



City of Durham Parish Council

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Date of summons: 18th April 2025

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 **Thursday 24th April 2025 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 27TH MARCH 2025**
- 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 5. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 21st March and 4th April 2025**

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

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

- Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 11th March 2025**

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

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

- Motion by Councillors C Lattin and R Friederichsen on air quality in Durham City

- 6. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 27th March 2025

- 7. PARISH COUNCIL EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

- 8. PROPOSED OPERATIONS BETWEEN MAY ELECTIONS AND THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

- 9. FAREWELL REMARKS BY RETIRING COUNCILLORS**

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 27th March 2025 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, L Brown, N Brown, A Doig, D Freeman, G Holland and C Lattin.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley, 2 members of the public and Mr Stephen Cronin and Ms Sally Dixon (Durham Fringe).

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

Apologies were received from Councillors E Scott, R Friederichsen and R Ormerod. No other apologies were received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

The Clerk highlighted that, in a personal capacity only, he is currently a Director of Durham Fringe.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 27TH FEBRUARY 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Rupert Benjamin updated the Council on the ongoing waste issues at Homer Terrace and advised that, after much effort on his part and with support from DCC colleagues, a lot of the waste from builders and nearby students had been reduced. Mr Benjamin advised that he would continue to monitor this situation and the Chair congratulated Mr Benjamin on his work in addressing this matter.

5. PRESENTATION BY DURHAM FRINGE ON PLANS FOR THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL

The Chair welcomed Mr Stephen Cronin and Ms Sally Dixon to the meeting. Sally began by thanking the Parish Council for the opportunity to speak with Members at this forum today. Sally advised that the Fringe were excited to be coming back to Durham City for the fifth consecutive year.

Stephen advised that the Fringe Festival was first conceived by himself and his wife Suzanne in 2021 and had since grown to become a 7,500-ticket sales event in the art scene of Durham City. Stephen advised that it was very much his ambition to grow the Festival with a target of 10,000 ticket sales in 2025.

Stephen highlighted that the Durham Fringe Festival was extremely well run and received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Volunteers were described as friendly and helpful, contributing to a fantastic atmosphere that made the event particularly enjoyable for families in Durham.

Sally advised that the Fringe continues to significantly enhance the arts scene locally, while also raising awareness of Durham's cultural vibrancy. She quoted feedback from a London-based performer who expressed heartfelt thanks, calling the festival a "magical thing" and praising its role in showcasing Durham's uniqueness.

Stephen and Stephen both highlighted that the event also offered important personal development opportunities. A 16-year-old volunteer described the experience as "really valuable" for meeting people from around the world and developing confidence. The young volunteer said they would highly recommend the opportunity to others their age and has since gone on to gain valuable work experience in a Theatre tech role.

Sally advised that the Showcase event received particularly high praise and was described as "brilliant" by attendees. She emphasised its role in highlighting the diversity of performances and talents presented during the festival.

Stephen highlighted that, while feedback was largely positive, some constructive criticism was also received. One area identified for improvement was accessibility, with comments suggesting that current arrangements could be enhanced to better accommodate a wider range of audience needs. Stephen advised that logistical improvements were also highlighted. Suggestions included extending the Park and Ride transport services to support evening show access, which would improve public transport availability and support sustainability goals.

Sally also advised that several attendees raised the need for better toilet facilities at festival venues. Sally noted that this was a recurring theme in the feedback and would be taken into account during planning for the next edition of the festival. Sally also highlighted that street performers were well-received and brought vibrancy to the city centre. She noted suggestions for increasing the presence of these performers in public areas so that more people could enjoy their acts, even without attending a scheduled show.

Stephen advised that there was a call for more shows specifically geared toward children, reflecting demand from families. He suggested that programming for future festivals could include a dedicated family and youth schedule to meet this need. In doing so, Stephen advised that the current running costs for the Festival were approximately £160,000 and he and the team were constantly fundraising to secure this funding. Stephen thanked the Parish Council and other sponsors for their continued support with the festival and advised that he hoped to grow the festival even further across more than the existing eight venues.

Both Sally and Stephen concluded by stating that overall feedback demonstrates strong public support and enthusiasm for the Durham Fringe Festival. She expressed gratitude on behalf of the organisers for the community's engagement and the Parish Council's ongoing support.

