



City of Durham Parish Council

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Date of Summons: 16th June 2025

SUMMONS

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

Councillors S Walker, L Brown, E Hopgood, E Scott, V Ashfield and L Wilson.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Finance Committee meeting on Friday 20th June at 11:00am in Room 1.01 in Clayport Library, 8 Millennium Place, Durham. DH1 1WA** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown. The link to join this meeting is below:

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. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**
- 2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**
- 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**
- 5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14th FEBRUARY 2025**
- 6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 7. REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL AT THE START OF FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-26**
- 8. REPORT ON GRANT APPLICATIONS 2025-26**
- 9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Friday 14th February 2025 at 12:00pm via Zoom.

Present: Councillors A Doig (in the Chair), V Ashfield, J Ashby, L Brown and D Freeman.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley, Councillors C Lattin and S Walker and Prof. Steven Lindsay

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor H Weston.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15th JANUARY 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Professor Steven Lindsay advised that he was attending the meeting as a Member of the Elvet Residents Association who had a particular interest in Item 5 on the Agenda.

Steven advised that Elvet Residents Association are strongly in favour of a 20mph speed limit for the entire length of Church Street, not just the area around the school. Steven also advised that ERA would also very much like to see a one-way system implemented on Church Street.

Steven advised that ERA has three main concerns with the current proposal:

1. The positioning of the signs - ERA would like the proposed signs at both ends of Church Street, not just around the school.
2. ERA would also like the 20mph limit to be in effect throughout the day, not just during school drop-off and pick-up times.
3. Whilst ERA very much understands the budget constraints, Steven advised that the Association feels that the £28,000 price tag is too high.

Steven indicated that ERA would very much support the Parish Council in lobbying Government to enable more comprehensive and effective 20mph schemes across the country.

The Chair thanked Steven for his report to the Committee and for sharing ERA's views on this matter.

5. CONSIDERATION OF RECENT SECTION 106 APPLICATION - DCC TRAFFIC ASSETS - INSTALLATION OF A PART-TIME ADVISORY SCHOOL 20MPH SCHEME IN THE AREA OF ST OSWALD'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Members carefully considered the content of the application paperwork as well as Steven's report from the local Residents Association in the area. In agreeing to support

this application, Members unanimously agreed the following response to this application:

The Parish Council wishes to commend both Durham County Council and St Oswald's school for bringing forward this long-awaited initiative to improve pedestrian safety on Church Street. As the main route to and from the University's main campus as well as the location of the school along this road, Church Street is one of the busiest pedestrian streets in the City. The safety of school children and other pedestrians is of paramount importance and we fully support any measures which enhance road safety in our community.

Whilst the Parish Council has consistently advocated for a permanent 20mph speed limit running the entirety of Church Street, the Parish Council recognises the statutory and budgetary constraints which have influenced this proposal. In 2013, the Department for Transport provided revised guidelines on the Setting Local Speed Limits (DfT Circular 01/2013), encouraging traffic authorities to consider introducing more 20mph limits over time, and over a larger number of roads. However, it also advises that 20mph limits are most appropriate where the mean speed (85th percentile) is already at or below 24mph. At present, we understand that the mean speeds on Church Street exceed this limit and therefore a 20mph speed limit covering the entirety of Church Street would only be possible with further (costly) traffic calming measures.

Notwithstanding this, and in considering the existing road layout, comprising side roads, accesses, parking and restrictions, current pedestrian usage and vehicle movements, the Parish Council appreciates that the introduction of physical traffic calming features to slow traffic down would likely to be inappropriate as they are generally aimed at maintaining lower speeds where an excess problem is present.

Additionally, the Parish Council recognises that there are minimum length requirements for the implementation of a standalone speed limit and Church Street falls short of these requirements. Considering this, a legal permanent speed limit could only be implemented if it included a wider area and this would certainly impact traffic flow and emergency response times in these city centre locations.

