

City of Durham Parish Council

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SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council: Councillors E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, L Brown, N Brown, A Doig, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, R Hanson, G Holland, C Lattin, R Ormerod, E Scott, S Walker and H Weston.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Meeting of the Council** to be held in the **Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF** on **Wednesday 25th September 2024 at 7:00pm** 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. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**
- 3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25TH JULY 2024**
- 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 5. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- **Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 12th and 29th July and 9th and 23rd August 2024**

Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:

<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/planning-committee/>

- Report on the recent project to assess all Non-Designated Heritage Asset within the Conservation Area – verbal update.
- Response to the recent NPPF changes consultation
- Report on freehold housing in the parish area and estate charges

- **Environment Committee minutes from meetings held on 9th July 2024**

Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:

<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/environment-committee/>

- Proposal to launch a new Durham Tidy Gardens initiative.
- Proposal to request that BT remove or improve its telephone boxes within the Conservation Area.

- **Finance Committee minutes from meetings held on 18th June 2024.**

Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here:

<http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/finance-committee/>

- 6. CHAIR'S UPDATE**
The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 25th July 2024.
- 7. TO REVIEW THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE**
- 8. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCIL'S CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE**
- 9. PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES IN THE CITY**
- 10. COMPLETION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S EXTERNAL AUDIT 2023/24**
- 11. REPORT ON PLANNING FOR THE REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2024 EVENT.**

12. REPORT(S) FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- Report by Councillor J Ashby on the meeting of the University's student housing management group held on 6th September 2024
- Report by Councillor C Lattin on the most recent meeting of Durham University's Community Engagement Task Force.

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 25th July 2024 at 7:00pm in the Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF.

Present: Councillors S Walker (in the **Chair**), E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, N Brown, A Doig, D Freeman, G Holland, C Lattin, R Ormerod and E Scott.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and 2 members of the public.

1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors L Brown, R Hanson, H Weston and R Friederichsen.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor E Scott declared an interest in the item relating to Visit County Durham and took no part in the discussion or vote on this item.

Councillor S Walker declared an interest in the report from Merryoaks Community Hall on their recent grant award under item 7 and took no part in the discussion on this item.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 27TH JUNE 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2024 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor G Holland presented the minutes from the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings held on 14th and 28th June 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee reports.

Proposed joint project with Durham County Council on producing an evidence-base for non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) within the Durham City Conservation Area.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council is working together with Durham County Council on the production of a Conservation Area Management

Plan. As part of this, the Parish Council is part-funding the officer time required to produce this Plan.

As part of this work, the Clerk advised that Lee Hall needs to produce an evidence base for the existing list of non-designated heritage assets within the Durham City Conservation Area. The Clerk advised that most of these assets have been identified over time either through the day-to-day planning process, the creation of the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan or the production of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal in 2016.

The Clerk highlighted that there are currently 314 such assets on the existing list and each one of these needs to be assessed via a survey, with the asset being scored based on a set of criteria. There is also a need to provide an up-to-date photo of the asset itself.

The Clerk advised that a copy of all of these assets has been provided along with this Agenda for Members' consideration. These do not include NDHAs identified outside of the Conservation Area (such as the Hill colleges) nor those assets identified through the local list project, from which surveys already exist from those who nominated each asset.

The Clerk advised that, due to current resourcing issues, it is not possible for Lee and DCC's Conservation team to carry out this work alone and they have therefore reached out to the Parish Council as well as colleagues within the City of Durham Trust to ask for our support in producing this evidence base.

The deadline for completing this survey work is the end of August/ beginning of September 2024.

Councillor G Holland advised that there is clearly a need for additional volunteers to be identified to support this project and it is hoped that circa. 30 volunteers in total would make this task more achievable.

Councillor A Doig and the Chair particularly expressed a concern about the likely administrative workload implications for the Clerk on this project.

The Clerk highlighted that Sue Childs had been actively engaged in this project from the beginning and has indicated her willingness to support the Clerk in the administrative side of this work.

Councillor J Ashby highlighted the significant work this project would involve and advised that he would support contracting Sue's services on this project, particularly highlighting the excellent work Sue did on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Members unanimously **agreed** to work positively with Durham County Council and colleagues on the production of this evidence base and to take all actions necessary to support the production of these surveys within the timeframe identified above.

As part of this, it was also proposed and unanimously **agreed** to set aside a budget for paying Sue should she wish to be paid for her support, in order to reduce the work implications on the Clerk.

Response to Durham County Council's Regulation 7 Direction renewal application for the Durham City Conservation Area.

Members noted the recent application for the renewal of DCC's Regulation 7 Direction and the ongoing consultation relating to this. Members expressed their full support for this Direction and unanimously **agreed** the following response to this consultation:

Response to Regulation 7 Direction consultation

The City of Durham Parish Council writes to express its full support for the Local Authority's renewal application for the Direction made under Regulation 7. This Direction covers part of the Durham City Conservation Area and removes deemed consent rights for the display of estate agents' boards falling within Class 3A of Schedule 3, Part 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

Background to the current Direction

The current Direction runs for a period of 5 years and we understand expires in October 2024. Although the original consultation on the current Direction pre-dated the formation of the City of Durham Parish Council, we are aware of the very substantial work by the Local Authority, the Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum and many others prior to the introduction of this Direction to address this issue and the Parish Council fully supports this Direction in its entirety.

In particular, prior to its report setting out the case for this Direction to Durham County Council's Cabinet in February 2018¹, the Local Authority had sought to tackle this issue with a Voluntary Lettings Board Code (2011-2018). Whilst the introduction of the Voluntary Code affected a limited improvement to the situation, it was not considered successful in addressing the issue.

Between 9th January 2017 and 17th February 2017, the Local Authority undertook an extensive public consultation on options to address this issue. A total of 104 responses were received at that time, of whom 90% considered To Let Boards to be a significant problem within the City with only 2% considering there to be no issue at all. 87% of those who responded also considered option 3 (introduction of the Regulation & Direction) to be the preferred solution with only 3% considering that the continuation of the current Voluntary Code as being an effective solution.

Prior to the introduction of the Direction, there had been an excessive proliferation of estate agents' boards in areas of the City where former family homes have been

¹ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/25290/Proposals-to-restrict-Letting-Boards-in-areas-of-high-number-student-properties-Report-to-Cabinet-7-February-2018/pdf/LettingBoardsReportCabinet7Feb2018.pdf?m=1531308504553>

*transformed into Houses in Multiple Occupation (see **Appendix 1**), resulting in a transient population with frequent letting and sale of units.*

Whilst To Let boards act as a direction to students of property available to let for future terms, they also promote high proportions of multi occupied properties available in the central area of the City which is considered by residents to be detrimental to the enjoyment of permanent residents and also to tourists visiting the beautiful asset of the famous Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site and its surrounding complementary features.

The area covered by this Direction forms part of Durham City Centre Conservation Area within which there are also a number of listed buildings. As such, the Local Authority is under a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of these assets. The untidy and cluttered street scene resulting from the proliferation of estate agents' boards certainly detracted from the character and appearance of the area at certain times of the year prior to 2019.

Whilst a range of options to address this issue were considered by the Local Authority in 2018, the existing Direction has been successful in keeping streets in our City clear of these estate agents' boards. Residents indicate to us that there has been a marked improvement in the visual appearance of these areas and indeed there is now an almost total absence of estate agents' To Let Boards year-round within the City.

Taking the above into account, there is clear evidence of the Direction working. This is acknowledged in many of the representations we receive from those locally who strongly support the renewal of the Direction. Substantial satisfaction is expressed by residents in the notable improvement to the character and appearance of the City since the Direction has been in force.

Policy context

Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed, and explains that the consent process for advertisements should be operated in a way that is simple, efficient and effective.

Paragraph 042 of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) explains what is required for a Direction under Regulation 7 to be made. It states that 'it must be clear that one or more of the deemed consent provisions has had such adverse effects on the amenity or public safety of the area that there is no prospect of an improvement in the quality of the advertising in a locality, unless the local planning authority are given the power to control that particular type of advertisement.'

Policy 29 of the County Durham Plan (CDP) is considered relevant and relates to Sustainable Design stating that proposals should ensure that adverts and signage

are not detrimental to visual amenity or highway safety and sited in inappropriate locations.

The application to renew this Regulation 7 Direction is considered to comply with the NPPF. Moreover, the continued requirement that all To Let boards within the designated area need express consent from the Local Authority is considered reasonable. The removal of high concentrations of To Let Boards which have evidently been detrimental to visual amenity within the City also accords with the aims of adopted local development plan policy.

'Deemed consent' rights

The deemed consent rights it is sought to remove do have some restrictions. Only one board is permitted to be displayed per property and they are not permitted to be displayed for more than 14 days following the sale or lease of the property. However, even with these limitations the Parish Council considers that, in areas of high concentrations of HMOs, even the lawful display of boards will undoubtedly result in a cluttered and unsightly street scene.

Powers do exist for Local Authorities to secure prosecutions in such cases. However, not only is this time consuming but it can be difficult to secure prosecutions in those cases where it is not always known when a lease for each individual bedspace within a property has been concluded. This being so, it seems that only the renewal of the Direction will protect the character and appearance of the areas in question from the harmful effects and a proliferation of estate agents' boards.

Conclusion

The areas covered by the Direction are ones where the preservation or enhancement of their character or appearance should be given substantial weight. Harm to their character and appearance has arisen in the past, but has been prevented by this Direction since its introduction in 2019. To prevent a recurrence of harm, we fully support the renewal of this Direction without delay.

