

City of Durham Parish Council Strategy 2019/20



Foreword by Councillor Elizabeth Scott

Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council

Since our formation in May 2018, the City of Durham Parish Council has been working to identify its key strategic priorities which will preserve, support and enhance our community for years to come.

As Chair of the Parish Council, I am proud to have overseen this work and we are extremely grateful to everyone who has participated in helping us to identify these priorities.

This document sets out our objectives as a Parish Council for 2019/20 under the following key priority areas:

Priority 1: Enhancing the wellbeing and prosperity of our Parish

Priority 2: Creating a Neighbourhood Plan and representing the Parish on planning matters

Priority 3: Being a voice for the City and working with key partners

Priority 4: Supporting the business community and encouraging tourism

Priority 5: Enhancing the physical environment of our Parish

The Parish Council will always value your participation and would welcome any comments on the priorities we have chosen.

Priority 1

Enhancing the wellbeing and prosperity of our Parish.

Promoting and enhancing the health, wellbeing and prosperity of our community, its residents, visitors and those who work in our Parish are fundamental to our key strategies as a Parish Council. We recognise that these create a number of cross cutting strands in the work of our various committees.

Firstly, we recognise the impact which enhancing our physical environment and, in particular, the green infrastructure that this Parish can have on the wellbeing of our residents. Any new initiative which promotes and improves the health and wellbeing of our residents will be supported.

As a Parish Council, we will ensure that the design and management of our public spaces are safe, user-friendly and accessible for all by being designed to promote and sustain physical activity and healthy living.

The Parish Council will object to any development which has a negative impact on any amenity within our Parish and which does not promote our key objective of ensuring that Durham is a City which is "accessible for all".

Should the Parish Council decide that any development has a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents or would result in a worsening of provision, the Council will seek to redress this by using contributions from section 106 agreements to provide for new and alternative amenities.

As a Parish Council we will encourage activities which reduce carbon emissions and will also support sustainable methods of public transport as well as promoting activities such as walking and/or cycling.

Furthermore, we also recognise the widely expressed concerns from a number of our Parishioners in relation to road and traffic safety and we will support further road safety initiatives, particularly around schools, such as supporting a 20mph zone outside Durham Johnston School. We will also support the domestication of the A167 as a key priority to ensure greater road safety in our area.

The Parish Council has also recently taken ownership of the Allotments site on Larches Road from the County Council. Though this site is managed by an Allotment Association, the Parish Council will ensure that this site is well-maintained and will always promote Allotments as a form of recreation with a number health and wellbeing benefits.

The Parish Council will also work with the local NHS Trust and other key stakeholders in order to support the provision of health and wellbeing projects and, wherever possible, will communicate health and wellbeing messages to the public.

Priority 2

Creating a Neighbourhood Plan and representing the Parish on planning matters.

The Neighbourhood Plan

Through the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, the City of Durham Parish Council is currently in the process of creating a Neighbourhood Plan for our area. This will allow us to develop a shared vision for our community creating a strategy for future development in our area and influencing where new homes, shops, offices and other developments are built. This will also allow us to identify and protect important local green spaces as well as ensuring the conservation of the World Heritage Site in the City centre.

The designation area of the Neighbourhood Plan was consulted on and formally agreed earlier this year. Once adopted, following independent examination, and agreed by the community in a Parish-wide referendum, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory Development Plan. It is hoped that the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan will take place in May/June this year.

As a Parish Council, we recognise the need to promote development which is affordable, sustainable and in accordance with the local needs of our Parish. We will object to any applications that, in our judgement, have a negative impact on our World Heritage Site and Conservation Areas and we will actively discourage overdevelopment. As a Council, we will always campaign and lead any lobbying to ensure that we get the right development in the City of Durham.

The Planning Committee

Through the Parish Council's own Planning Committee, we will respond to consultations on planning applications and preapplication enquires and we will work with the County Council, local residents' groups and other key stakeholders and partners to ensure that development is sustainable, high-quality and consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the former District Council's Saved local planning policies and accords with the future County Plan when it is finally approved.

The impact of the University

The Parish Council recognises that the expansion plans of Durham University and the impact that this will have in terms of the demographic and growing housing demands within our Parish. The Parish Council therefore undertake an investigation into the level of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) currently in our Parish and identify those areas of our Parish which have high levels of student occupancy to ensure that our decision-making is well informed.

Where appropriate on planning applications the Parish Council will also make representations to the Planning Inspectorate.

Priority 3

Being a voice for the City and working with key partners

A local voice

It is important to recognise that, as a Parish Council, we are not always the final decision-making body on issues our residents are facing. However, as the first-tier of local Government we provide the best reflection of how our community feels about a particular issue to other organisations. As such, we are keen to work with key stakeholders so that the voices of our residents are understood, and their concerns resolved.

Where appropriate, the Parish Council bring together other local Parish Councils as well as the County Council and its County Councillors as a forum to share priorities and explore joint working. In addition, we will explore new opportunities to share best practice and offer value for public money on the range of services we provide as a Parish Council.

Working with Young People

The Parish Council recognises that young people are also a key stakeholder in our community and one priority for the Parish Council is to involve young people in the work which we do for our local community. We are already working with schools and in particular the various School Councils to identify young people's ambitions for their area and how we might best support these ambitions.

