



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

Date of Summons: 8th January 2026

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 Wednesday 14th January 2026 at 11:00am via Zoom** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown. The link to join this meeting is below:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87507166389>

Meeting ID: 875 0716 6389

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 19th NOVEMBER 2025**
- 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 5. REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**
- 6. REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY CENTRE SUPPORT WORKING GROUP**
- 7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Wednesday 19th November 2025 at 11:30am at Clayport Library. 8 Millennium Place. Durham. DH1 1WA

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

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Councillors R Cornwell, C Lattin and P Layton.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor L Wilson.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10th SEPTEMBER 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Committee received and noted the Clerk's detailed report on the current financial position of the Parish Council, which was confirmed as accurate up to 30 October 2025, with subsequent significant payments having occurred in early November. The Clerk advised that, notwithstanding these later transactions, the overall financial position of the Council remained stable and robust

It was reported that the Parish Council held a combined balance of £249,247.58 in its current accounts at the reporting date. This balance reflected year-to-date receipts totalling £312,362, the majority of which derived from the annual precept of £292,167. Additional income had been received from landlord contributions, grant funding, bank interest, and a VAT refund amounting to £7,654.87. Members noted with appreciation the work undertaken to secure these additional income streams.

The Clerk reminded Members that earlier in the financial year the Council had transferred £70,000 of its reserves into a Lloyds Bank community savings account. This account attracts a daily interest rate of 2.73%, which is projected to generate approximately £22,000 in interest income over a twelve-month period. This action was noted as a positive measure to strengthen the Council's financial resilience and maximise returns on reserves.

On the expenditure side, it was reported that total spend as at 30 October 2025 amounted to £164,986 across all cost centres, representing 43.9% of the approved annual budget at that point. It was further explained that certain budget headings, including staffing, administrative costs, and events, were already between 80% and 100% committed, reflecting the timing and nature of those activities. The net position

at that date showed income exceeding expenditure by £147,377, which had strengthened the Council's general reserve position.

Members were advised that, following the circulation of the agenda, additional payments totalling just over £36,000 had been processed in early November. These included election costs of just under £25,000 and a forthcoming invoice of £10,000 relating to the Council's contribution to the Safety of Women initiative at the Night hub. Taking these payments into account, the Clerk confirmed that expenditure against the annual budget had now increased to approximately 54%, with further increases anticipated before the end of the financial year.

The Committee noted that both the internal and external audits for the year had been completed earlier in the year with no issues raised. The auditors had again commended the Parish Council for its strong financial management and governance arrangements.

Looking ahead, the Clerk reported a projected total spend for the current financial year of £327,058, equating to just over 90% of the approved budget. Ring-fenced income totalling £25,638 was identified, together with other legally or contractually restricted funds, including allocations for beacon events, fundraising support, election reserves, and specific project funding. Subject to current assumptions, this projection would result in an estimated headroom of £10,436 at year end.

The Committee discussed the implications of recent election costs exceeding the original provision and noted that the remaining election reserve would be limited. It was acknowledged that potential future by-elections could place significant financial pressure on the Council, particularly in larger wards. Members therefore recognised the importance of reviewing and, where possible, strengthening the election reserve as part of prudent financial planning.

The Clerk further outlined considerations relating to cash management and the holding of funds across different banking institutions. It was noted that £65,000 continued to be held in a NatWest account established on auditor advice during the COVID period, although this account currently attracted no interest. Members supported the principle of developing a clearer policy on cash holdings, balancing financial security with the opportunity to earn interest, and agreed that further advice from the auditors should be sought before any significant reallocation of funds.

In conclusion, the Committee formally noted that the Parish Council remained in a sound financial position, with healthy cash balances, adequate reserves, and no immediate financial pressures identified. Members agreed that the position should continue to be monitored closely, particularly in relation to election reserves, interest income, and projected year-end headroom, and that these matters would be revisited later in the financial year as more precise information became available

6. BUDGET AND PRECEPT SETTING PROCESS

The Clerk reminded Members that there is a need for the Parish Council to have agreed its budget and to submit its precept request for the forthcoming Financial Year by the end of January 2026.

In order to support this work, the Clerk highlighted that all of the Parish Council's Committees have now met and have submitted the following budget proposals for their work from April 2026.

The Chair highlighted that Members began the process of reviewing the City of Durham Parish Council's medium-term plan earlier this year. Following an online questionnaire together with an informal strategy session in July 2025 as well as a Members' Away Day

in September 2025, Members have set out a number of key priorities for the Council moving forward

Members also considered the budget requests from each of the Parish Council's Committees as well as the financial implications for any changes to the precept. Members unanimously **agreed** to recommend to Full Council an increase in the precept in line with the current inflation rate. As such, the Band D charge would increase by £2.41 and would therefore become £65.61. This would generate a total precept of £307,632.168 and would provide a slight surplus (based on the proposed budget in Item 8) of £2,532.17.