Councillor E Ashby asked whether the Fringe had considered using the Main House in the Gala as a potential venue for performances. Stephen advised that he was delighted to have secured the studios within the Gala Theatre for this year's Festival but advised that, at this present time for the Festival, the Main House would be too large for their needs. However, Stephen advised that he hoped that the Fringe would grow to such a stage in the near future that venues of that capacity would be necessary and viable.

There being no further questions, the Chair thanked Stephen and Sally for their time and presentation. At this stage, Stephen and Sally thanked Members and left the meeting.

6. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor G Holland presented the minutes from the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings held on 21st February and 7th March 2025. There were no queries from Members.

• Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the minutes from the Environment Committee meeting held on 11th February 2025. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee reports.

Proposals to fund the production of the Community Emergency Safety Card following the adoption of the Community Emergency Plan

Councillor C Lattin advised that, following the formal adoption of the City of Durham Community Emergency Plan, the Parish Council is now seeking to implement a key element of this plan: the Community Emergency Card.

Councillor Lattin highlighted that the Emergency Card has been developed in partnership with Durham County Council's Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) and other key stakeholders, and is intended to provide all households with vital emergency information in an accessible, printed format. The card includes emergency contact numbers, instructions for specific emergencies, the location of safe spaces, and guidance on activating the Community Emergency Plan.

Councillor Lattin advised that the production and distribution of the Emergency Card would cost approximately £1,800, which is within the £2,000 already allocated by Members for this purpose.

It was unanimously **agreed** to a) approve funding for the production and distribution of the Emergency Card to all households in the parish; b) delegate responsibility for overseeing the production and rollout of the Emergency Card to the Parish Clerk and the Environment Committee; and c) note the forthcoming trial of the Emergency Plan by the Civil Contingencies Unit and to consider any feedback arising from this.

• Business Committee

Councillor D Freeman presented the minutes from the Business Committee meeting held on 21st January 2025. There being no queries from Members, Councillor D Freeman moved on to Committee reports.

Report on activities to mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day in Durham City

Councillor D Freeman advised that Durham City will commemorate the 80th Anniversary of VE Day on 8th May 2025, joining communities nationwide in celebrating 80 years of peace since the end of World War II in Europe.

Councillor Freeman advised that the Parish Clerk has been working with partners including Durham County Council and the Durham Markets Company to organise a programme of local events reflecting the national celebrations. These include a public street party in Durham Market Place on Bank Holiday Monday, 5th May, with live musical entertainment and food vendors in attendance.

Councillor Freeman advised that, on the anniversary date of Thursday 8th May:

- The national VE Day Proclamation will be read at 9:00am, with the Clerk currently identifying a suitable city centre location due to the temporary closure of the Town Hall.
- At 12 noon, pipers across the UK will play *Celebratum*, a piece composed specially for the occasion, from the nation's highest peaks.
- At 6:30pm, the bells of Durham Cathedral and St. Nicholas Church will ring out in celebration.
- At 9:30pm, it is again proposed that the City's beacon will be lit in Durham alongside other beacons across the country, symbolising the light of peace emerging from the darkness of war.

The Clerk advised that he had been in discussions with the Charter Trust and City Freemen to explore sharing the £1,800 cost of lighting the beacon, noting that this cost was previously covered solely by the Parish Council. The Clerk advised that he is presently still awaiting a response from the Charter Trust but that he had already received a response from the Chair of the Freemen advising that the Freemen would not share the costs for lighting this beacon with the Parish Council for this anniversary.

Councillor A Doig advised that he felt that the Parish Council is obliged to light the beacon for both VE Day and VJ Day this year but expressed his desire that the Parish Council could in future agree a set of clear criteria - to sit alongside the Memorandum of Understanding the Parish Council has with the Freemen and the County Council - on the specific events at which the Parish Council shall bear the responsibility for the lighting of the City's beacon. Councillor A Doig advised that he hoped that this could be communicated to partners following this year's important anniversaries.

In agreeing that the beacon must be lit for these important anniversaries, some Members advised that they felt that there was no need to include a reception nor a VIP-attended only beacon lighting ceremony as part of these events.