End of response

• Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the minutes from the Environment Committee meeting held on 11th June 2024. There were no queries from Members on these minutes.

• Business Committee

Councillor R Ormerod presented the minutes from the Business Committee meeting held on 21st May 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor R Ormerod moved on to Committee reports.

Proposal by Visit County Durham on joint project for Travel Trade promotion

Following the review of the Parish Council's budget aimed at providing professional support for local businesses, the Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council's Business Committee has been working to establish a different approach to the way the Parish Council markets the City centre, with a preference to move away from traditional social media marketing and more focus on driving visitor numbers directly.

The Clerk advised that Visit County Durham is the official tourism management organisation for the region and the Parish Council's Business Committee is proposing a partnership with VCD as this presents an opportunity to amplify our marketing efforts effectively.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has recently supported VCD and Durham County Council in its efforts to achieving 'coach friendly status' for Durham City and the result of this application is expected imminently.

Councillor R Ormerod advised that the Business Committee wishes to take this further and work collaboratively with VCD on driving additional footfall to the City directly through a travel trade promotion and recently met with Sarah Johnson the Marketing and Communications Manager at Visit County Durham to review these opportunities.

The Clerk highlighted that Visit County Durham is able to offer the following package for advertising Durham City through its travel trade promotion:

- Discover Durham annual membership, invitation to meetings, social media support
- Dedicated page on the Discover Durham website, featuring content on retail, food and drink and events
- Key City events featured in the What's On section
- Dedicated Durham City solus e-newsletter to groups and travel trade database
- Dedicated Christmas Festival solus e-newsletter to groups and travel trade database
- Dedicated Christmas Festival or general banner advert on DiscoverDurham.co.uk x 2 months
- Dedicated Christmas Festival or general e-newsletter banner advert x 2 months
- Joint funding of an advertorial in one of the travel trade publications
- Joint funding of a media visit (potentially linked to the Fringe)

The total cost for this package is £3,000 and this is well within the defined budget for this priority.

The Clerk advised that the Business Committee has also clarified that the promotion does not necessarily need to focus on Christmas events solely and this can be tailored according to our preferences, with the caveat that there is approximately 9-12 months of lead-in time required in advance of any events we'd like to see visitors coming to the City for.

At its most recent meeting, the Business Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council acceptance of this funding.

Members expressed a desire not to focus solely on Christmas events but rather to focus on events during the Spring/Summer which were footfall dependent, e.g. the Fringe Festival.

Councillor A Doig advised that he could not support this as he felt that VCD has more resources to deliver this type of activity already rather than asking the Parish Council for funding.

Members **agreed** (9 votes in favour, 1 against) to provide £3,000 towards the travel trade promotion alongside Visit County Durham, as set out in the report provided.

Proposal from Durham BID on proposed improvements to Silver Street/ Fowler's Yard

Through its association with Durham BID, the Clerk advised that the Parish Council's Business Committee is aware of a recent meeting with Silver Street businesses with the Durham BID board regarding their concerns relating to the poor street scene and visual appearance of Silver Street.

In a joint meeting with the BID, businesses asked that the BID and other partners work to improve the street scene and also support initiatives such as events to drive additional footfall.

In addition, the Clerk advised that businesses raised concerns about anti-social behaviour, nuisance begging and non-paying customers asking to use the premises toilets and the business not being aware of where to signpost these individuals to the nearest public toilets. On these latter issues, the Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council is funding additional Neighbourhood Wardens and Police for the City centre, the Council has also produced an evidence base in favour of the proposed Public Space Protection Order against anti-social behaviour and begging in the City centre and is presently producing a City Safety and Wellbeing card which includes details of all public toilets in the City.

The Clerk advised that Durham BID has reached out to the Parish Council for financial support on an initiative to fund improvements to premises frontages and the entrance to Fowler's Yard from Silver Street (alley running next to the Fancy Dress store on Silver Street).

Members are aware of the substantial ongoing work to improve the waste situation and general appearance of Fowler's Yard by the Parish Council and it is positive news to be aware that there are additional efforts by Durham BID to improve one of the access routes into the Fowler's Yard area.

Durham BID is also looking at introducing bunting to Silver Street as well as providing silk floral displays to shop frontages.

The Clerk advised that the premises the BID is looking to introduce this type of display to include: Uno Momento, Tortilla, Holland and Barrett, Kokoro, Cafe Nero, Vodaphone, Making Faces, Faru, Fusha, Nanakeet, Grape Tree Feed Good Food, Coviello, Moon, T4, Treats, Everyday Food and Durham Gin.

The total cost for providing this type of display is £10,600 (+ VAT) and Durham BID has asked if the Parish Council would be willing to make a financial contribution to this project for a display over the summer holidays.

The BID has assured the Council that the installation of these displays does not involve drilling or any permanent building damage.

The Clerk highlighted that there is £4,000 remaining in the Parish Council's budget on improving Fowler's Yard (previously agreed as part of a £10,000 budget to improve public toilets). £6,000 of this funding is already committed to the City Theatre project which begins in mid-August.

Councillors C Lattin and V Ashfield advised that they could not support this proposal, particularly in reference to the use of fake/ silk/ plastic florals to shop frontages. Councillor C Lattin felt that this would be inappropriate particularly given the need for more real planting and greenery in this part of the City.

Councillor V Ashfield felt that the lifespan of this type of material would be very short indeed and would look out of place in this historic street, particularly during the Winter.

Councillors A Doig and E Scott advised that they felt that funding should instead be directed to fencing off the waste bins in Fowler's Yard which is in a terrible condition. The Clerk and Councillor E Ashby highlighted the many difficulties with this arrangement and the fact that the landowner is a private landlord seeking to develop this site.

The Chair echoed the concerns of Councillors V Ashfield and C Lattin on this proposal.

Members **agreed** that they would be keen to carry out some works to improve this street, particularly in recognition of the concerns from local businesses. However, it was unanimously **agreed** not to pursue the proposed silk floral displays, set out in this report. Instead, Members unanimously **agreed** to delegate to the Clerk this fund and to work proactively with the BID on a suitable alternative scheme to improve Silver Street.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 27th June 2024 as follows:

The Chair began by wishing everyone attending this year's Durham Fringe a most enjoyable Festival. The Chair remarked that it is really wonderful to see this arts festival in our City once again. To think that this event started life as a kitchen table idea only a few years ago and has now grown to 90 shows across 8 venues in our City in such a short space of time is really amazing!

The Chair reported that the event has already sold over 6,000 tickets. A new development for this year has been "Fringe Week" - a range of offers and discounts for audiences, performers, volunteers and crew - with the aim of extending dwell time in the city, driving up spend and creating a sense of festival feel and buzz. This has got off to a great start this year, and has significant potential to grow in future years.

The Chair offered many thanks to Stephen and Suzanne Cronin, the Fringe Board and the 100+ volunteers this year who have made this event happen.

Equally, the Chair offered a very big thanks to the organisers of the Durham Brass Festival and Durham Miner's Gala in the City too and remarked that it was really wonderful to see these annual events return and to see so many families enjoying themselves throughout the events in the sunshine. The Chair remarked that these events really add to the atmosphere and vibrancy of our City. The Chair expressed the hope that the additional footfall generated by these events translates to more cash behind the tills at our many great businesses.

The Chair also advised that she enjoyed seeing the thousands of runners being cheered on by crowds lining the Durham City run last Thursday. The sense of camaraderie and positivity was amazing and the Chair expressed the hope that lots of money is raised for each of the charities represented at the race.

The Chair advised that she particularly welcomed the news in today's Advertiser that STACK are committing to improving their frontage. The Chair advised that she was aware that the BID had been liaising closely with the company and that our MP has also urged them to act on this as soon as possible. The current frontage is really detracting from the street scene and sense of place in our historic Market Place and Silver Street.

The Chair offered her congratulations to the Citrus Group on gaining planning consent for the new Prince Bishops Shopping Centre. The Chair took the opportunity to thank John Ashby, who spoke on behalf of the Parish Council and to Councillor David Freeman for his remarks too. The Chair remarked that her main takeaway from the Committee hearing was to see the Local Planning Authority throw out the absurd student numbers purported by the applicant in order to demonstrate a need for additional student accommodation. That said, the Chair expressed her serious disappointment to see the Committee approve the scheme with a fraction of the Section 106 monies for open space enhancement offered by the applicant. The Chair expressed that the agreed sum was an insult and that she felt she could not conclude otherwise that planners had sold the City short to the tune of over £500,000.

The Chair offered her thanks to Councillor David Freeman for his ongoing work to ensure enforcement of the Traffic Regulation Order in the Market Place and Elvet Bridge. The Chair advised that she understood that there has been further enforcement operations involving DCC and the Police. The Chair expressed her gratitude to the Clerk for arranging a photograph with Parish Councillors last month and expressed that this operation was a real eye-opener of the extent of this problem.

The Chair took the opportunity to wish Nick Malyan well in his future role as Chief Executive of Culture Sunderland after the surprise announcement that he will be leaving his role at Redhills. The Chair remarked that Nick has been a tremendous friend to the Parish Council and this is a tremendous loss to our City. The Chair advised that it has been a delight to work with Nick on so many projects over the years. The Chair wished his successor well in seeing through the completion of the redevelopment of the Miner's Hall.

