



City of Durham Parish Council

The City of Durham Parish Council. Office 3, Clayport Library. 8 Millennium Place. Durham. DH1 1WA.

Telephone: 07510 074875 Email: parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk

SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee: Councillors C Lattin, V Ashfield, T Cleaver, G Bignardi, G Holland and F Robinson.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Environment Committee meeting** to be held **via Zoom at 10:30am on Tuesday 13th January 2026** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84025362572>

Meeting ID: 840 2536 2572

Members of the public and press are also cordially invited to attend. Members of the public may address Council, Committee or Sub-Committee meetings for up to three minutes, with the agreement of the Chair of the meeting, provided that the statement is related to an item on the agenda. The speaker should approach the Clerk before the meeting commences to request to speak during the meeting.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, Civility and Respect and Human Rights plus Social, Economic and Environmental matters.

Yours faithfully,

A. Shanley

Mr Adam Shanley
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council

AGENDA

- 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS.**
- 3. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11th NOVEMBER 2025**
- 4. TO RECEIVE ANY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS**
- 5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT**
- 6. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:**

6a. To decide:

- I) To approve the judging criteria for the Durham City Landlord of the Year Award – briefing note included.
- II) To consider the planting priorities for the City in financial year 2026/27 – to include a discussion on future fruit tree provision following market day event and Viaduct planters
- III) To consider priorities following decision on Section 106 application to fund new green roof bus shelters.
- IV) To consider the response from DCC Portfolio Holder regarding Clean Air and upcoming Environmental Plan

6b. To complete:

- I) Update on the duckpond project initiative
- II) Update on the Shincliffe boundary stone project
- III) Update on the proposed new blue plaque commemorating former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Dr Mo Mowlam

- 7. AOB** (please note for information only and not for formal decisions).

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

10th February 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom
10th March 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee meeting held on Tuesday 11th November 2025 at 13:00pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors C. Lattin (in the **Chair**), V. Ashfield, G.Holland, F. Robinson and T Cleaver.

Also present: Mr Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk), Councillor S Walker and Mrs Hannah Shepherd (Durham University).

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair formally opened the meeting and welcomed all Members and attendees. The Chair noted that the meeting was fully quorate and confirmed that no apologies for absence had been received. The Chair further welcomed Councillor S. Walker and Mrs Hannah Shepherd, who was attending to contribute to the substantive discussion under Agenda item 6.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited Members to declare any interests in relation to the business on the agenda. No declarations of interest were received.

3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2025

The Committee considered the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 14 October 2025. Councillor T. Cleaver raised a point of clarification regarding a matter discussed informally after the close of the previous meeting relating to reports of anti-social behaviour near St Nicholas' Church.

The Clerk explained that this discussion had taken place after the formal conclusion of the meeting and had therefore not been included in the official minutes, as no formal decision had been taken at that time. Members accepted this explanation and confirmed that the matter would instead be referred operationally to the Neighbourhood Wardens for awareness.

Subject to this clarification, the Committee confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2025 were a true and accurate record of proceedings and were **agreed**.

4. Public participation

The Chair confirmed that no members of the public had registered to speak in advance of the meeting and no public participation was received.

5. To consider the latest Neighbourhood Warden report

The Committee received and noted the latest Neighbourhood Warden report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Chair highlighted the value of the photographic evidence included within the report and noted that residents consistently expressed appreciation for the visibility and effectiveness of the wardens' work.

Members discussed the distribution of the report, and the Clerk confirmed that it was shared with Parish Councillors, partner organisations including the Police and Durham University, resident associations, and subscribers to the Parish Council newsletter.

Further discussion focused on issues relating to homelessness and rough sleeping within the city. The Clerk provided a detailed update on ongoing engagement with individuals experiencing rough sleeping, noting that multi-agency support was in place involving the Neighbourhood Wardens, the Rough Sleeper Action Team, and charities including Humankind and Cornerstone. The Clerk advised that while some individuals had been offered accommodation, they had declined housing at that time, and engagement remained ongoing.

Members discussed the potential value of a structured session involving relevant organisations to improve understanding and public awareness of homelessness issues. The Chair supported the proposal for an initial meeting with Environment Committee Members, with a view to potentially developing a wider public forum at a later date.