It was unanimously **agreed** to a) note the report detailing the VE Day 80th Anniversary events; b) delegate full planning and budgetary responsibility for delivering these events to the Parish Clerk and c) to agree a set of clear criteria, to be communicated to partners, on the specific events at which the Parish Council shall bear the responsibility for the lighting of the City's beacon.

To approve the annual events plan for the City of Durham Parish Council during financial year 2025/26

Councillor D Freeman advised that events continue to be central to the work of the Parish Council's Business Committee; offering valuable opportunities to bring residents together, promote civic pride, and support the local economy. Councillor D Freeman advised that events also play a key role in raising the Parish Council's profile and encouraging footfall in the City, directly benefiting local businesses and the hospitality and retail sectors.

Councillor D Freeman advised that the Parish Council has allocated £30,000 in its 2025/26 budget to support events via the Business Committee, in line with its ongoing commitment to funding accessible, high-quality community initiatives.

The Clerk further highlighted that the Personnel Committee has requested the creation of a Gantt chart to monitor personnel input into events planning and the approval of this plan will assist him in meeting that requirement.

Councillor D Freeman noted that the Clerk and the Business Committee had worked closely with local stakeholders, including charities, cultural organisations, and business representatives, to ensure this year's events are inclusive, vibrant, and offer value for money.

Members unanimously **agreed** the events plan for 2025/26 as follows:

Event name 2025/26	Date of event	Potential Parish Council contribution	Notes
VE Day event	Thursday 8th May 2025	£2,500	Looking at street party in Durham Market Place on Bank Holiday and part-funding for a beacon lighting event on 8th May in line with national protocol - requires additional funding from Charter Trust / Freeman
Durham Pride	Saturday 24th - Sunday 25th May 2025	£5,000	Previous contribution of £3,000 but costs have increased significantly and there may be a shortfall in DCC funding for this event.

			AS supporting Mel find alternative sponsorship. Impressed by level of exposure and credit to sponsors.
Durham Regatta	Saturday 14th - Sunday 15th June 2025	£1,500	Same contribution as last year. Impressed by level of exposure and credit to sponsors.
Durham FRINGE Festival	Wednesday 23rd July to Sunday 27th July 2025	£5,000	Same contribution as last year. Impressed by level of exposure and credit to sponsors.
Durham DUCK race	Provisionally looking at 5th October 2025	£3,000	Previously committed this amount for event which did not take place in 2024. Durham BID applying for funding and leading on this event.
Durham City Children's Book Festival	TBC but usually last weekend in August	£1,000	Usual contribution of £3,500 however football stats from 2024 show little impact on football figures from this event and newly announced Seven Stories apparently going to support/ lead on this in future.
VJ Day Event	Friday 15th August 2025	£1,000	Not delivered previously but recognised by the recent Business Committee as equally as important as VE Day and therefore the Committee is keen to host an event to mark this important anniversary.
Uniformed Services Day	TBC but usually first Friday in November	£1,500	Same contribution as last year. Impressed by level of exposure and credit to sponsors.
Remembrance Sunday	Sunday 9th November 2025	£4,500	Parish Council is the civic host for this event.
Christmas events	Throughout December 2025	£5,000	Contribution primarily focused on supporting the Christmas Festival. Suggest reduction from £7,000 (2024) to £5,000 (2025) -

			other partners need to contribute, e.g. BID, DCC.
Lunar New Year 2026	Saturday 17th February 2026	£1,000	Same contribution as last year. Impressed by level of exposure and credit to sponsors.
		Total: £31,000.00	

7. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 27th February 2025 as follows:

- The Chair reported her thanks to all those involved in planning for the forthcoming Royal Maundy Service at Durham Cathedral. Members were informed that extensive security and operational arrangements were underway to ensure a fitting welcome to Their Majesties upon their visit to the City.
- The Chair further reported that progress was finally being made on the long-awaited retail unit at Mount Oswald. Members were advised that, subject to planning approval by Durham County Council, a 3,000 sqft Asda Express would be opening on The Drive opposite South College. The Chair welcomed this proposal, noting that residents in the Mount Oswald area had expressed strong interest in seeing this unit occupied.
- The Chair advised that she had represented the Parish Council at a recent meeting of Durham County Council's Highways Committee in relation to a proposed Traffic Regulation Order introducing a new road user charge zone. The Parish Council had supported further restrictions on the peninsula to address displaced and inconsiderate parking. The proposal was unanimously approved by the Committee despite objections from parents at the Chorister School. The Chair confirmed that the Council would continue to work closely with DCC to ensure appropriate monitoring and enforcement of the new restrictions.
- Thanks were extended to Claire Murray-Kemp for her work on submitting a strong Section 106 grant application for the installation of three sedum-roofed bus shelters in the Elvet and Claypath areas. The Chair expressed gratitude for her efforts, along with thanks to SNCF and the Elvet Residents Association for their support with the project. The outcome of the application is awaited with interest.
- The Chair reported that Durham County Council would be hosting a series of drop-in consultation events in Elvet during the week commencing 7th April. These events would focus on the proposed redevelopment of Elvet Park. The Parish Council would be participating actively in the consultation,

having already submitted a letter of support for the associated S106 funding bid.

- Members were reminded that the Parish Council's annual community grants window would be opening in April. The Chair advised that the Clerk would be circulating further details to local community and voluntary groups in due course. The Chair reaffirmed the Council's commitment to supporting local initiatives through this funding programme.
- Finally, the Chair reminded Members that the next Full Council meeting would be the final meeting of the current Council term ahead of the Local Elections in May. It was noted that the agenda would be kept light and an opportunity would be given for any retiring Members to offer farewell remarks.

8. REPORT FROM THE 'OPERATION MAUNDY' PLANNING GROUP

The Clerk reported that the Operation Maundy Planning Group had met on 4th March 2025 to discuss preparations for the upcoming Royal Maundy Service at Durham Cathedral on 17th April. The Clerk echoed the group's delight at the news of Their Majesties' visit—the first such Maundy visit to Durham since 1967—and agreed on the importance of extending a warm civic welcome.

The Clerk advised that the visit would be limited to a service at Durham Cathedral, during which His Majesty would present specially minted Maundy money to 152 recipients—76 men and 76 women—selected for their Christian service across the Province of York, as well as Wales and Scotland.

The Cathedral was noted to be preparing for a spectacular event, with the group acknowledging the Cathedral's strong track record in hosting significant national services.

The Clerk reported the following key updates and actions from the meeting:

- A road closure would be in effect on the peninsula from 6:00am on 17th April. The Clerk had been tasked with drafting a letter for businesses, to be reviewed by the police and other partners. He was also following up with DCC on when the closure might be lifted.
- Musical entertainment had been scheduled in the Market Place to encourage footfall and atmosphere. Colin Wilkes had booked singer Paul Skerritt for a morning performance, and the Clerk had arranged for the North Tyneside Steel Band to perform from 1:30pm. The Clerk was also liaising with the police and DCC to confirm that performances would not interfere with formal timings.
- Royal-themed decorations around Prince Bishops Shopping Centre were being explored by Julie Marshall.
- The Clerk had begun designing welcome posters for shopfronts and was working with Paul Howard on additional visual elements, including painted window displays. Drafts would be circulated and costs confirmed.

- Bunting for Saddler Street and Silver Street was being handmade by local WI groups and was scheduled to be installed on 10th April by Keith Dawson. The Clerk would liaise with partners to ensure no disruption to CCTV coverage.
- The Clerk also reported on plans for knitted displays, Frontages in Bloom, and a Royal-themed breakfast and Afternoon Tea promotion, led by Durham BID.
- Jet washing of the peninsula had been confirmed by DCC, with additional hanging baskets also being arranged.
- Promotional work would be jointly developed by the Parish Council and Durham BID. Members were reminded that for security reasons, the timing of the royal arrival could not be published.

The Clerk confirmed that the group would continue to meet virtually each Tuesday, with a final in-person meeting scheduled for Tuesday 15th April.

It was unanimously agreed to a) note the Clerk's report, and b) delegate all planning and budgetary responsibility (within the allocated £1,000 budget) for the delivery of Operation Maundy activities to the Parish Clerk.

In doing so, Members took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for all of his exceptional work on planning for this event.

Due to the confidential nature of the following items, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in 3 paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the LGA 1972 Act and section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. At this point in time the press and the public were asked to leave the room.