On the matter of enforcement, the Chair remarked that she was thoroughly appalled to hear the news that 114 drivers were arrested during the Euros as part of a targeted drink-driving enforcement operation organised by our Police and Crime Commissioner. The Chair thanked Joy Allen for arranging this and expressed the hope that this serves as a deterrent to anyone getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol.

The Chair thanked the Clerk, DCC Highways and Visit County Durham on their work to secure the Coach Friendly Status Accreditation for the City – now one of only 3 areas across the county to have achieved this accolade – the Chair expressed the hope that this sends a huge message nationwide to coach operators that the City is open and welcoming for their business. The Chair expressed that this is a real triumph for our visitor economy and we hope this bears fruit for years to come.

Finally, the Chair reminded Members that the Council does not sit during August and wished all Members and the Clerk a most enjoyable and relaxing holiday season. The Chair advised that the Clerk will be taking some much-needed holiday time over August – exact dates of which will be circulated in due course.

7. REPORT ON GRANT FUNDING IMPACT FROM 2023-24

The Clerk reminded Members that in June 2023 the Parish Council agreed to support local voluntary and community organisations in the parish with a grant award. All applications were considered in line with the Parish Council's agreed Grant Awards policy and all successful organisations were advised accordingly of the outcome of their applications.

The Clerk advised that, under the terms of the Council's Grant Awards policy, organisations have up until June 2024 to spend the funds as per their original application. The Clerk advised that he continues to monitor progress on each application and had brought this report to Council in order to allow Members to consider the impact this funding has had on partner organisations.

Members very much welcomed this report as a further example of the positive impact and work of the Parish Council, supporting organisations who help some of the most vulnerable residents, who help improve the public realm in the parish and who help to make the parish an exceptional place to live, visit and work.

It was noted that a number of organisations had not yet responded to the request for a report and therefore it was unanimously **agreed** that the Clerk should write

to each of these organisations once more reminding them of their responsibility and agreement to submit such a report.

8. COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION EXPANSION CONSULTATION

The Clerk highlighted the ongoing consultation relating to the expansion of community water fluoridation in the North East of England.

The Clerk advised that this consultation seeks views on a proposal by the previous Government to request Northumbrian Water Limited, to enter into new fluoridation arrangements, and to vary existing agreements, in order to expand community water fluoridation schemes across several parts of the North East of England, including the City of Durham parish area.

The Clerk highlighted that the consultation material indicates that this is because of the significant and long-standing inequalities in the region and this formed part of the previous Government's plan to improve dental health.

In considering this proposal, Members acknowledged the Government's commitment to improving dental health and the wellbeing of communities. In particular, Members welcomed the Government's pledge to create 700,000 additional urgent dental appointments per year and recruit new dentists in underserved areas. It was agreed that this critical work is all the more urgent given the recent report by the Healthcare Watchdog which highlights the difficulties for patients accessing dentistry services across County Durham

The Clerk highlighted the recent correspondence from the "County Durham Against Fluoridation" group to Members and Members agreed that this is a hugely polarising issue. As such, the Members agreed that there is a need for a wider and more comprehensive public consultation on this issue.

Councillor R Ormerod objected to the proposal as he felt this translated to mass medication and this was seconded by Councillor C Lattin.

Councillor E Ashby highlighted that there is a legal obligation for the Government to monitor health impacts of water fluoridation schemes every 4 years, with the next monitoring review taking place in 2026. The health monitoring report for England 2022 looked at the prevalence and severity of dental caries in 3 to 5 year-old children and hospital admissions for removing teeth due to decay in children and young people.

As such, Councillor E Ashby proposed that the Parish Council responds to this consultation requesting that this proposal be delayed until after the 2026 monitoring review has been completed.

Councillor E Ashby further proposed that the Parish Council asks that the Government directs all resources associated with the expansion of this community fluoridation scheme to addressing the serious backlog in NHS dentistry appointments, expanding complementary alternative strategies aimed at reducing

tooth decay in England, including oral health promotion programmes and education as well as improving the availability of critical dentistry services in our community.

Both of these proposals from Councillor E Ashby were unanimously **agreed** by Members.

9. TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSED ADVERT FOR A SHORT-TERM CONSULTANCY CONTRACT

The Clerk reminded Members that, in agreeing its budget for financial year 2024/25 in January 2024, Members unanimously approved a fund of £15,000 towards assistance for the Clerk in supporting the functions and aims of the Parish Council.

Although originally envisaged to be administrative support, the Clerk reminded Members that previous efforts to recruit at this level have been unsuccessful and the Council is presently investigating technical/ automated solutions to support the Clerk's work with minute taking (as one example).

The Clerk advised that the Council has previously expressed a desire to focus on acquiring external funding for projects within the City of Durham parish area. As such, it is recommended that this fund be used to finance a number of one-off, time-limited pieces of work on a contract basis.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has successfully been able to deliver on a number of projects on a similar contractual basis with external consultants; including the investigation into HMOs across the City, retail support for City centre businesses, the production of an evidence-base for an Article 4 Direction in Mount Oswald and a report into the distinction between planning/ licensing hours in premises across the City.

At a recent meeting of the Council's Personnel Committee and provided that Members are in agreement about the use of this funding, the Clerk indicated that he felt that the Parish Council should focus on 3 particular areas for achieving external finance from this budget: a clean air project, heritage at risk and culture.

As part of a clean air project, the Clerk advised that the Environment Committee has recently discussed the proposal of revisiting the green roof bus shelters and has expressed a desire to look at delivering 5-6 such shelters in Gilesgate (Gilesgate bank), Lower Claypath and Elvet (Church Street). The total cost for such a project would likely range between £87,000 - £105,000.

The Clerk advised that it is hoped that this particular project could be delivered by a consultant within a budget of approximately £5,000 depending on their inclusive daily rate.

The Clerk advised that the delivery of such a project has been supported by the local Residents' Associations in these areas and would be a welcome and proactive step by the Parish Council in taking action on clean air in the city.

The Clerk highlighted The Personnel Committee met earlier this month and have agreed that the content of an advert, as provided in the report to Members this evening.

Councillor C Lattin advised that she very much welcomed this proposal and congratulated the Personnel Committee on its focus in relation to clean air.

Councillor R Ormerod also advised that he supported this initiative and expressed the hope that such a person might be available to carry out this work.

Members unanimously **agreed** to the use of this budget for a short-term consultancy project, as set out in the above report.

Members also unanimously **agreed** to the advert provided with this report and asked the Clerk to advertise this accordingly.

Members also unanimously **agreed** to delegate responsibility for appointment of an appropriate individual for this task to the Personnel Committee.

10. REPORT(S) FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

Report by Councillor J Ashby on the most recent meeting of Durham University's Student Housing Management Group.

Councillor J Ashby presented the following report to Council from the meeting of the University's student housing management group held on 25th June 2024:

- 1. The County Council's Housing Strategy has now been approved by Cabinet and recognises the particular nature of the housing market in and around Durham City and the need for affordable housing for students.*
- 2. The case for an Additional Licensing Scheme was to be the subject of a report to the County Council's Cabinet in June but this has not yet occurred. There was to be a meeting with officers of the County Council later today. I do not know what, if any, progress was achieved.*
- 3. The Durham Students Union has completed a survey of nearly 300 student tenants and recorded very many complaints, mainly about the state of the property and the responses of letting agents/landlords.*
- 4. Work is on-going for the Do-it-Online reporting system to be more user-friendly, and for a student housing issues on-line hub. By the end of 2024 the aim is to add issues about mould etc to be raised on-line for non-licensed HMOs, which of course comprise 75% of the HMOs in the city.*
- 5. The University presented finalised results of this year's intense analysis of student addresses. This analysis matches the University's records against the County Council's Class N Exemptions. A report will be made available soon. We can now be absolutely definite on the question of quantitative "need" that is required by County Durham Policy 16.2: there are more student beds than students, and the number of students is going to be stable from now on at*

around 21,500 so there is no case on quantitative grounds for additional student beds.

End of report

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

Signed,

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(25th September 2024)**

ITEM 5: Report on the consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

On 30 July, the Government made a Written Ministerial Statement and announced a consultation on a series of changes to the planning system, including a draft revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). A consultation has been launched and responses are invited by 24th September 2024.

The proposed changes aim to increase house building across the country. There is a new standard methodology for calculating housing targets, which would result in them being significantly higher. Targets would be mandatory rather than advisory, and where they cannot be met due to constraints, then the potential for neighbouring councils to meet them should be examined. There would be greater flexibility around potential development within the Green Belt, where necessary to meet housing requirements. New legislation would be introduced to require a level of strategic planning across the country, and in the meantime the existing 'duty to cooperate' is proposed to be strengthened.

All Local Planning Authorities are urged to bring up to date local plans in place as soon as possible. Changes to the process of preparing local plans, as previously proposed, are still due to take effect, but the timing of their introduction will be later, and Councils are advised not to wait for that change before progressing their plans.

The consultation also includes suggestions for increasing planning application fees, so that the fees would cover a greater proportion of the costs of considering applications.

Key points from the NPPF consultation are:

- Mandatory, and higher, housing targets, using a new Standard Method with a stronger affordability ratio.
- Requirement to review green belts when insufficient land for homes is available, with 'grey belt' land coming first, and any green/grey belt sites having to include 50% affordable housing. 'Grey belt' is a new concept, defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously-developed land or otherwise making a limited contribution to the Green Belt purposes.
- Reversal of the December 2023 NPPF changes – including those changes made to the five-year housing land supply requirement. Councils will have to be able to demonstrate a five-year land supply even if their plan has been recently adopted.
- All authorities to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place – with a commitment to the Government stepping in where authorities fail to deliver.
- Amending the wording of the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' to make clear that the 'relevant policies' are those for the supply of land, as the primary role of the presumption is in addressing inadequate land supply – but also to make clear that the Framework's policies for the location and design of development are to be taken into account in decisions when the presumption applies.
- Strengthening of the existing 'duty to cooperate' in plan making – in advance of legislation on strategic planning which will be introduced later.