Concerns were also raised regarding the persistent issue of household bins being left on Back Western Hill, creating obstruction and safety hazards. The Clerk confirmed that this issue would be raised at the forthcoming Waste Management meeting and that Neighbourhood Wardens were continuing door-to-door engagement and education. Members were encouraged to use Durham County Council's reporting mechanisms, notwithstanding acknowledged limitations in the system.

The Committee noted the report and supported the continued engagement with partner organisations and the Neighbourhood Warden Service, and **agreed** that the Clerk would pursue further discussions with relevant agencies and raise the identified waste management concerns with Durham County Council.

6. Discussion on supporting the recently launched 'rate your landlord' scheme in Durham

The Chair introduced the item and welcomed Mrs Hannah Shepherd from Durham University, who had joined the meeting to provide an update on the 'Rate Your Landlord' scheme. The Chair emphasised that this was a significant agenda item and that the Committee was keen to explore how the Parish Council might support the initiative constructively.

Mrs Shepherd delivered a detailed presentation outlining the background, development and current status of the scheme. She explained that the platform

had been developed by Unipol, a national student housing charity, and was now operational across several northern university cities, including Durham. The scheme enables students to rate landlords across eight defined criteria, with provision for short written feedback and a right of response for landlords, supported by moderation safeguards.

Mrs Shepherd reported that Durham had successfully completed its pre-launch phase, reaching the threshold of 500 verified reviews by summer 2025, enabling the full public launch of the scheme in October 2025. She confirmed that the platform was now fully integrated into Durham University's Housing Hub and was being actively promoted to students as part of housing decision-making.

Members welcomed the scheme as a positive tool for improving transparency, standards and accountability within the private rented sector. Discussion focused on the Parish Council's potential role in supporting awareness of the scheme among residents and landlords, and in reinforcing consistent messaging around housing standards and responsible letting.

The Committee recognised that while regulatory powers lay elsewhere, the Parish Council could play a valuable role in advocacy, partnership working and signposting. Members expressed support for ongoing dialogue with Durham University and the Students' Union to align initiatives and share intelligence where appropriate.

The Committee formally welcomed the 'Rate Your Landlord' scheme and **agreed** to support its promotion in principle, to continue engagement with Durham University officers, and to explore appropriate opportunities for collaboration within the Parish Council's remit.

7. Consideration of future planting and ongoing maintenance priorities for 2026/27

The Committee considered future planting and maintenance priorities, with Councillor V. Ashfield providing a detailed update on recent planting activity in the viaduct area, including successful engagement with student volunteers. Councillor V. Ashfield reported that all remaining planters had been replanted for the current season, though concerns were raised regarding the disappearance of several planters from various locations.

Members discussed the likelihood that some planters may have been removed inadvertently by Durham County Council, and it was agreed that the Clerk would investigate this matter once precise locations had been confirmed.

The Committee further discussed the balance between new planting, replacement of missing planters and the importance of ongoing maintenance, particularly during summer months when student populations are reduced but permanent residents remain. The need for clearer maintenance planning and prioritisation of streets with year-round residents was emphasised.

The Clerk provided a detailed overview of planting budgets and raised concerns regarding the cost-effectiveness and quality of three-tier planters supplied via

Durham County Council. Members expressed dissatisfaction with the value for money and visual impact of these installations and supported the Clerk's recommendation to discontinue this arrangement.

The Committee discussed future priorities, including increased emphasis on bulbs, trees and locally managed planters, alongside clearer maintenance arrangements. Members supported the approach of reallocating planting budgets towards initiatives that deliver higher community and environmental value.

The Committee **agreed** that the Clerk would investigate missing planters, source costings for replacement planters, review planting budget allocations, and report back to the Committee with detailed proposals for consideration.

8. Any other business

The Chair briefly noted progress on the Blue Plaque Trail project and thanked Councillor V. Ashfield for her contribution to advancing the initiative.

The Chair also requested a short update from the Clerk regarding Citizens Advice and Groundwork projects, expressing concern regarding volunteer recruitment and organisational capacity. The Clerk undertook to provide further information outside the meeting.

No decisions were required under this item.

9. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted the dates of future meetings as follows:

- Tuesday 13 January 2026 at 10.30am via Zoom
- Tuesday 10 February 2026 at 10.30am via Zoom