



City of Durham Parish Council

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Date of Summons: 11th January 2024

SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council's Finance Committee:

Councillors A Doig, D Freeman, R Hanson, V Ashfield, H Weston and L Brown.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Finance Committee meeting** to be held in **Meeting Room 1.01. Clayport Library. Durham. DH1 1WA via Zoom at 11:00am on Wednesday 17th January 2024** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown.

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. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**
- 3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12th JUNE 2023**
- 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 5. REPORT ON THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COUNCIL FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24**
- 6. TO AGREE A RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-25**
- 7. TO AGREE A RECOMMENDED PRECEPT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-25**
- 8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 17th April 2024 at 11am
Wednesday 19th June 2024 at 11am

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Monday 12th June 2023 at 11:00am via Zoom.

Present: Councillors A Doig, V Ashfield, D Freeman, R Hanson and L Brown.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor A Doig was elected as Chair of the Finance Committee. Proposed by Councillor L Brown and seconded by Councillor V Ashfield.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor D Freeman was elected as Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee. Proposed by Councillor V Ashfield and seconded by Councillor R Hanson.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor H Weston.

4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor A Doig declared an interest in the grant application from Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the vote on this application.

Councillor L Brown declared an interest in the grant application from Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the vote on this application.

Councillor V Ashfield declared an interest in the grant application from St. Nicholas Church and took no part in the vote on this application.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12th JANUARY 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

7. UPDATE ON INTERNAL AUDIT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2022-23

The Clerk reported that the Internal Audit for financial year 2022-23 had now successfully passed completion without any issues raised. Members took the opportunity to thank the Parish Clerk for his work on this and also thanked Gordon Fletcher once more for his work and support with this audit.

8. REPORT ON THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COUNCIL FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

The Clerk provided the following report to Members on the current financial position of the Council for financial year 2023/24:

After a total expenditure of £190,934 during the financial year 2022-23, the Parish Council ended the financial year with £76,508 remaining in its account. This includes the Parish Council's reserves which remain at £45,000 – an appropriate level of reserves based on national guidance.

Our end of year cash-in the bank figure was £16,508 above what we had forecast but Committee needs to bear in mind that this includes receipt of a national lottery grant for Coronation events of £9,439 received in 2022-23 but for which the majority of expenditure will take place in this current financial year.

Circa £7,000 can either be reallocated or fall back into reserves therefore.

The remainder of the underspend came primarily from the Parish Council's Environment Committee. At the beginning of the financial year, the Committee agreed a budget of £42,500 towards projects and £30,883 has been spent in the previous financial year.

Inevitably this means that there were a number of overspends in certain budgets – namely staffing costs were higher than predicted owing to a larger than expected salary increase for all Green Book employees at a national level and the administration of the Council costs were also higher than predicted. This is not surprising giving rising costs our auditor assures us.

The balance sheet appears to indicate that there was also an overspend on events in the city but Members will need to bear in mind that we received a grant totalling £8,000 from our 4 County Councillors towards the Jubilee events last year.

In January 2022, Full Council agreed an ambitious programme of work for this financial year, with expenditure thereof totalling £242,166 with a contingency fund – in addition to reserves - of £15,000 for unforeseen expenditure during the year. As we've seen in all years of the Parish Councils existence, this is an important provision for the Parish Council.

The Parish Council's expenditure to date totals £33,942.50. We have a number of large bills set to come out – including the invoices for the enhanced policing service agreed in January this year.

In all but a few projects identified in this year's budget, I can see us spending all of the allocated funding.

Members **agreed** that, of the underspend from financial year 2022-23, £5,400 should be allocated towards grant funding and that the remainder should fall back into general reserves,

9. CONSIDERATION OF THE ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING TO LOCAL COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN THE PARISH FOR 2023/24

Members considered the grant applications received in this financial year's funding window and agreed the allocation of grant funding as follows:

