thank Members of the Environment Committee for their ongoing support for this project.

Councillor S Walker advised Members that the £6,000 allocated towards new EV-charging points in the City of Durham parish area is now not being progressed by

the Environment Committee and that the Committee has instead agreed that this funding should be allocated towards this project as part of its commitment to 'green up' the Viaduct Area.

The Clerk highlighted that greening up the Viaduct Area of the City is a key strategic aim of the Parish Council and Committee Members felt that this project conforms strongly with that aim.

Councillor S Walker advised that she and the Clerk had carried out a site visit of the area with contractors and the following quote has been received from DCC's groundworks team to clear and level the land:

Total cost for labour and materials: £4,957.22

The Clerk advised that initial estimates from private contractors have been significantly higher than that quoted by DCC.

The Clerk advised that the works are expected to take approximately. 3 full working days to complete and could only commence at the beginning of September 2023 in order to avoid the bird nesting season.

Councillor D Freeman asked that the Environment Committee considers a range of fruit trees as part of the new planting for the community garden space.

Councillor E Ashby asked that any signage associated with the project should conform with the signage for the Hallow Green project.

Members **agreed** to support this project as set out in the report provided. (Votes were as follows: 12 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions).

### **Update on the Service Level Agreement with Durham Police**

The Clerk highlighted that the SLA with Durham Police had now been agreed by both parties and the new police officers had now commenced (as of 4th April 2023).

The Clerk also advised that he had been part of the interview panel for the new Safer Streets Coordinator role alongside colleagues at the Durham Agency Against Crime (DAAC).

The Clerk advised that the panel had successfully recruited a new Coordinator for this SLA. The Clerk advised that the new Coordinator – Ashleigh White – is due to commence her role on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and that he expected the Parish Council to receive a regular (monthly) report about the impact of this SLA.

The Clerk advised that he would be meeting with Ashleigh shortly after her formal start date to discuss expectations going forward and ensure that Ashleigh has settled into the role and has everything, she needs to carry out the functions of this role.

The Clerk reminded Members that this role is being funded by the OPCC and that Ashleigh's employers were DAAC but that she would be expected to work closely with the Parish Council and the Durham City Inspector.

Members thanked the Clerk for his work on this matter.

#### • **Business Committee**

Councillor R Ormerod presented the minutes from the Business Committee meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023. There were no queries from Members.

Councillor R Ormerod took the opportunity to thank Members of this Committee for their work and remarked that he felt that this Committee is the most important of all the Parish Council's Committee.

### **8. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023 as follows:

The Chair began by thanking everyone involved in the work for the Coronation at the beginning of this month. This involved us establishing a 'Golden Orb Working Group' of all the major City stakeholders; chaired by our Parish Clerk, organising events and acquiring external funding from bodies such as the National Lottery, Durham BID, DCC culture team and many more in order to deliver 7-days' worth of back-to-back events at very little cost to the taxpayer. The Chair remarked that these events were huge undertakings and simply would not be possible without the work of Councillor Esther Ashby, local partners and our Parish Clerk Adam.

The Chair also took the opportunity to thank those Members who attended and supported the annual meeting of the parish yesterday. The Chair remarked that this was a great opportunity to let our residents know about the work the Parish Council does every day on their behalf, to present the Good Citizen Awards and to hear an update from our Inspector Dave Clarke. The Chair advised that all of the issues raised by residents are being looked into and followed up.

The Chair advised that he was pleased to see that Durham County Council is set to adopt new rules around dog control. The Parish Council responded to the PSPO consultation earlier this year and supported this proposal. The Chair remarked that he was disappointed to see that the Council is not following our request and the advice of professional dog walkers' associations, the RSPCA and many others over the maximum number of dogs one handler can walk at any one time. The Chair reminded Members that the Parish Council requested this be reduced to 4 dogs but the Council is sticking resolutely to 6.

The Chair advised that there will be a special meeting of our CRAF Forum later in June so that the Terms of Reference of this Forum may be agreed. Sadly, these could not be agreed at the last meeting of the Forum as the minutes demonstrate that there was some unhappiness over Councillors attendance at this Forum. The Chair advised that strong objections to this came solely from the Whinney Hill Community Group who have now resigned from the Forum.

The Chair also advised that he was aware, from a recent meeting of the Durham Traffic peninsula group, that the Council is looking to increase the congestion charge for vehicle entering the peninsula to £5. The current charge is a desperately low £2 and this has remained so for quite some time. In the interests of pedestrianizing our streets and discouraging vehicular movements in the area, the Chair advised that he very much welcomes this proposal and hopes that DCC agree to this. The Chair advised that he will be looking at this in more detail in the coming months.

The Chair welcomed that some landlords have paid towards the Parish Council's voluntary contribution request, with a deadline for all responses to this request of 16<sup>th</sup> June. The Chair advised that he understood that there is to be a meeting with the County Council and the organisers of Green Move Out to see where this funding can be best spent towards what is a huge undertaking. The Chair particularly thanked Councillors Ashfield and Lattin for their continued work on this.