- Greater support for 'social rented' affordable housing, withdrawing the requirement for a proportion of 'affordable home ownership'.
 - Support for renewable energy developments including onshore wind energy.
 - Support for key industries including laboratories, gigafactories (battery cell manufacturing plants), digital infrastructure, freight and logistics.
- 1.2 Other potential changes to the wider planning system are:
- A new system of strategic planning to be introduced, requiring universal coverage of spatial planning across wider geographies. This will require new legislation.
 - Increasing planning fees, and consultation on the potential to set planning application fees locally
 - Greater flexibilities over affordable housing grants and use of right to buy receipts

The Written Ministerial Statement accompanying the changes is a material consideration in planning decisions immediately, emphasising the need for greater housing delivery, green belt reviews to meet housing needs, and support for renewable energy proposals. Many of the proposed changes will take effect as soon as the revised NPPF is published (intended to be by the end of the year). These include the new housing numbers (though there are transitional arrangements for plans at later stages of preparation), green belt policy and the reversal of changes introduced by the previous Government in December 2023. Other changes, including the arrangements for strategic planning across local authority boundaries, will take effect later, with additional legislation due to be introduced. Until then, under the new NPPF, the existing 'duty to cooperate' is to be strengthened.

Undoubtedly, the most significant implication for Durham City is the change to the standard methodology for calculating housing targets as well as the potential risk to our surrounding Green Belt.

As such, whilst the consultation contains no fewer than 106 questions, the Parish Council has focused its work on the specific areas which it feels has the most significant impact on our community, namely: housing numbers, green belt, upward development, support the environment and the cost of planning applications.

The specific questions within the consultation and the proposed responses are set out below in chronological order:

The changes to the calculation of housing requirements and mandatory housing targets.

Question 1: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made to paragraph 61?

The City of Durham Parish Council appreciates that, in order to achieve the Government's ambitions of delivering 370,000 dwellings per annum (1.5million by the end of the Parliament), it is appropriate to expect Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to seek to meet their identified housing need. However, this is only

appropriate if the methodology for calculating housing need is both realistic and appropriate.

An appropriate 'standard methodology' should support achievement of 370,000 homes per annum, whilst also supporting the establishment of a sustainable pattern of development and the achievement of the wider aspirations of the planning process and NPPF.

For County Durham, the new Standard Methodology would equate to an increased requirement to deliver 2,210 per annum (up from 1,129 new dwellings per annum and compared with the net average annual completion of 1,572 new dwellings per annum).

It would appear the national distribution of housing need proposed through the proposed 'standard methodology' favours significant increases in rural areas. This gives rise to several issues, principally:

- a) This could have major implications on the need for additional infrastructure.
- b) the recently adopted County Durham Plan focused 40% of the whole County's new housing development sites onto Durham City and, in so doing, involved the deletion of part of the City's precious greenbelt. The City of Durham Parish Council is deeply concerned that the new housing requirements will add further pressure on the LPA to delete further parcels of the greenbelt around the City rather than focusing new housing on towns and villages with a greater need of regeneration.

Question 2: Do you agree that we should remove reference to the use of alternative approaches to assessing housing need in paragraph 61 and the glossary of the NPPF?

Yes. See response above.

Question 3: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made on the urban uplift by deleting paragraph 62?

The Parish Council is generally supportive of this change. However, the 'standard methodology' should include a mechanism by which the LPA may direct more development to urban rather than rural areas. This is because urban areas are more sustainable; have the services, facilities and infrastructure best able to support significant development; and contain the vast majority of brownfield land.

Question 4: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made on character and density and delete paragraph 130?

Yes. The emphasis must be on ensuring development achieves high-quality design which is responsive to the development site and complementary to its setting.

A one size fits all approach often seen by large housing developments – where house types and designs are the same across the country – is unacceptable in a medieval City such as Durham and therefore a design-led approach must be foremost.

Question 5: Do you agree that the focus of design codes should move towards supporting spatial visions in local plans and areas that provide the greatest opportunities for change such as greater density, in particular the development of large new communities?

Yes in principle though we do recognise the challenges local authorities face in producing area wide design codes in locations where geographies are extensive and varied. As such, the role of design guides and masterplanning for major development is paramount.

The Parish Council particularly welcomes the proposal to direct resources to locations of change, where there is the greatest potential for positive impact.

Question 6: Do you agree that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be amended as proposed?

Most definitely but most particularly alongside the introduction of safeguards which make it clear that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not justify poor quality development – having regard to the location and design of development. High-quality design is fundamental to achieving sustainable development.

Question 7: Do you agree that all local planning authorities should be required to continually demonstrate 5 years of specific, deliverable sites for decision making purposes, regardless of plan status?

Yes, albeit the Parish Council maintains that the most effective way for Local Planning Authority's to demonstrate a continuous five-year supply of housing is through a Plan-led approach, and through the allocation of land for development, rather than through a process of speculative development and an 'appeal-led' process.

We particularly welcome that the draft NPPF does mark a clear change of emphasis towards housing growth within a plan-led system.

Question 8: Do you agree with our proposal to remove wording on national planning guidance in paragraph 77 of the current NPPF?

No, the Parish Council believes that past over-supply should continue to be set against upcoming need and that Local Planning Authorities who have managed to achieve their housing target should not be unfairly penalised or forced to accept additional housing.

Local authorities may find themselves in the absurd situation of having met the new Standard Method's figure of housing need and yet be required to find more sites for development.

Question 9: Do you agree that all local planning authorities should be required to add a 5% buffer to their 5-year housing land supply calculations?

No, the Parish Council does not consider there to be justification for inclusion of a 5% buffer of housing land supply in locations where there is no evidence of under-delivery.

The intention of undertaking annual assessments of the five-year housing land supply is to determine whether there is sufficient supply of housing land to achieve housing needs/requirements over this period – thereby determining whether there is sufficient choice and competition in the availability of land.

Inclusion of a further 5% buffer in locations where there is no evidence of under-delivery, is simply a duplication of the original intention of requiring an assessment of a five-year housing land supply.

Question 10: If yes, do you agree that 5% is an appropriate buffer, or should it be a different figure?

N/A. However, if the Government is minded to insist on a buffer, this should not be greater than 5%.

Changes to the NPPF in relation to the Green Belt and the introduction of so-called "Grey Belt".

Question 20: Do you agree that we should make the proposed change set out in paragraph 124c, as a first step towards brownfield passports?

The Parish Council has no objection to this change, stipulating that redevelopment of brownfield land within settlements should be considered as acceptable in principle, although, in itself, it appears to make little difference to the current situation. It is unclear exactly what the term 'brownfield passports' is referring to.

Question 21: Do you agree with the proposed change to paragraph 154g of the current NPPF to better support the development of PDL in the Green Belt?

No. The Parish Council is concerned that this amendment could lead to conflicting policy framework within the NPPF and lead to confusion and abuse. Specifically, Paragraph 142 is clear that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are "their openness and their permanence". However, proposed changes to paragraph 154g would remove reference to appropriate redevelopment of previously developed land within the Green Belt not having a "greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt".

Moreover, the associated text in the consultation document (chapter 5, paragraph 6) says that it "makes no sense" to protect former "petrol stations or car parks". Depending on the details of particular proposals, redevelopment of isolated previously-developed land (PDL) sites such as these could certainly result in "substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt". A focus on individual sites such as these would be an inappropriately non-strategic approach to Green Belt release. It would be important that any revised Planning Practice Guidance reflects this point.

Question 22: Do you have any views on expanding the definition of PDL, while ensuring that the development and maintenance of glasshouses for horticultural production is maintained?

The Parish Council has no objection to this in principle though the changes proposed seem unlikely to be helpful, as the definition already includes 'fixed surface infrastructure' which would seem to include 'hardstanding' and

glasshouses are very unlikely to be in locations that would be suitable for non-agricultural/horticultural development.

Moreover, this would seem to be an appropriate opportunity to clarify/correct the apparent anomaly in the NPPF definition of PDL, whereby residential gardens in rural ('non-built-up') areas are defined as PDL, and therefore, other things being equal, treated as a relative priority for development, whereas residential gardens in urban ('built-up') areas are defined as 'greenfield', and therefore a lower priority for development.)

Question 23: Do you agree with our proposed definition of grey belt land? If not, what changes would you recommend?

No. The Parish Council is concerned that the proposed definition of 'Grey Belt' will cause unnecessary confusion, as it extends beyond previously developed land (PDL), seeking to also encapsulate all poor performing Green Belt - which is not grey.

The City of Durham Parish Council would advocate Grey Belt being limited to Previously Developed Land only. Moreover, we would argue that land in an area like County Durham, previously old industrial sites such as from the steel and mining industries, but which have already been reclaimed as part of the landscape cannot be included in the definition of PDL.

It would be helpful to have a more definitive definition of what the Government means by "Previously Developed Land".

Question 24: Are any additional measures needed to ensure that high performing Green Belt land is not degraded to meet grey belt criteria?