Residents Groups

As a Parish Council, we also recognise the outstanding contributions being made by our residents' groups, community associations, youth groups, the emergency services, third sector organisations, Durham University, Durham Cathedral, the Durham business community and many others. We will work positively with all these key stakeholders to identify our shared priorities and encourage action plans to deliver on these priorities.

Awards

As part of our commitment to support the work of other organisations, the Parish Council has also committed a specific part of its budget to provide funding. Each year, between April-June, the Parish Council will welcome applications from different organisations for financial support, in accordance with its recently established grant awarding policy.

Furthermore, through the introduction of our annual Good Citizen Award, the Parish Council will recognise outstanding commitment to the life of the City through exceptional contributions to voluntary activities, work carried out to support and help others, and/or achievements which have benefited our community as a whole.

Partnership working

Through partnership working, the Parish Council will increase the range of information available to our residents about community-based projects, activities and services available to enhance wellbeing and civic pride. We will find out if additional noticeboards are needed

in our city centre and surrounding areas to keep all our residents and tourists better informed about what is happening in our Parish.

Consultation

Central to the work of the Parish Council is to be sure that our priorities are aligned with those of our Parishioners. We will hold public meetings as a forum for consultation with local residents about what they would like to see from their Parish Council. We will therefore implement a programme of activity which enables people living and working in Durham to participate and engage in the decision-making process of the Parish Council.

We recognise that the student population makes an important and growing demographic of our community. We will work closely with the University and its students to promote better community cohesion and identify areas where we all have common cause.

To have confidence that the voices of our residents are heard on a wide-range of issues, the Parish Council will respond to consultations carried out on issues directly or indirectly affecting our Parish.

Priority 4

Supporting the business community and encouraging tourism

Tourism

Wherever possible, the Parish Council will actively promote the image of and pride in Durham, making it an attractive destination for tourists and visitors. We will do all we can to support and conserve our World Heritage and cultural sites and our physical environment and we will provide the funding for more heritage signage.

Temporary events for visitors such as Durham Lumière, the Miner's Gala, Velo North, etc will be encouraged given their positive impact on the local economy, their support of local businesses and the promotion of civic pride. The Parish Council will work with strategic partners such as the County Council to ensure that the organisation and management of these events has as minimal disruption as possible for local residents, e.g. by making representations on temporary road closure orders.

Our Business Community

The Parish Council will work closely with the business community of Durham and business support agencies to promote Durham as a centre of enterprise, signposting businesses to funding opportunities and other external support organisations. We will also market Durham as an exciting base for ethical, green, socially-engaged businesses.

To improve the physical environment of our Parish and support local businesses, the Parish Council will introduce a 'Best Business Frontage' award in order to promote the city centre as a welcoming and attractive place to live and visit.

The Parish Council will actively promote small and medium sized businesses in the Parish with initiatives for example during Fair Trade week, Small Business Saturday and Restaurant week.

In recognising the increased pressure faced by the high street, where businesses have vacated premises and units have become empty, the Parish Council will also provide temporary screening. This could be used to promote events and other organisations within Durham as well as improving the attractiveness of the high street, until such a time that a new tenant acquires the space.

The night time Economy

The Parish Council is aware of the high profile of the night-time economy in our area. and We also recognise that if this is to continue to be a positive and valued feature of our Parish there must be a balance between the needs of licence holders and the wellbeing of local residents. Alongside the development of the Durham night-life, the Parish Council is keen to work with key stakeholders and partners such as licensees, the police, the Safe Durham Partnership and the City Safety Group as well as local residents' groups to ensure that the night-time economy operates in a way which does not have a negative impact on

local residents nor the safety of those visiting Durham to enjoy the many restaurants, cafes and bars our city centre has to offer.

We will actively seek ways to support the growth of the early evening economy being targeted by other partners to encourage expansion of the overnight stay by visitors to the city.

Through the work of its Licensing Committee, the Parish Council will encourage the promotion of responsible businesses. New licenses will be granted in accordance with the four licensing objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder; public safety; the prevention of public nuisance; and the protection of children from harm.

Priority 5

Enhancing the physical environment of our Parish

The physical, natural and historical environment of our Parish is distinctive and valued, playing a key role for Durham County as a whole. It is a significant asset both to our residents and our visitors from across the region and beyond. It makes an important contribution to the character, quality of life, sense of place and to the economy of Durham County and acts as a valuable resource for our community, businesses and visitors alike.

As a Parish Council, we will always aim to conserve and enhance our environment and safeguard its future for future generations. We will do all we can to ensure that our natural, historic and built environments are experienced and treasured by all.

To protect the physical environment of our Parish, we will develop our green spaces wherever possible and enhance our open spaces and park areas with floral planting and grass cutting to supplement the contribution already provided by Durham County Council. The Parish Council will also offer to act as a partner with the Durham in Bloom project to add to the distinguished work carried out over many years.

Furthermore, the Parish Council will provide additional services such as litter picking, chewing gum removal, weed control and street and sign cleaning so that our environment can be appreciated and enjoyed by all. The Parish Council will also establish further Neighbourhood Warden services, where, amongst other activities, Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) will be issued to counter instances of littering, industrial waste, fly tipping, flyposting and dog fouling.

The Parish Council recognises the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions and we understand the impact that these emissions have on our physical environment. We will find ways to facilitate and encourage our community in reducing direct and indirect CO₂ emissions as part of a much wider international initiative.