Applicant	Project	Amount requested (£)	Amount agreed (£)
Alington House	We run 3 sessions of fitness sessions for the over 50's which has proved to be beneficial both mentally and physically. This also offers the chance to combat loneliness and isolation. To	2,500	2,500

	continue this very important project we need funding to pay our qualified fitness tutor.		
Climate Action Durham	We want to continue to meet monthly in the City of Durham to raise awareness of the urgent situation of the climate damage which has been and is being done by humanity on our environment and to explore the way by which we can individually and collectively contribute to limiting this damage.	1,500	500
Discovering Durham CIC	Discovering Durham's "Show Us Your Shelf" campaign is an innovative initiative aimed at encouraging people to support local businesses and embrace locally sourced products. The campaign invites participants to dedicate a shelf in their kitchen specifically for locally sourced items and then share a picture of their shelf, known as a "shelfie," on social media platforms. The primary goal of the campaign is to inspire individuals to incorporate more locally produced goods into their daily lives and to raise awareness about the importance of supporting local businesses. By dedicating a shelf to these products, participants showcase their commitment to the local economy and sustainable consumption. The act of sharing a shelfie not only serves as a personal expression of support but also has a broader impact. It acts as a catalyst for encouraging others to follow suit and create their own dedicated shelves. Through this collective sharing of how participants utilize the locally sourced products, the campaign aims to foster a sense of community and inspire a ripple effect of support for local businesses. By leveraging the power of social media and the visual appeal of shelfies, Discovering Durham hopes to create a widespread movement that highlights the benefits of buying locally sourced products. Ultimately, the "Show Us Your Shelf" campaign aims to strengthen the local economy, promote sustainable practices, and foster a sense of pride and connection within the community.	1,500	1,500
DMC 4 Durham CIC	Covid-19 followed by the cost-of-living crisis has had a long and lasting impact on small local independent businesses and families in Durham City. Businesses are seeing a vast reduction in footfall and people 'spending local' as families are increasingly watching their finances. We could like to create some free-standing community art installations on Market Hall stall roofs in collaboration with local artists/sculptors and primary schools in the area which will hopefully encourage families to visit and see how much Durham City centre has to offer. In	850	850

	addition to this, we would like to apply for funding for a hand truck/ sack barrow in order to support the operations of the market and to make this easier for staff on market days.		
Durham Fringe	All of our volunteers are local people who give up their time to support this community arts festival. In recognition of the hard work that is given freely and to give a sense of belonging to the group, Fringe gives each volunteer a T-shirt for when they are on duty but it is theirs to keep. At each of our venues we provide snacks and a non-alcoholic drink which is offered free of charge to volunteers. In addition, all volunteers are given free access to as many Fringe performances as they wish to see. Therefore, we are applying to the Parish Council for a contribution towards the costs of T-shirts and to cover the costs of refreshments and travel expenses when requested. Our aim is to enable local people to participate in a voluntary group and support residents who volunteer their free time	1,000	1,000
Lowes Barn Community Project CIO	Within the new Merryoaks Community Hall, we have the facilities for meetings, conferences and public lectures which require the use of modern audio-visual equipment. This is something we currently do not have and is a gap in the offering that we provide for the local community. We plan to buy two or three screens that will enable a presentation to be made and shared throughout the Hall making the experience more inclusive for all participants irrespective of their ability or location within the Hall. A grant from the Parish Council will enable us to offer a more complete package to groups meeting in the Hall to the benefit of the inhabitants of Durham City	5,000	5,000
Merryoaks WI	To purchase a receiver and possible second hand held microphone to compliment the equipment we already have to allow more flexibility and inclusion. To purchase a full Zoom license to allow us to continue when needed to have speakers from other parts of the country and to enable us to have hybrid meetings when required.	300	300
St. Cuthberts Church	Installation of a Baby Memorial, Installation of new signage, Renewal of footpaths, Professional Fees (architect and archaeologist).	2,000	2,000

St. Cuthberts Hospice	Many of our visitors still prefer to meet and visit guests outdoors to prevent the risk of infection. Our gardens continue to provide much needed sensory stimulation and therapeutic benefit to our patients and their families. It is important that we continue to maintain and rejuvenate the mature gardens we are most fortunate to offer. We are so grateful for the support of the City of Durham Parish Council and would use any subsequent funds to continue to improve accessibility around the Hospice grounds and enhance experience for all who visit our gardens through improvements and essential repairs. Your donation will be used to pay for new and replacement tools, equipment, plants and furniture. As a result of these funds and improvements, we will be able to remain a welcoming, peaceful and accessible environment for our patients, families and visitors, through innovation and repair. Over a 12-month period we expect that over 1,000 patients and their families will be able to enjoy the therapeutic value of nature within our grounds.	4,250	1,750
St Margaret Centre	The replenishment of consumable materials used in the craft room, woodworking, shop supplies and horticultural sections of the Centre.	5,000	3,000
St Nicholas Church	To help fulfil our aims of serving the community and acting as an eco-church we need to reclaim the church's graveyard which has been neglected (and desecrated) over the last 10 years. We want to turn it into a heritage rest and recuperation area potentially with mini-allotments for older residents to use and designated picnic and meeting areas and areas for rest and contemplation.	2,000	2,000
	Total	£25,900	£20,400

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

14th September 2023 at 11am

7th December 2023 at 11am

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

Signed,

**Chair of the Parish Council Finance Committee
(17th January 2024)**

ITEM 7: TO AGREE A RECOMMENDED PRECEPT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-25

Budget

Please refer to Item 6 for consideration of budget priorities for 2024/2025.