9. GOOD CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2025 NOMINATIONS

Members **agreed** to award the Good Citizen of the Year 2025 Award to: Ashleigh White, Andrea Cairns, Matthew Booth, Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson and Martin Hiles.

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
24th April 2025

ITEM 5: MOTION BY COUNCILLORS C LATTIN AND R FRIEDERICHSEN ON AIR QUALITY IN DURHAM CITY

Background:

Over the past four years, this Council has worked with residents, schools, and representatives from Durham County Council and the Northeast Combined Authority to raise awareness of air pollution in Durham city and to support and encourage the strongest possible action by the various actors. Solutions to improve air quality will continue to require urgent attention by the Durham City Parish Council and strong commitment to work through the complexities due to the high number of stakeholders involved. Various minutes of meetings of the Environment Committee and the Full Council detail the testimony heard and initiatives taken over the past years, and the budget already allocated to continue action on air quality in 2025.

The solutions:

This Council has carefully considered numerous proposals and seeks to improve air quality in the worst affected locations whilst optimising city-wide impacts. In this context, we recognise the importance of further modelling of alternative traffic flows, and stress the benefits of the quickest possible roll-out of electric buses. We recommend to the next Council to pursue the following solutions as strategic priorities.

Electric buses in Durham City

In September 2023, the Department for Transport (DfT) announced a programme to support the introduction of zero emission buses and associated infrastructure through the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA 2) programme. NECA was successful in its bid, receiving £7.4million in ZEBRA 2 award funding, which, alongside earlier investment from the Levelling Up Fund, will allow for an additional 95 zero emission buses to be delivered across the region and we understand these are expected to enter service by December 2025.

In spite of this investment however, the urgent need for us to collectively address the serious air quality issues in Durham City, in particular the Church Street area of Elvet remains a top priority.

Church Street has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area and yet remains one of the busiest walkways and one of the most polluted in Durham City. We have levels of pollution similar to those which resulted in the death of the 9-year-old child in London several years ago, yet we have a Primary School in the street and thousands of students walk down the road each day during term time. This level of air pollution has been consistently high for the past 11 years (apart from during lockdown and when New Elvet Bridge was closed). As such, interventions carried out to reduce pollution in Elvet have not worked.

Durham County Council's draft Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026¹, published in February 2024, identifies that 59% of NO_x emissions in Church Street are due to emissions from buses alone.

Based on recent NO₂ concentrations in this area, the Parish Council has urged the North East Mayor – and is asked to continue to urge the Mayor - to prioritise Church Street bus routes for the rollout of zero emissions buses in any further upcoming transport initiatives.

Local congestion charging zone expansion to include Elvet

A congestion zone (at the location identified via the map below) would be free to low emission buses, electric taxis, emergency vehicles and residents, with other vehicles paying a fee to enter. A congestion charging system currently operates in a neighbouring area on the Bailey.

Benefits

Reducing the number of vehicles passing through Elvet and prompting people to adopt cleaner vehicles. Reducing air pollution. Low price intervention requiring four cameras. These should ideally be self-funding providing charges are targeted at the right level. Using a congestion zone rather than a low emissions zone gives more flexibility over which vehicles are charged.

Risks

- Possible objections from businesses in the area, and from parents dropping off at St Oswald's School. A variation might be to only charge vehicles which pass right through the zone in a certain timeframe, so that if you entered and exited via the Whitechurch junction, for example to drop off a child, there would be no charge. Or if you entered via New Elvet Bridge and exited half an hour (or some time period to be decided) later after a visit to a local business, no charge would apply.
- Displacement of traffic into other parts of the city a similar zone for the Margery Lane area may be needed.
- Motorists attacking traffic cameras.
- Politicising congestion charges by claiming these 'demonise the working classes'. It should be noted that lower-income areas have persistently higher levels of pollution than wealthier areas e.g. See - [Associations between air pollution and socioeconomic characteristics, ethnicity and age profile of neighbourhoods in England and the Netherlands](#)

¹ <https://durham.gov.uk/media/44427/Draft-Air-Quality-Action-Plan/pdf/DraftAirQualityActionPlan.pdf?m=1712843686050>

Reducing student car usage

University staff currently have free annual parking permits in the University's car parks, but students are generally barred from parking within the University unless they have a medical need or require transport for their studies (e.g. teaching practice). During the University term there is much higher demand for parking spaces in Elvet, with the number of parked cars doubling during term time, suggesting that students without university permits are the main cause of the increased congestion. In principle, if students have a valid need to drive to the University, the University should accommodate them on-site rather than taking scarce public parking areas.