It is not clear what exactly is meant by the term 'high performing', however chapter 5, paragraph 8 seems to indicate that it relates to the 'environmental value' of the land. Under the current/previous system, Green Belt is designated as a strategic planning tool, not because of the ecological, recreational or landscape value of the land. If this is intended to change, it would seem necessary for the defined purposes of Green Belt to be revised.

Question 25: Do you agree that additional guidance to assist in identifying land which makes a limited contribution of Green Belt purposes would be helpful? If so, is this best contained in the NPPF itself or in planning practice guidance?

Yes, within the NPPG.

In addition, it may be helpful for the Government to take a view on whether Green Belt designation is equally valuable around all parts of a city or whether it is most valuable where there is a substantial risk of merging between cities and/or other settlements.

Question 26: Do you have any views on whether our proposed guidance sets out appropriate considerations for determining whether land makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes?

Please refer to our answer to Question 25.

Question 27: Do you have any views on the role that Local Nature Recovery Strategies could play in identifying areas of Green Belt which can be enhanced?

Yes, LNRS could play a very important role. However, it will be important that LNRSs are incorporated into the plan-making system; currently their status and role seem somewhat unclear.

Question 28: Do you agree that our proposals support the release of land in the right places, with previously developed and grey belt land identified first, while allowing local planning authorities to prioritise the most sustainable development locations?

See response above in relation to what constitutes grey belt land.

If the Government decides to proceed with the current proposals, the fifth purpose of Green Belt should perhaps also be reconsidered and emphasise 'regeneration' in rural as well as urban areas.

Question 29: Do you agree with our proposal to make clear that the release of land should not fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole?

This is fine in principle. However, it is not clear what exactly is meant by "fundamentally undermine[ing] the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole". It can be argued that each individual release does not "fundamentally" undermine the Green Belt, however a series of relatively small incremental releases may well result in undermining "the function" (which presumably means 'the five purposes').

Question 30: Do you agree with our approach to allowing development on Green Belt land through decision making? If not, what changes would you recommend?

The proposed approach gives far too much weight to statistical calculations, relating to issues that, with regard to five-year supply, involve a high degree of speculation, and, with regard to the Housing Delivery Test, are beyond the direct control of LPAs, relative to the weight that should be given to the fairly fundamental planning issues that can be at stake when considering poor proposals for development in the Green Belt. There appears to be excessive emphasis on the quantity of housing supply, at the expense of quality, local housing need and appropriate locations.

The Parish Council would therefore recommend amendment of the wording of proposed paragraph 152, part a, and deletion of part b.

Question 31: Do you have any comments on our proposals to allow the release of grey belt land to meet commercial and other development needs through plan-making and decision-making, including the triggers for release?

Similar issues apply as with regard to the previous questions, regarding housing needs.

Question 32: Do you have views on whether the approach to the release of Green Belt through plan and decision-making should apply to traveller sites, including the sequential test for land release and the definition of PDL?

No comments to offer on this.

Question 33: Do you have views on how the assessment of need for traveller sites should be approached, in order to determine whether a local planning authority should undertake a Green Belt review?

No comments to offer on this.

Question 34: Do you agree with our proposed approach to the affordable housing tenure mix?

No. This is a watering down of the original 100% reference in the existing NPPF.

Question 35: Should the 50 per cent target apply to all Green Belt areas (including previously developed land in the Green Belt), or should the Government or local planning authorities be able to set lower targets in low land value areas?

The Parish Council would note that the current approach to Green Belt within paragraph 154 of the NPPF allows for and indeed facilitates the delivery of 100% affordable housing exception sites, where there are identified needs.

The Parish Council would encourage Government to ensure proposals to facilitate development in the Green Belt (where there is no five-year housing land supply or there has been significant under-delivery) do not undermine opportunities for 100% affordable housing exception sites in the Green Belt.

Question 36: Do you agree with the proposed approach to securing benefits for nature and public access to green space where Green Belt release occurs?

Yes, broadly. However, proposed paragraph 155 refers to "green spaces that are accessible to the public" and does not specifically refer to 'nature', so this could be clarified. Green spaces need to be integrated with each other as well as with development to allow wildlife corridors. Green and blue infrastructure also need to be well integrated.

Publicly accessible land needs to be defined within the NPPF.

Question 37: Do you agree that Government should set indicative benchmark land values for land released from or developed in the Green Belt, to inform local planning authority policy development?

Yes.

Changes relating to the NPPF in relation to upward development

Question 60: Do you agree with proposed changes to policy for upwards extensions?

No. Firstly, the current specific references to mansard roofs in Paragraph 124(e) of the Framework favours one particular type of upward extension, which are not always in keeping with the built character of our area and this consultation seems an ideal opportunity to address this issue.

However, the Parish Council simply cannot support the proposed changes to the Framework on upward extensions, considers this very much a backward step and we are deeply concerned at the potential impact of this change on our medieval city.

In our view, suggesting that the NPPF should be "strongly supportive of all upward extensions" could have some significant consequences. Using Durham City as an example, the roofscape below the Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site is essential to the city's historic and visual integrity. The proposal should be amended to remove the blanket term "all" and to prioritize Conservation and World Heritage Site protections.

Supporting Green Energy and the Environment

Question 72: Do you agree that large onshore wind projects should be reintegrated into the NSIP regime?

Yes, but alongside other initiatives that provide alternative energy solutions

Question 73: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the NPPF to give greater support to renewable and low carbon energy?

Yes, by covering a full range of potential opportunities here and now. Meeting the demands of global warming and introducing renewable energy into our economy as a significant contributor to the energy economy of the UK is a welcome step in the evolution of the NPPF. However, restricting this contribution to merely onshore windfarms and solar projects limits the full field of view when other equally relevant renewable energy sources must also be introduced and expanded if gas, oil and coal are to be replaced entirely by non-carbon sources.

Onshore windfarms require specific sites and those can conflict with the natural world as defined elsewhere. Windfarms cannot be given priority over alternative considerations and, by issuing numerical targets, NPPF must not create opportunities for inappropriate development in these open and unprotected areas. The same restriction must be established for solar arrays that cover many acres, as is seen, for example, in Germany. Such sites must be carefully chosen to gather maximum radiation without causing environmental damage. The NPPF should include these reservations.

The limited vision in this NPPF is its failure to identify and place in planning context other vital sources of renewable, carbon free energy opportunities. Their location in the UK and relevance should also be identified in the NPPF to embrace all the opportunities available in the UK. Indeed, the UK's long-term dependence on external energy and management, has created a frail and uneasy national economy the result of long-term mismanagement dating back to the 1970s. All

the NPPF can do is attempt to steer a more appropriate course in the coming decade.

Therefore, the NPPF should specify other important sources of energy and their potential within the UK. All new buildings, amongst the many now planned and all those being modernised, should use ground source or, where impossible, air source heating to diminish the load on the grid. All new buildings alongside any new building modifications should use solar panels with a similar outcome. That is, as far as possible, all new and modified builds should be energy self-sufficient.

Geothermal energy, correctly used, also diminishes the load on the national grid. In certain parts of the UK, especially in areas of former coal mining, shallow mine water sources offer heat transfer opportunities, whereas deeper drilling into granite bodies produced high temperature water able to drive generators. Tapping these sources again diminishes the load on the nation grid.

Question 74: Some habitats, such as those containing peat soils, might be considered unsuitable for renewable energy development due to their role in carbon sequestration. Should there be additional protections for such habitats and/or compensatory mechanisms put in place?

Yes, definitely because such environments need not be caught up in the drive for energy independence and zero carbon

Question 75: Do you agree that the threshold at which onshore wind projects are deemed to be Nationally Significant and therefore consented under the NSIP regime should be changed from 50 megawatts (MW) to 100MW?

Yes, but only as a contribution to the wider energy needs of the country and only by using appropriate and environmentally suitable sites.

Question 76: Do you agree that the threshold at which solar projects are deemed to be Nationally Significant and therefore consented under the NSIP regime should be changed from 50MW to 150MW?

Yes, because it offers a small addition to our energy economy but, once more chosen locations should be environmentally appropriate.

Changes to the cost of planning applications

Question 89: Do you agree with the proposal to increase householder application fees to meet cost recovery?

Yes. The cost of delivering a planning service across the many local authorities across the country can vary significantly. As such, there should be flexibility applied to each local authority to allow them to set their own fee.

Question 95: What would be your preferred model for localisation of planning fees?

Full Localisation – placing a mandatory duty on all local planning authorities to set their own fee.

ITEM 5: Report on freehold housing in the parish area and estate charges

The Parish Council has recently been contacted by a local resident with concerns relating to estate management charges.

At present, these estate management charges are known to apply in Mount Oswald, Aykley Woods and St. Margaret's Garth in our parish area. In fact, approximately 40% of all new estates built in England over the last five years are covered by these types of charges.

What are freehold estate charges?

Freehold estates are private or mixed-tenure estates where, unlike other residential areas, shared areas and facilities, such as roads, play areas and open spaces, are not owned or looked after by the local authority. Responsibility for their maintenance will instead rest with a private company (often the original developer) or homeowners themselves through a residents' management company (RMC).

Responsibility for estate management is normally agreed when the local authority grants planning permission. Authorities can be reluctant to take responsibility for common areas (a process known as 'adoption') due to the maintenance costs involved.

The private company or RMC will normally employ an estate management company to organise the necessary maintenance work on the estate, and the estate residents will be required to pay for the maintenance via an estate charge.

The requirement to make a financial contribution will be set out in legal documents that are signed when the property is bought.