In turn, Members also **agreed** the following recommended budget to Full Council in November:

Budget for 2026/27 (expenditure only)

Planning and Licensing Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Representing the parish on planning and licensing matters	
Professional support in responding to planning applications and licensing hearings	£5,000.00
Review of County Durham Plan policies	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Improving the licensed economy	
Enhanced drug searching scheme with Durham Police	£600.00
PRIORITY 3: Tackling shoplifting and anti-social behaviour	
Best Bar None	£2,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£9,600.00

Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Noise abatement	
<i>What to do if you have a local issue in Durham leaflet...</i>	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Clean Air, Clean and Green City	
Planting budget	£20,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Emergency plan	
Community emergency plan – emergency boxes	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Improving the appearance of our City	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA	£13,000.00
PRIORITY 5: Promoting the heritage of our parish area	
Heritage project	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 6: Enhancing the River Wear	
Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust (Education and INNs)	£2,500.00
PRIORITY 7: Improving housing standards for students	
Rate Your Landlord annual awards scheme	£500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£45,000.00

Business Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Increasing footfall through events	
Hosting events in Durham City (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, D-Day Anniversary, miscellaneous).	£45,000.00
Sponsoring community events with local businesses – a specific focus on improving the early evening economy	£15,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Improving shop frontages in the City	

Christmas Frontage Awards (previously under Environment Committee)	£1,500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£61,500.00

Finance Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Improving community facilities	
Community centres/ facilities fund	£40,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£40,000.00

Full Council

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Administration of Parish Council	
(Office rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website and other expenditure)	£22,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Training of staff and Councillors	
Training budget	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 3: supporting local community and voluntary organisations	
Grants budget	£15,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Staffing costs	
Clerk salary (including salary, pension, NI on costs)	£90,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£129,000.00

Contingencies	£15,000.00
Election reserve	£5,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£20,000.00

Committee	Cost (£)
Planning and Licensing Committee	£9,600.00
Environment Committee	£45,000.00
Business Committee	£61,500.00
Finance Committee	£40,000.00
Full Council	£129,000.00
Contingencies and election reserves (to be added)	£20,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2025/26 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£305,100.00

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 14th January 2026 at 11:00am via Zoom.

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
(14th January 2026)**

ITEM 6: REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY CENTRE SUPPORT WORKING GROUP

Following the local elections in May 2025, the City of Durham Parish Council reaffirmed its commitment to supporting community centres and facilities as a key strategic priority for the 2025–2029 term of the Council. In recognition of the vital role that community centres play in providing inclusive, accessible and welcoming spaces for residents, Members agreed to establish a Community Centres Support Working Group to help shape a structured and sustainable programme of support.

As part of this commitment, Members have agreed to allocate a dedicated fund for each year of the current Parish Council term to support community centres across the parish.

To inform the design of this programme, the Parish Council issued an invitation in October 2025 to all relevant community facilities within the parish to submit an Expression of Interest. This process was intended to gather high-level information on governance, facilities, development aspirations and barriers to growth, rather than detailed funding bids, and to ensure that future support is targeted, proportionate and aligned with Parish Council priorities, including sustainability and the climate emergency.

All eligible community centres/ facilities were contacted and a total of eight Expressions of Interest were received by the closing date. The overall standard of submissions was very strong, reflecting the commitment and ambition of local organisations. Following a detailed assessment by officers and the Working Group, three applications have been selected to progress directly to the next stage of the application process. These are St. Giles Church, Waddington Street United Reformed Church, and Alington House Community Association.

The Working Group was particularly impressed by these applications due to their clear focus on long-term sustainability and a demonstrable commitment to addressing the climate emergency, including proposals to improve energy efficiency, reduce running costs, and secure the long-term viability of their buildings. Progression to the next stage reflects the strength and merit of these submissions and will allow for a more detailed assessment through a full application process, with funding to be allocated on a competitive basis.

Each successful organisation has been contacted and asked to submit a formal application, as agreed by the Working Group, by no later than Thursday 19th February 2026.

The remaining Expressions of Interest were not progressed at this stage; however, applicants have been formally notified and encouraged to reapply in future rounds. They have also been signposted to the Parish Council's Small Grants Scheme and to alternative external funding opportunities, ensuring continued engagement and support beyond this programme.

In addition, the Working Group gave specific consideration to the Expression of Interest submitted by the City Theatre. While the Working Group recognised the exceptional quality and ambition of the submission, it concluded that the scale and nature of investment required to secure the long-term future of the building exceeds the scope of the Community Centres Support Fund.

The Working Group is therefore proposing that the Parish Council supports the City Theatre through an alternative budget, by providing access to a grant fundraiser/bid writer to help the organisation secure substantial external funding from regional and

national sources. This approach would offer meaningful and targeted support while remaining consistent with the intended purpose of the community centres funding programme.

Members are reminded that the Parish Council has agreed a fund to support its fundraising activities and it is recommended that part of this fund be used towards financing such a fundraiser to look at funds such as the National Lottery and Cultural Growth Fund.