In recognising these constraints on the local traffic authority, we would invite Durham County Council to join us in further lobbying central Government to ensure that all roads adjacent to primary schools can be designated as 20mph zones, that the minimum length requirements be reviewed and that appropriate funding is allocated to local authorities to achieve this vital safety improvement.

On the application itself, we understand that the costs originally associated with this scheme may have been reduced to circa. £20,000. Before final approval of this funding application, we would appreciate confirmation of the total amount of funding now being sought and would particularly welcome the use of solar-powered signage as opposed to signs that rely on power from the grid. A solar-powered solution aligns better with our environmental commitments and will contribute to reducing carbon emissions associated with the scheme's implementation.

The Parish Council also acknowledges concerns regarding the potential increase in emissions caused by vehicles slowing down and speeding up within the proposed advisory zone, particularly given that Church Street is already identified as an area of air quality concern. As such, the Parish Council is delighted to be proactively working with DCC's public transport team on its own Section 106 proposal to install new green roof bus shelters in the area. These shelters will play an important role in carbon capture and mitigating air quality issues. We look forward to submitting a funding bid for this initiative in due course and trust that Durham County Council will give this its full support.

We very much look forward to working with the County Council on the delivery of this proposal and would particularly be interested to learn more about how the effectiveness of this scheme is to be monitored once installed.

End of report

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Friday 20th June 2025 – 11:00am in the Parish Council office.

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
(20th June 2025)**

ITEM 7: REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL AT THE START OF FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-26

After a total expenditure of £263,296 in financial year 2024-25, the Parish Council carried £97,439 over to this current financial year (2025-26). In addition to this, £7,654 is to be refunded as part of a VAT rebate from expenditure incurred in 24-25 in this current financial year, resulting in a total of £105,093.

Of this £105,093:

- **£45,000** is held in general reserves.
- **£5,000** is held in election reserves.
- **£36,330** is presently ringfenced for the same project(s) to be carried over into financial year 25-26 as follows:
 - £15,000 from the staffing budget towards grant fundraising support (£5,000 already allocated).
 - £2,350 from the professional planning support (allocated to Article 4 report).
 - £8,263 from the planting budget (originally earmarked for the Market Place improvement project but used to reduce precept request for 25-26).
 - £4,878 from the Improving the River Wear project (additional £5,000 agreed in the budget for 25-26, of which £2,500 is allocated).
 - £3,839 allocated to Green Move Out (raised on the basis of this priority so must be attached to this – there will also be a further appeal later this financial year).
 - £2,000 from the emergency plan project (additional £2,000 agreed in the budget for 25-26).

On this basis and the understanding that each non-ring-fenced project/ priority is either removed or further budget was added for 25-26, £18,763 needs to either be reallocated or put into reserves. In agreeing its budget for 25-26 in January 25, the Parish Council provisionally proposed that £10,000 could be allocated towards the Operation Lentil budget (presently sitting at £40,000) but this is yet to be formally agreed by Full Council.

In agreeing its budget for financial year 2025-26, the Parish Council agreed an ambitious programme of work with a total precept request of £292,172.28. Copies of the Council's budget and strategy for 2025-26 have been circulated to all Members.

Our total income to date in 25-26 is £293,064.30 (including precept + £897 refund for the Battle of Neville's Cross leaflets (S106 funded project)).

Our total expenditure to date is £42,579.26 and all spends are within allocated budget headings.

The Parish Council has recently undergone a successful internal audit by Gordon Fletcher and once more the Parish Council has been commended for its excellent governance and procedures.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to consider the financial information provided as part of this report and agree a recommended reallocation of budgets as set out above, to be presented and agreed at Full Council.
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ITEM 8: REPORT ON GRANT APPLICATIONS 2025-26

Members are reminded that at the January (2025) meeting of the Full Parish Council, Councillors formally agreed to allocate £15,000 of the budget for 2025/26 towards grants for local and voluntary organisations, on the basis that:

- The project to be funded meets the aims and objectives of the Parish Council.
- Assistance will be given on the basis of need, merit and contribution to the local community.
- Applicants must clearly show how any assistance given will benefit the people living in the Parish or will benefit the environment of our Parish.
- Any assistance given will be subject to on-going monitoring and subsequent evaluation of the outcome of the grant.
- Organisations should not make a presumption that funding will continue on a year-to-year basis.