The amount of council tax each household pays is not discounted or adjusted to account for the estate charge or to reflect the specific services received. Council tax is collected to deliver a broad range of services across the wider local community.

What rights do freeholders currently have?

Unlike leaseholders, freehold homeowners on these estates currently have very limited rights over the cost and quality of services provided.

Where the developer employs a management company, a freeholder can lodge a complaint with the relevant redress scheme. Property management companies in England must belong to a government-approved redress scheme: The Property Ombudsman or The Property Redress Scheme. These schemes provide for independent resolution of disputes. There is government guidance on the schemes.

What new rights will freeholders have?

The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 received royal assent on 24 May 2024. The act will strengthen the rights of freehold homeowners on private and

mixed-tenure estates in England and Wales. In particular, it will give freeholders the right to:

- challenge unreasonable estate charges and the standard of work carried out through an application to a First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) (or Leasehold Valuation Tribunal in Wales).
- apply to the tribunal to appoint a substitute manager where their estate management company is failing.
- improve the transparency of estate charges and ensure freehold homeowners receive key information on a regular basis.
- improve the transparency of administration charges and give freeholders the right to challenge unreasonable charges through an application to the tribunal.
- require freeholders/developers who directly manage the estate (in other words, they do not employ an estate management company) to belong to a redress scheme.

In 2019, the government said it would consider whether to introduce a statutory right for freeholders to take over estate management via a Right to Manage company. However, provisions to enable this were not included in the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill.

Although the 2024 act has received royal assent, the majority of the provisions are not yet in force and will need to be commenced through secondary legislation. The Labour government has committed to “act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024...” There have been no further announcements about the implementation timetable.

Future reforms

In the King’s Speech 2024 the government committed to publish a draft Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill in the 2024-25 parliamentary session, so that it may be subject to broad consultation and additional parliamentary scrutiny.

The background briefing notes to the King’s Speech 2024 said the Bill will, amongst other things, “bring[ing] the injustice of ‘fleecehold’ private estates and unfair costs to an end.” The government will consult on the best way to achieve this.

CMA recommendations on estate management

In February 2024, the Competition and Markets Authority’s (CMA) final report on its market study into housebuilding identified significant issues with private estate management. The CMA consequently recommended action to:

- prevent the proliferation of private management arrangements on new housing estates; and
- provide greater consumer protections for homeowners on existing privately managed estates.

The CMA also invited the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments to consider options to support the adoption by local authorities of shared amenities on estates currently under private management arrangements.

What can the Parish Council do about this issue?

Residents have asked if the Parish Council would consider adding their voice to lobbying our local Member of Parliament Mary Kelly Foy, to seek changes to the national legislation on this matter.

Moreover, residents have highlighted the case of Stratford District Council and asked if more localised action can be taken to address this problem.

In 2020, Stratford District Council agreed to step in, adopting a new planning stance stipulating that for all new housing developments, if parish councils are unwilling to take on the community space, they will automatically adopt it instead, cutting outside management companies out of the loop.

At that time, Stratford Council's portfolio holder for community services said: *"The District Council has listened to the concerns raised by residents about the 'hidden charges' and quality of the maintenance work carried out in these public open spaces. Cabinet has taken a decision, subject to Council approval, that from 1 January 2021 in the event that a Town or Parish Council decides not to take ownership of the public open space, the District Council will take ownership and responsibility for the land"*.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to agree to write to lobby the Member of Parliament seeking urgent legislation on this issue. 2) As an interim measure ahead of any new legislation, to also agree to write to DCC to request that they take a similar stance as that set by Stratford District Council on this issue.
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ITEM 5: PROPOSAL TO LAUNCH A NEW DURHAM TIDY GARDENS INITIATIVE

As Members are aware, the City of Durham Parish Council has launched an appeal to local landlords for a contribution to the parish precept for the last two years.

Last year, part of the funding acquired from this appeal was directed towards additional waste collections at £1,500 and there remains approximately £8,000 in its account from both appeals.

Councillors Ashfield and Lattin have successfully negotiated a "Green Move In" additional waste collections on the Sunday and Mondays of and immediately following Induction Week with DCC and this will be charged at a total cost of £1478.04.

This is a highly welcome initiative and in recognition of the need for additional waste collections as students produce more recycling waste transporting items from home.

An additional aspect of the funding from this appeal has been agreed to be directed towards supporting residents maintaining their front gardens (where applicable) and, as an added aspect of the proposal, to help educate residents on how to recycle. This will be done through a leaflet which is included with this Agenda.

In establishing a number of reputable gardeners, the Parish Council has reached out to DCC and has been provided with 2 private companies who are able to cut grass and carry out general gardening maintenance. As such, there is no requirement on the Parish Council to provide gardening equipment or a service directly, this leaflet will simply pinpoint residents to an appropriate gardening service which will be chargeable for the resident.

The Parish Council's Environment Committee is also keen to invite other gardening service providers to be part of this list of suppliers.

In the case of student properties, the Parish Council has received complaints from local residents about the condition of some student properties throughout the year. In a number of cases, landlord tenancy agreements stipulate that it is the tenants' responsibility to maintain the gardens and the Parish Council is also aware of anecdotal evidence that students are not having their deposits returned to them in full by some landlords because the garden areas are not maintained. This initiative by the Parish Council is entirely geared towards supporting residents in a) maintaining their gardens and b) in the case of student properties, to make it easier for students to comply with their tenancy agreements and receive their deposit back in full.

It has been suggested that DSU be approached to carry out some research on how widespread the issue of non-repayment of deposits is in Durham.

Durham University has offered its support for this initiative although DSU does not support this initiative if student residents are expected to pay for the gardening service themselves.

Anyone signing up for this scheme will have to do so via a Google Form allowing the Parish Council to assess the take-up of this initiative as well as supply those registering with a free bulbs pack.

The costs associated with this proposal involve the production and delivery of this leaflet at approx. £1,300 (based on 8,000 doors) as well as the cost of the bulb packs (dependent on take-up). Although not every property will have a garden, a general delivery to all properties is easiest for the delivery company and each household will also benefit from the recycling information on the reverse of this leaflet too.

All aspects of this initiative will be funded from the landlord appeal and will not come from Parish Council funds.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to agree to launch the Durham Tidy Gardens initiative, as set out in the above report. 2) If 1 is agreed, for Members to agree the content of the leaflet attached to this scheme.
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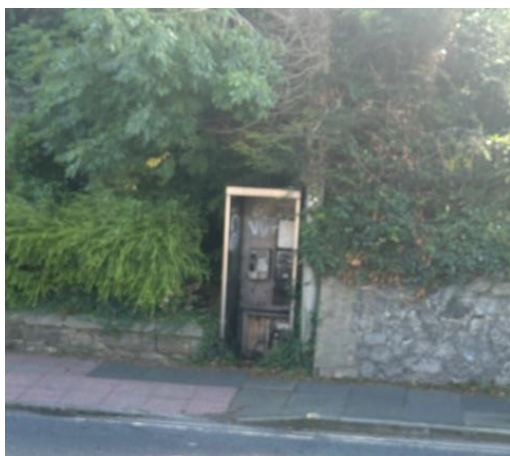
ITEM 5: PROPOSAL TO REQUEST THAT BT REMOVE OR IMPROVE ITS TELEPHONE BOXES WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

There are several BT telephone boxes located around the parish area. Most of these boxes are relatively modern, glazed structures which are inappropriately designed for a Conservation Area. Similarly, the traditional red phone boxes, such as telephone box at Lower Claypath and at Palace Green, make a positive contribution to the Conservation and, in fact, are considered Non-designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs).

The current list of telephone boxes within the City of Durham Parish area has been provided by BT as follows:

Address	Post Code
PP1050 19B OLD ELVET DURHAM	DH1 3HU
GB2484 PCO - SOUTHBOUND PLATFORM RAILWAY STATION NORTH ROAD DURHAM	DH1 4RB
GB2484 PCO - SOUTHBOUND PLATFORM RAILWAY STATION NORTH ROAD DURHAM	DH1 4RB
BT PINPHONE 19B OLD ELVET DURHAM	DH1 3HU
BT PINPHONE 19B OLD ELVET DURHAM	DH1 3HU
PCO PCO1 NEW ELVET DURHAM	DH1 3AQ
GB2484 RAILWAY STATION NORTH ROAD DURHAM	DH1 4RB
K3864751 A690 PCO1 NORTH ROAD DURHAM	DH1 4RB
OPP MILLENIUM SQUARE PCO1 CLAYPATH DURHAM	DH1 1RG
PCO PCO1 JCN SUNDERLAND RD GILESGATE DURHAM	DH1 1QG
PCO PCO1 NEVILLES CROSS BANK DURHAM	DH1 4JF
GB2442 ST. AIDANS COLLEGE WINDMILL HILL DURHAM	DH1 3LJ
PCO PCO1 NORTH ROAD DURHAM	DH1 4SG
PCO PCO1 NEAR ROUNDABOUT GILESGATE DURHAM	DH1 1QG
ADJACENT TO 19A PCO1 OLD ELVET DURHAM	DH1 3HN
PCO PCO1 O/S GREGGS THE RIVERWALK DURHAM	DH1 4SL

A number of these boxes are subject to vandalism, anti-social behaviour or are simply no longer functioning.



In June 2022, we Ofcom updated its rules on public call boxes. BT now cannot remove a box if it meets one or more of these criteria:

- it is in a place without coverage from all four mobile network providers;
- it is located in an area with a high frequency of accidents or suicides;
- it has made 52 or more calls over the past 12 months; or
- there is other evidence that the box is reasonably needed at the site – for example if it is likely to be relied upon in the event of a local emergency, such as flooding, or if it is used to call helplines.