Information on Council Tax base

Council Tax base is calculated by taking the number of houses in the City of Durham Parish Council area, allocating a weight to them based on their council tax banding and adding up the total of the weighted households. For example, higher council tax band properties carry a higher weighting and lower council tax base properties carry a lower council tax weighting. The Council Tax Base can therefore fluctuate from year to year based on the number of properties in each area. For example, council tax base will increase if any new houses have been built and the occupants have started to pay council tax but may decrease if for example any houses have been demolished in an area or have changed their use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C4 or sui generis (non-tax paying Use Classes).

The 2024/25 Tax Base is 4,450.1. The 2023/24 City of Durham Parish Council Tax Base was calculated at 4,641.5. Our Tax Base has therefore decreased by 191.4

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant

The LCTRS grant payable to the City of Durham for 2024/25 is £8,437.00.

Precept request

The precept request must be submitted to Durham County Council by the end of January 2024.

The Parish Council's Band D precept charge is currently £52.17. Although the City of Durham Parish Council area has a high population, its tax income is lower than areas of similar size due to the significant number of properties exempt from Council tax because of their use as student accommodation. It is understood that this is the cause of the reduction in our Tax Base for 2024/25.

The Band D charge in the City of Durham parish area remains one of the lowest in County Durham.

Parish Council consultation

Between 27th November to the 5th January, the Parish Council carried out a public consultation exercise. This consultation focused on the work of the Parish Council to date, what residents viewed as their priorities for the parish area and how the Parish Council can best communicate the work it does in the community with local residents. The consultation also sought residents' views on whether they would be willing to pay a higher precept in the financial year 2024-25 in order to fund solutions to local issues.

A total of 29 responses have been received from residents of the parish to this consultation.

A summary of the responses received to each question is below:

How would you rate the City of Durham Parish Council's performance since it was founded in 2018? Please provide details.

From the 29 responses received to this consultation:

24 rated the performance of the Parish Council since 2018 as being either excellent or very good. Positive feedback in particular was received in relation to the Council acting on behalf of residents' concerns, the Council's work in planning and the work of our two Neighbourhood Wardens Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson.

3 respondents rated the performance of the Parish Council as being either good or OK. 2 respondents rated the performance of the Parish Council as being either 'not good or poor'.

In both cases where the response on the performance of the Parish Council has been either 'good to OK' or 'not good to poor', respondents have highlighted that their main concerns appear to be beyond the powers of the Parish Council to directly act on or general statements about issues such as studentification, the perceived state of the City centre, etc. have been included.

What would you most like to see the City of Durham Parish Council prioritise over the next year?

The main issues highlighted through this consultation were as follows (in order of priority):

- Addressing the studentification of the parish area
- Creating a more varied and vibrant high street
- Making the community safer and addressing anti-social behaviour such as noise and late-night anti-social behaviour.
- Improving the cleanliness and appearance of the parish area.
- Tackling car parking issues and the lack of car parking spaces for residents.
- Working to get Baths Bridge and the Leazes Road footbridges opened properly again

What do you feel are the additional issues in the City of Durham Parish area and would you be prepared to pay a small increase in the Parish Council's precept to fund solutions?

Additional issues highlighted through this consultation were as follows:

- Improving the air quality of the City centre.
- Ensuring historical aspects of the city are kept.
- Improving conditions for city retailers
- Addressing the anti-social behaviour and the general street scene.
- More events for families in the City centre.

From the 29 responses received to this consultation:

27 said that they would be willing to pay an increase in the precept.

2 said that they would not be willing to pay an increase in the precept.

What are the best ways for the Parish Council to keep residents updated on its work in the community? (For example, public meetings, website, newsletters...)

A mixed response was received to this particular question, with most respondents highlighting that use of electrical communications such as Facebook, the website and emails are low cost and efficient ways of communicating with residents.

Others preferred more public meetings, a Parish Council newsletter and more advertising in the local press.

Other matters

A full copy of all responses can be made available to Members upon request.