In accordance with the Parish Council's current grant awards policy, the City of Durham Parish Council provides grant funding to support the following aims:

- To enable local people to participate in voluntary groups and activities.
- To help the parishes' voluntary groups to improve their effectiveness.
- To ensure the provision of services, needed by the residents, via the voluntary sector.
- To support organisations which meet the needs of people experiencing social and economic difficulties.
- To ensure that there is equality of access and opportunity for all parishioners of City of Durham to the services it provides and funds.
- To improve or enhance the local environment.
- To achieve value for money.

The grant funding window opened on 1st April 2025 and this has been advertised on social media, the Parish Council's website and through direct e-mails.

Organisations were asked to apply by early June 2024 in order that the Finance Committee may consider this at its meeting in June and make a recommendation to Full Council in June. Once approved, all grant payments will be made at the end of June 2025. Members have been provided with the full details of all applications.

For ease of reference, the applicant, the amount requested from each applicant and a summary of each project is provided below:

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to consider the merits of each of the grant applications and to make a recommendation for each award to Full Council in June.
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Organisation	Project	Amount requested
Alington House	To re-establish a garden group within Alington House, growing fruits and vegetables which the volunteers can take home and encouraging wellbeing by working in the outdoors. Since Covid we had a volunteer project from Ingeus repair access and build a seating area which our users enjoy but many have expressed an interest in gardening again and we are looking for funds towards extra accessible planters (we had raised beds built but these are down steps that are uneven) and plants	£750
Artichoke	A grant from City of Durham Parish Council would enable us to engage Parishioners in a curator-led tour of the festival before it opens to the public, with opportunities to meet the creative team, learn about the artworks and celebrate Lumiere as a community. We will target communities who are underserved by creative activities and who face barriers to taking part, including low-income families. We have strong links with local schools and community groups, and we would work with City of Durham Parish Council to identify priority communities to engage in the tour. We will also work with the Parish Council to promote volunteering opportunities to Parishioners during the festival. Lumiere volunteers guide audiences and provide information about the artworks, meeting new people, developing their confidence, and gaining a sense of community pride and belonging.	£1,000
Durham Hospital Radio	The station has an item of equipment which urgently needs repairing at a cost of £1570. Also a contribution of £1430 against our annual running costs would be extremely beneficial.	£3,000
Durham Scratch Choir	New printer to print all the music sheets for our choir	£250

Durham Woodland Cemetery	Apart from a ring-fenced grant from Durham Crematorium Fund for 5 memorial benches for each of the glades in the cemetery our funds barely cover even our basic expenses (insurance etc). Our income prior to the covid pandemic came primarily from the hire of the lodge at the Woodland cemetery by families wishing to hold funeral services and memorials. Sadly, the lodge has suffered severe storm damage to the roof, for the repair of which we have been quoted around £7000. We are intending to apply to Point North for a grant to help with this repair. We will then be able once again to hire out the lodge to bereaved families as mentioned. As a newly formed group of trustees we are also looking at various ways whereby we can raise regular funds including a possible nominal annual subscription from our membership. In the meantime, we would like to promote the Cemetery and provide information leaflets for funeral Directors and the public. We are eager to attract volunteer working parties who would assist in the conservation of the area and keep it in good order. We would also like to improve the facilities offered by the lodge. Other than that, we depend upon donations and gift aid.	£500
Friends of Pelaw Woods	We require materials - wood, drains, tools. To date this year we have purchased wood, a pond liner, and new scythes. We also hire a contractor to cut the grass in autumn in specific locations. Over the last 4 years we have been spending donations generated by the former Chairman opening his private garden. These reserves are now spent. The current bank balance is £64. The proposed grant will fully fund us for the forthcoming 12 months.	£350
Seven Stories	The Tiger Who Came to Tea touring exhibition from Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books, delivers an unforgettable in-centre experience for children and their grown-ups — combining nostalgia, photo opportunities, and interactive fun. This will increase family footfall, dwell time, and social media buzz this summer. Supported by the Seven Stories unique story telling free to families throughout the day. We will also run book donations weekly whilst this exhibition is in Two Tales supporting books into communities.	£6,000