If a public call box that is the last at a site does not meet any of these four criteria, BT or KCOM can consult with the relevant local authority on removing it. BT and KCOM must take account of any views and evidence received from this consultation before deciding whether to remove the box.

Public call boxes that are not the last at a site can be removed by BT and KCOM without consultation.

The Clerk asked the Chair of the Crossgate Community Partnership for local views on the use of these boxes and received one comment in response asking for these boxes to be removed.

BT maintains strict confidentiality regarding call volumes and will not share them with the Parish Council or any other agency. The only exception to this policy occurs when law enforcement agencies request access to these records for investigative reasons.

The Environment Committee has recently met and discussed this issue and has agreed to ask BT to carry out an audit of its telephone boxes in the City of Durham Parish area. Where it is the case that the box does not meet any of the criteria above and is either broken or vandalised, this should be removed. The Environment Committee has also suggested that a tree might be positioned in place of the box.

Where a phone box does meet the criteria above but the box is damaged, it is proposed that the Parish Council asks BT to carry out some remedial works to the box itself.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to request that BT carries out an audit of its existing telephone boxes to either remove or improve these.
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ITEM 7: TO REVIEW THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

As Members are aware, the Parish Council has created the Planning and Licensing Committee, consisting of seven Members, and appoints (usually on an annual basis) Members of the Council to the Planning and Licensing Committee at the Annual Meeting in May, or as it sees fit. A quorum for this Committee will be no fewer than three members.

The Committee meets every two weeks on a Friday at 12 noon to carry out the planning and licensing functions of the Parish Council. This is a very important Committee whose work is wide-ranging and planning matters and the way in which the Parish Council exercises its planning functions in particular are regularly listed as being amongst our residents' top priorities.

The licensing functions of this Committee are equally as important.

Although the Committee historically has not struggled to form a quorum, Members have noted that the Committee membership is very often reduced to five Members due to competing commitments.

Members are also reminded of their ability to appoint a substitute should they know in advance that they will be absent for a meeting.

As such, it is felt that there is a need to review the membership of this Committee.

The current membership of the Committee is as follows:

- Grenville Holland (Chair)
- Susan Walker (Vice-Chair)
- Esther Ashby
- John Ashby
- Nicola Brown
- Robert Hanson
- Carole Lattin

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree a new membership of this Committee.
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ITEM 8: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCIL'S CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

Throughout the local government sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment, and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and county associations have responded to this by setting up a Civility and Respect Working Group to oversee the Civility and Respect Project.

NALC, SLCC, and OVW believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

The Civility and Respect Pledge is being introduced because there is no place for bullying, harassment and intimidation within our sector. The pledge is easy for councils to sign up for and it will enable councils to demonstrate that they are committed to standing up to poor behaviour across our sector and to driving through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct.

Members are reminded that the City of Durham Parish Council has adopted a Dignity at Work Policy and this is reviewed annually.

NALC is inviting all Councils to take the Civility and Respect Pledge and those that do can legitimately showcase this logo on their website and all literature as a sign of the Parish Council's commitment to this area of our sector.



To date, 1,591 Councils have signed the Civility and Respect Pledge.

By signing the Pledge, the City of Durham Parish Council is agreeing that the Council will treat Councillors employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles and that it:

- Has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors
- Has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work policy
- Will seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise
- Will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens

- Will continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council through for example the Local Council Award Scheme
- Supports the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

NALC'S CIVILITY AND RESPECT MISSION STATEMENT

Civility and respect should be at the heart of public life, and good governance is fundamental to ensuring an effective and well-functioning democracy at all levels.

The intimidation, abuse, bullying and harassment of councillors, clerks and council staff, in person or online, is unacceptable, whether by councillors, clerks, council staff, or public members.

This can prevent councils from functioning effectively, councillors from representing local people, discourage people from getting involved, including standing for election, and undermine public confidence and trust in local democracy.

NALC, county associations and OVW, as the membership organisations representing the first tier of local government in England and Wales, and the SLCC, as the professional body for clerks, are committed to working together to promote civility and respect in public life, good governance, positive debate and supporting the well-being of councillors, professional officers and staff.

To that end, the Civility and Respect Working Group will be working to deliver tangible resources, actions and interventions in four main areas: providing councils with the tools to support good governance; lobbying to strengthen the standards regime and encouraging more people to get involved; training; and processes to intervene to provide support to struggling councils.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to agree to sign the Civility and Respect Pledge, as set out in the above report. 2) If 1) is agreed, for Members to honour the commitments required as part of this Pledge and listed in the above report.
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ITEM 9: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES IN THE CITY

At the beginning of 2024, Durham Area Youth and Durham City Youth received funding through the ASB Trailblazer project to engage with young people who were presenting at several locations in Durham City. A small number of the young people were known to be causing an above average proportion of ASB, resulting in higher community tensions with residents and visitors. The project therefore very much focused on engagement and building up relationships with the aim of reducing this youth related ASB.

Over the length of the project, the youth workers have engaged with approximately 15 – 30 young people on a Friday evening and have made good inroads in helping some of them make positive choices around their actions.

This initial funding was very much a pilot project and in addition to it being successful in terms of engagement, has also brought an increased awareness around safeguarding issues in relation to some young people.

This has led to increased partnership working with Children and Young Peoples Community Support Service and there are now firm links with the exploitation and missing from home officers who are aware of the issues in the city.

Additional funding has again been granted from the ASB Trailblazer fund and a proportion of this has been made available to the project which should be able to recommence in September 2024. The amount of funding has reduced meaning the project is only able to operate for a further three months, possibly until the beginning of January 2025.

Both Durham City Youth and Durham Area Youth are committed to continuing the project and they along with DCC are trying to bring a group of partners together to apply for longer term and more sustainable funding of between 1 – 3 years. The funding application for bigger projects is more time intensive and in-depth and requires more detailed information and input and whilst this is on-going, match funding is being sought from partners to extend the project until a response comes through from the funding bodies.

The Parish Council has been asked if it would consider making a contribution of £2,000 towards this project. Although this was not budgeted for in January, the Finance Committee and Environment Committee have recently met and feel that there is flexibility within current budgets (e.g. contingencies) to fund this request.

It is hoped that if granted the funding would help the youth workers to develop deeper relationships with the young people and provide worthwhile diversionary activities.

Benefits of Youth Work in the City

Reduce risks for young people:

- Young people have a trusted adult to speak to.
- Professionals on the streets are able to make referrals if they observe YP at risk.

- Young people can access advice and information where they spend time together
- Informal education through conversations can help young people identify risks and consequences.

Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour:

- Informal education can help young people gain an understanding of their local communities.
- Being listened to can help young people feel valued and part of their local communities.
- Engaging in positive activities young people are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour.
- Informal education can explore choices and consequences and support young people to be less impulsive.

The Pilot

The pilot consisted of 6-8 weeks reconnaissance work which is an essential part of any new detached youth work.

It provided youth workers with this essential information:

- Where and when young people spend time together
- Where local shops are (and whether they have issues)
- What other youth provisions there are (e.g. Youth Clubs etc.)
- What crime (especially youth crime and ASB) is like in the area
- What the latest local news is
- Who else might be working in the area

Workers also used the time to build partnerships:

- Inform local police and local council that we are undertaking this work
- Introductions to local shop keepers, door staff etc.
- Connect with other youth work agencies
- Join Social Media groups for the area

Consultation with Young People

Successful youth work recognises the importance to get the views of young people.

- Why young people choose to hang out in the city
- What are the key issues affecting young people hanging about in the City
- What youth services appeal to young people hanging about in the City
- Are there any other key services that could benefit young people spending time together in the city

Delivery Pilot

The consultation informed a 3–4-month Youth Provision Pilot. This was an open access youth session using the Youth Bus and Detached Youth Workers. This was delivered once a week until the end of the project. It was hoped that an external outreach activity would be provided, but timings would not allow this.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to approve the contribution of £2,000 towards the provision of youth services in the City, as set out in the above report.
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ITEM 10: COMPLETION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S EXTERNAL AUDIT 2023/24

As Members are aware, each year the Parish Council undergoes two sets of audits - one internal audit and one external audit.

These audits are a legal requirement which assess the Parish Council's policies, standing orders, financial regulations, VAT returns, cashbook, bank statements, minutes, website and more to ensure good governance and compliance. Earlier this year, the Internal Auditor carried out a review of the Parish Council's workings and provided a positive report, as provided to Members.

Mazars LLP have now completed their external audit for the year ended 31 March 2024 and have certified the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. No issues have been identified in the external audit review.

As such, the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 set out what the Parish Council must do at the conclusion of this audit.

In summary, the Parish Council is required to publish a statement:

- that the audit has been concluded and that the statement of accounts has been published;
- of the rights of inspection conferred on local government electors by section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; and
- the address at which, and the hours during which, those rights may be exercised.
- Keep copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return remains available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was first published.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to note the conclusion of the external audit for 2023/24 and to instruct the Parish Clerk to take all appropriate action, as set out in the above report.
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ITEM 11: REPORT ON PLANNING FOR THE REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2024 EVENT.

As Members are aware, the City of Durham Parish Council has civic responsibility for the Remembrance Sunday event in Durham City, which takes place on Sunday 10th November this year. In January 2024, Members approved a total budget of £25,000 towards events in the City, with the Remembrance parade being a key aspect of the Council's calendar of events for financial year 2024-25.