The Chair also took the opportunity to thank local MP Mary Foy and Durham University for arranging a meeting of local landlords and agents earlier this month. The Chair advised that there was a great turnout and welcomed work moving in the right direction; nobody wants to see a repeat of the scenes we saw last year of students being pressured into signing up with any property and queueing overnight in the street for accommodation.

The Chair also thanked John Ashby for his continued work in trying to progress a landlord licensing/ accreditation scheme. The Chair advised that there is an excellent paper on tomorrow's Planning and Licensing Committee meeting where this issue is being progressed. Despite many obstacles thrown our way on this, the Chair advised that John has persisted on this issue which is high on the list of priorities for residents.

The Chair also welcomed the excellent Merryoaks Community Hall finally opening for business. The Chair remarked that the Hall is absolutely sensational and a huge credit to the work of many. The Chair advised that he understood that Councillor Walker and her husband are throwing themselves into running the Hall which is brilliant.

The Chair also proposed that the Parish Council progresses the idea of putting a lead Member of the project forward for a national honour.

The Chair also highlighted that the Clerk has now completed his CiLCA award as previously reported and proposed that the Council looks to get this extensive piece of work professionally bound and reproduced in hard copy by Ryman in Durham. It was agreed that 5 copies of this should be ordered from Ryman.

The Chair also highlighted that the Clerk has circulated information regarding the new information board for the beacon and a proposal from the Council that Jubilee Walk be re-named Beacon Hill. The Chair advised that the Clerk has asked for all Members' feedback on this by Wednesday next week please.

The Chair also advised that he would like to see a review of whether the current Parish Council office location is the most suitable for the Parish Council's needs and those of its employee(s).

The Chair also advised that he would like to re-visit the idea that a review be undertaken of the role of the Charter Trust.

## **9. MOTION BY COUNCILLOR A DOIG ON SECTION 106 FUNDING WITHIN THE PARISH AREA**

Councillor A Doig advised that he was aware of some unhappiness relating to the delay in allocation of Section 106 funding within the parish area and highlighted that this has been raised at a number of previous meetings of the parish by local residents.

Councillor A Doig presented the following motion to the Council:

*"This Council invites Durham County Council to urgently establish a special Working Group of interested stakeholders, including the City of Durham Parish Council, in order to explore projects for funding through the City's substantial Section 106 funds which have remained unspent for several years."*

Councillor A Doig advised that the current list of Section 106 monies published by the Council currently has £318,789.42 marked as unallocated from various developments within the Elvet and Gilesgate division. Some of this dates back to June 2014 (e.g. development at Kepier Hospital).

Councillor A Doig advised that the Clerk has raised this several times with the Council since the Levelling Up bids failed but has not had a clear answer on what is happening with this.

Councillor A Doig highlighted that the latest list was circulated on 14th May 2023 and strangely didn't include the Section 106 funds attached to the development of William Robson House for instance e.g. the £22,134 agreed for open space enhancement has been indexed for the provision or upgrading of play/ recreational facilities.

Councillor A Doig also advised that the Parish Council had recently experienced the issue of funds for Biodiversity Net Gain allocation and Open Space enhancement (over £522k) attached to the development of the PBSA at Mount Oswald provisionally allocated to outside the parish area.

Councillor A Doig also highlighted that the Neville's Cross division also has circa. £150,000 available for sports fields which has yet to be allocated.

Councillor A Doig reminded Members that the Parish Council endorsed a list of proposals in September 2021 which we were aware had community support and these have not been able to be progressed due to applications being on hold for the Elvet and Gilesgate division – something which appears to be a special case for Durham.

Ms Janet George highlighted concerns from local residents groups that the Section 106 monies may be returned to the developer if unspent and asked the Councillors

to move speedily on projects which had community support as opposed to projects such as Lampounette at the Sands.

Councillor V Ashfield highlighted the extensive work she had undertaken with local residents' groups to allocate this funding towards community projects and felt that there were no direct answers coming from the County Council on this allocation. Councillor D Freeman advised that he was aware of the local concerns but highlighted that there is to be a further round of Levelling Up funding applications and it is envisaged that the Section 106 monies may be put towards these projects.

Councillor D Freeman highlighted that this funding could lead to a much greater source of funding towards projects such as Elvet Park.

Councillor L Brown highlighted her disappointment at how Section 106 funds from Elvet and Gilesgate were being allocated.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that no plans had ever been presented for Elvet Park and local residents in the Elvet area had already expressed their concerns about any element of this proposal including a skate park.

Councillor E Scott advised that DCC has one of the most open and transparent processes of any local authority in the allocation of Section 106 funds. Councillor E Scott advised that she felt that the Parish Council could benefit from another meeting with Stephen Reed (DCC) to explain how the process works.

Councillor E Ashby advised that she was aware of previous consultations on the Elvet Park proposals. Councillor E Ashby indicated that she wished to propose an amendment to the motion.