St. Nicholas Community Forum	SNCF DELI COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT: SNCF commenced a community garden project January 2025 – the SNCF Deli Community Garden Project. Our aim is to provide a space where the local community can work together to grow chemical free produce throughout the year and share gardening skills and knowledge. The area is inclusive, child friendly and supports the environment and wildlife. By May 2025 we have 15 regular gardeners, mostly novices, but also wider community support from many other people within the local area who get involved when they can, help as needed with larger jobs, give donations of tools, plants and advice. We promote the project through local forums to encourage other residents to get involved and have linked with the University and students are welcome to join when they can. The community garden has already become something more than a communal space to grow produce. It is flourishing into a space of wellbeing, creativity, growing social connections and friendships. There are opportunities for everyone involved to share and learn gardening, woodwork, produce growing, environment, nature and wildlife skills and knowledge. Together we have cleared the site and planted a large variety of vegetables and herbs, all are growing successfully. We plan to further develop the community garden; to maximise produce growing space and the potential for more members of the local community to be involved. We would like to apply for funding to purchase staging for the existing polytunnel in the garden (we are currently using makeshift shelves which limit the growing area), a greenhouse where we can grow more produce all year round and a small shed which will be custom made to be accessible and green, using reclaimed wood and a sedum roof. The shed will be used to safely store away tools under cover and resources that can be used by our community gardeners (seeds, gardening guides, etc). This will help us maximise use of the space we have. We are requesting support for Stage Two of the garden development – polytunnel staging, a greenhouse (which includes greenhouse structure, installation, materials to prepare the base, internal staging, automatic window open system and gutter and water butt to utilise rainwater), a small green roof shed and seed trays/plant pots for planting. The SNCF Deli Community Garden has Public	£2,964
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	Liability Insurance and comprehensive risk assessments for all activities. All necessary requirements are in place for student volunteering opportunities through Durham University volunteer platforms. We are a new member of Social Farms & Gardens and look forward to working towards their vision: 'People and communities reaching their full potential through nature-based activities as a part of everyday life' and have joined the RHS Grow With It national programme to get year-round community growing support.	
St Cuthbert's Hospice	Our gardens continue to be a focal point of the hospice and are enjoyed by our patients and visitors. 2025 is an extra special year because we have been chosen to be the recipient of the "Hospice Garden" which will be showcased at the Chelsea Flower Show in May. Afterwards it will be rebuilt in our grounds for the benefit and enjoyment of everyone who visits us. The additional garden will improve our grounds and continue to provide sensory stimulation and therapeutic benefits not only to our patients but to everyone who visits. The grant would be used to improve the site/garden and complete essential repairs which will contribute to our grounds being a welcoming and peaceful place for all who visit them. We anticipate at least 1000 would visit our gardens which includes patients, families, carers, health care professional, staff, volunteers and the public.	£4,250
St Margaret's Centre	To purchase IT equipment (3 x laptops) to help us deliver activities, training and support.	£1,047

St Oswald's Institute	Renovation of kitchen to include: isolation of gas supply; creation of serving hatch with food warmer below; provision of electric refreshment preparation and food reheating facilities, in line with C. of E. 2030 net zero target, for e.g. providing soup and Warm Space, and other community functions.	£5,000
	Total:	£25,111