Road and traffic matters:

The Clerk will be submitting a road closure order for the event; this is done free of charge by the County Council as per their own policy for Remembrance Sunday. The Clerk is also arranging for the County Council to organise the alternative public transport route during the timing of the event. This only affects Claypath services which divert via Leazes Road. The Clerk is organising the traffic management support (including four road closed signs and advances) and DCC Highways will attend the event to organise this on the day at no additional charge to the Parish Council.

The closure points between 9:00 – 13:00 would be:

1. Framwellgate Bridge (no entry signs near fighting cocks PH)
2. North Bailey just below the entrance to Hatfield College Car Park
3. Claypath junction with Providence Row
4. A690/ One-way slip (side of library)
5. Two-way slip above Prince Bishops mini-roundabout

Use of land:

The Parish Clerk is seeking permission from the University for the temporary occupation of Palace Green and the temporary occupation of the Marketplace. Both Durham University and DCC are aware of the event taking place this year as usual and this is a formality. As is custom, the Mayor's office has also arranged for a dais to be installed on the day in the Market Place. The Mayor's office usually funds this, although the Clerk has made arrangements for the new and more substantial dais for the 2024 event following feedback that the previous dais needed replacing and the success of this dais at the 2023 event.

Health and safety:

The event is covered by the Parish Council's own public liability insurance. The Clerk has carried out a Risk Assessment for the event. In addition, the Police will be carrying out their own security assessment (SECCO assessment) for the event. What level of Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVMs) methods installed on the day depends on the outcome of the police's SECCO report. The County Council has agreed to fund the installation of the necessary HVMs going forward.

There will also be a need for crowd management control in order to facilitate the day. The Parish Council usually contracts the services of Showsec (preferred supplier of DCC) at a cost of £454.03 for this and the Clerk is arranging for this to happen for the 2023 event.

The Parish Council will also need to fund the medical provision on the day. The Clerk has now contracted the services of Nerams Ltd (DCC's preferred supplier) at a cost of £633.60. The Clerk has also arranged for the police to be on hand on the day to manage any incidents of disruption or anti-social behaviour.

The Clerk is also hoping to arrange for Jill Woods, DCC's former Safety Officer for the event to attend on the day and to carry out a pre-event assessment and walkthrough. The Town Hall will once again be used as a meeting point for missing persons if needed.

Notification of event:

The Clerk will also be letting local traders in the affected area know about the plans for the event and the event will also be publicised on the Parish Council's website and Facebook page. A letter drop will be taking place on 2nd November to all traders in the area.

Service at the Cathedral and the parade:

The order of service within the Cathedral would be managed entirely by the Clergy of the Cathedral and the Parish Council would not have any involvement with this but the seating of the Parish Councillors will be arranged with the Cathedral. The Parish Council will be expected to lay a wreath on Remembrance Day and the Chair of the Council would do this on the Council's behalf. The Clerk has arranged for the wreath to be provided. Durham City Parish Councillors now form part of the official procession from the Cathedral to the Town Square with their position in this procession is to be determined in due course. A meeting has now taken place with the Cathedral and army personnel to run through the order of service and arrangements on the day. Access to the service is to be managed by the Cathedral staff.

Miscellaneous

The Parish Council's Parade volunteer Arthur Lockyear continues to support this event with fundraising and working with the Parish Council to enhance the parade. Arthur is hoping to once again gain funding for 4 bands and catering after the event. The Parish Council has usually supported the costs for this.

The Parish Council will once again be supporting the Festival of Remembrance on Saturday 9th November this year.

As this year marks the 200th Anniversary of the founding of the RNLI, we are delighted to welcome the Deputy Chair (National) to our parade this year along with an RNLI contingent as part of the parade.

Moreover, it is also proposed that the Parish Council supports the installation of a B-Class RNLI lifeboat in the Market Place on 1st November (Uniformed Services Day). This is a very special year for the RNLI and it is right that we highlight their role in saving many souls both during war and in peacetime.

**DECISION
REQUIRED**

For Members to note the above report and the preparations being made for this event and to delegate all organisational and budgetary responsibility for this event to the Clerk.

ITEM 12: REPORT BY CLLR J ASHBY ON THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT HOUSING MANAGEMENT GROUP HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2024

1. On student numbers, the indications for the new Academic Year 2024/25 are of about 200 fewer post-graduates and about 100 more undergraduates than was intended. Definitive figures will come from the December 'census' once no-shows, late arrivals and early drop-outs have settled down. There are a few first years who did not opt for University accommodation but have not indicated that they have found themselves private accommodation, so the University is pro-actively addressing every case to make sure that they do have somewhere to live.
2. The University's analysis that matches their address records against the County Council's Class N Exemptions has been completed, and the report with headlines and details will be made available soon. This report will be immensely useful in considering planning applications and also in thoughts about improving Policy 16.3.
3. There has been a positive meeting with the Code of Practice landlords to consider possible further items of good practice. The Code of Practice will be promoted to students via the Housing Hub on the University website. Also, the PBSA liaison group is being re-started; this has greater importance than ever as it is apparent that PBSAs are the major route for decreasing the number of students in HMOs. However, the landlord representative reported that the costs of constructing PBSAs has risen sharply, with implications for rents and indeed for bringing any further PBSAs forward.
4. The DCC representative explained that the disrepair workload is increasing as returning students report concerns with the new Academic Year's HMO accommodation. The team's compliance work regarding gas and electricity certificates is ongoing. A dedicated page for students on Do-it-Online has been created but needs to be made easier to find.
5. A draft Additional Licensing Scheme has been put forward by DCC and is being considered by the University and DSU for a verdict in about 6 months' time. The landlord representative on the group reminded us that existing legislation provides most of the tools but is not consistently applied or enforced.
6. The Durham Students Union will be launching a 'Rate Your Landlord' scheme shortly. DSU plan to hold a "Find your housing" fair/workshop in November, and wish to have the Parish Council and resident groups involved to provide a flavour of each locality. I indicated that this would be welcome.
7. The County Council's Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan will be submitted to Full Council probably in January 2025. The Housing Needs SPD will be adopted under delegated powers by December 2024. Various amendments have been to recognise the particular nature of the housing market in and around Durham

City, and the need for affordable housing for students. It is currently being reviewed in the light of the proposed changes to the NPPF. We need to see the final document for assurance, or not, on key issues for the Parish Council, such as the step-by-step methodology for assessing “need” for student accommodation of a particular type in a particular location.

ITEM 12 (CONTINUED): REPORT BY COUNCILLOR C ON THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE HELD ON AUGUST 21ST 2024

Attended by Carole Lattin as substitute for Victoria Ashfield

- The chair, Claire O'Malley gave an update. She re-iterated that the University is being careful not to exceed the cap they have put on student numbers for 2024 – 5. There have been dips in applications for post graduate UK courses. She was open about the need to increase student fees.
- Richard Baker, Director of Development and Commercialisation, gave a presentation. The University see many opportunities for partnership with the North East devolution agreement. University Vice Chancellors are taking it in turns to sit on the devolution board for the North East Mayoral Authority. They are looking to develop further innovation and investment. He talked about Aykley Heads and NetPark in Sedgefield as particular growth areas. The university is an anchor institution in the north east and further re-development is taking place as part of the new Durham innovation district, in partnership with DCC. There are three catapults in Netpark, which all have innovation centres. Catapults are seen as schemes and projects which can cause and lead expansion.
- Ged Baker spoke about developments in culture. There is to be a major exhibition on space sciences, including light years. This is in partnership with DCC on satellites. And is a three-year programme. Other partners are international e.g. NASA. There are estimated to be 10,000 new jobs to be created in satellite science. There will be a summer Space Fair. They are developing a touring exhibition about the James Webb space telescope. This links with the lux muralis at the cathedral. In October there will be a celebration of science in a marquee on Palace Green. Over 40 events are planned throughout the county for next year.
- Student Engagement Strategy – presented by Katie Binks who leads on Community Engagement and volunteering. She talked about the ongoing development of community involvement in the Assembly Rooms and local schools such as a Shakespeare project with Parkside School. Student and staff volunteers play an active role in developing performing art work with schools and also in sustainability. There are many summer schools, open to local schools such as Performing Arts summer camp, and many sporting activities. She gave an example of the university opening access to its Steinway pianos for school music exam practice. Volunteers also support music lessons and development. For the forthcoming year, their aim is to increase community use of university facilities from 10,000 to 12,000 and to continue to act as a hub for community sport. The overarching goal is to promote a culture amongst university students and staff of service to others. Opportunities should be meaningful and meet the needs of the community. 25% of staff members and one sixth of students are volunteers.
- A new development is E-Sports. This is a new space at Maiden Castle for gamers, to make it a safe environment and also a social one. Teams can play together or take on external teams. There was a tour of the E-Sports

room which is indeed impressive – all the up-to-date equipment and comfortable gaming chairs! Already 200 students are signed up and taster sessions are being offered to the community, in school holidays. They also give tips on staying safe online, code clubs etc.

- James Cook from DCC Spatial policy told the meeting about the consultation of Minerals and Waste and also on the proposed National Policy Planning framework.
- Ashleigh White told the forum about the success of Operation Lentil and strategies to reduce parking in the Market Place and on Elvet Bridge. There is also a project to make rented properties safer. Many older properties only have one lock to the front doors which students then leave unlocked. They are proposing keypads.