Councillor R Ormerod advised that there is no risk of any Section 106 funding being returned to developers and asked Councillor A Doig if he might consider withdrawing his motion. Councillor R Ormerod highlighted that the motion had not yet been seconded and it was therefore still the ability of the proposer to withdraw the motion.

Councillor A Doig advised that he would withdraw the motion on the basis that the Parish Council invites Stephen Reed to its next meeting in June, in order to discuss how funding is allocated.

The motion was therefore withdrawn and not put to a vote.

## **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 legal requirement for Parish Councils to review on an annual basis its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other important documents.

The Clerk advised that, as per the agreement at the April Full Council meeting, a Working Group, comprising Councillors A Doig, E Ashby and S Walker, had met to



review these documents and the amendments had been set out in reports to Councillors.

The Clerk also highlighted that the report also included a request to adopt both a Staff Appraisal Policy and a Community Engagement Policy.

The content and wording of each document was **agreed** as set out in the following link: <https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/important-documents-and-policies/> (Votes were as follows: 12 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions).

Members also **agreed** to adopt the Staff Appraisal Policy and the Community Engagement Policy. (Votes were as follows: 12 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions).

## **11. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S CLIMATE LEAD**

The Chair reminded Members that, in February 2022, the Parish Council had agreed to appoint Councillor R Friederichsen as its first Climate Lead. This was again agreed at the Full Council meeting in May 2022 and a set of Terms of Reference for this position were also established.

The Chair reminded Members that this role and these Terms of Reference must be reviewed on an annual basis at the Council's annual meeting.

Members unanimously **agreed** the Terms of Reference for the Climate Lead role and also unanimously **agreed** to appoint Councillor R Friederichsen as its Climate Lead for the ensuing year of the Parish Council; as proposed by Councillor C Lattin and seconded by Councillor V Ashfield.

## **12. TO DECIDE ON APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

Members **agreed** (Votes were as follows: 11 votes in favour, 1 vote against, 0 abstentions) to maintain a Parish Council representative on all of the local organisations listed in the report. In doing so, Members also agreed that the Parish Council representative for each of these organisations should be as follows:

<b>Local organisation/ body</b>	<b>City of Durham Parish Council representative</b>
Community Engagement Task Force	Victoria Ashfield
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Economic	Esther Ashby
Community Engagement Task Force sub group – Citizenship	Victoria Ashfield
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Lived Environment	Carole Lattin
PBSA Liaison Group	Esther Ashby

Durham Access Group	Nicola Brown and Susan Walker
CDALC Larger Councils Forum	Esther Ashby, Adam Shanley and Richard Ormerod
City Safety Group	Adam Shanley
Durham BID board	Adam Shanley
Durham AAP Board	Susan Walker

### 13. TO DECIDE ON PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members unanimously **agreed** the membership of each Committee for this year of the Parish Council as follows:

<b>Planning and Licensing Committee (7 Members)</b> Grenville Holland (Chair) Susan Walker (Vice-Chair) Richard Ormerod Carole Lattin Alan Doig Esther Ashby Nicola Brown	<b>Environment Committee (6 Members)</b> Carole Lattin (Chair) Victoria Ashfield (Vice-Chair) David Freeman Liz Brown Susan Walker Rupert Friederichsen
<b>Personnel Committee (5 Members)</b> Alan Doig (Chair) Elizabeth Scott (Vice-Chair) Govind Nair Victoria Ashfield Grenville Holland	<b>Business Committee (6 Members)</b> Richard Ormerod (Chair) David Freeman (Vice-Chair) Nicola Brown Grenville Holland Esther Ashby Victoria Ashfield
<b>Finance Committee (6 Members)</b> Alan Doig (Chair) David Freeman (Vice-Chair) Robert Hanson Victoria Ashfield Helen Weston Liz Brown	

### 14. REVIEW OF COUNTY DURHAM ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

The Clerk advised that the Local Government Boundary Commission is reviewing the electoral areas in County Durham to make sure councillors represent an equal number of people and the boundaries help with effective council work.

The Clerk advised that, as part of this review, the total number of councillors will be reduced from 126 to 98 and will consist of 48 divisions, including nine single councillor divisions, 28 two councillor divisions and 11 three councillor divisions.

The Boundary Commission is conducting this review of Durham County Council as some Councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. The Commission describes this as 'electoral inequality'. The aim of this review is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per Councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

The Clerk advised that this electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The divisions in County Durham are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the county.

The Clerk also highlighted that the Parish Council had agreed to simply note (without further commenting) on the parliamentary boundary proposals when they were consulted on last year.

It was unanimously **agreed** to note the proposals without making any further comments to the Boundary Commission.

## **15. CYCLE OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The following cycle of meetings was **agreed** by Members for forthcoming Full Council meetings:

### **2023**

22<sup>nd</sup> June  
27<sup>th</sup> July  
28<sup>th</sup> September  
26<sup>th</sup> October  
23<sup>rd</sup> November

### **2024**

25<sup>th</sup> January  
22<sup>nd</sup> February  
28<sup>th</sup> March  
25<sup>th</sup> April

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council  
(22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023)**