There is currently no time limit on car parking. Having many or all of the spaces restricted to a shorter period, such as two hours, for non-residents would make the area much less attractive to student car drivers and other people spending a long period in the city centre. As Church Street is on a Park and Ride route, the parking spaces should primarily be serving people who have a need to drive to access businesses, amenities, and properties on the street itself.

Aside from medical or educational needs, there are potentially valid reasons for students to use a car, such as if they are living at home elsewhere in County Durham and cannot access public transport, or if they need to drive to access employment to help pay for their studies. The university should consider widening the eligibility criteria for student permits, to remove these uses from the public roads. It would then be open to the County Council to discourage unnecessary student car use by better management of the on-street spaces near to the university and restricting residential permits issued to HMO properties.

While the university terms see a dramatic increase in cars on streets near the university and on residential streets in student areas, the number of students using a car to travel to the university has been steady at around 5% in successive travel surveys. Thus, a small minority of students have a big impact, not only on permanent residents of the city but also on their peers who prefer to use sustainable transport modes.

Risks

- May not dramatically reduce congestion nor pollution, therefore additional interventions are required.
- May lead to more parking of cars outside the Controlled Parking Zone, such as at Mount Oswald. Extending the CPZ may be necessary.

- Pushback from student representative bodies. This is why reviewing eligibility for university parking is a key component of the plan, to ensure fairness, along with highlighting the dangers to the majority of students of the poor air quality.

The Motion

"Given the long-standing, unacceptably high levels of air pollution across various parts of Durham city and their significant negative health and environmental impacts, the City of Durham Parish Council requests that the next Council continues the work to improve the City's air quality as a matter of priority. We urge the new Council to build on the priorities listed above for the benefit of the city as a whole whilst continuing to support the most affected residents."

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to consider the information as set out in the above report and approve the motion proposed by Councillors C Lattin and R Friederichsen on air quality in Durham City.
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ITEM 7: PARISH COUNCIL EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Introduction

The City of Durham Parish Council has a duty to communicate and engage effectively with its residents, partners, employees and stakeholders.

The aim of this strategy is to align our communications objectives to the overarching priorities of the Parish Council and ensure that our brand represents a forward-thinking and ambitious voice for our City as a Council focused on delivering excellent services to our residents.

Achieving the Parish Council's aims and objectives requires good communication with every individual, group and organisation we work with. Without proper co-ordination it would be difficult to make sure messages communicated by the Parish Council are consistent and accurate.

If communication is managed effectively, the Parish Council can create and seize opportunities to communicate with partners and the public and build an accurate and positive reputation beyond our Quality Award status as an organisation.

This strategy illustrates our aim to consistently deliver effective communications to our residents and partners and highlights that good communication is the responsibility of both officers and elected Parish Councillors on the Parish Council.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to strengthen community engagement and communication with all residents, partners and businesses within the City of Durham Parish area.

In adopting this strategy, the City of Durham Parish Council commits to:

- Facilitate community engagement by both informing and engaging with residents through a variety of different medias on the services and events we deliver.
- Promote and build a positive environment and a strong sense of community within the City.
- Focus on current issues whilst also looking forwards and embracing new thinking and ideas.
- Inform residents what action the Parish Council is taking on their behalf and how their precept is spent.
- Where no conflict of interest is likely to arise, to promote the work of other organisations which the Parish Council considers provide benefit to residents.

Objectives

- To promote the Parish Council's brand consistently
- To enhance and promote the reputation, image and beliefs of the Parish Council
- To be proactive in communications
- To provide inclusive and accessible communications
- To provide clear, regular, reliable, timely and accurate communications using a multi-channel approach but focused on a 'digital-first' approach
- Ensure all staff understand the Parish Council's priorities, brand and how their role contributes to the overall aims of the Council
- Ensure Councillors are kept informed and engaged
- Identify any training requirements for either staff or elected Members

Our communication principles

Through all communications we ensure:

- we are resident-focused, informative and positive, actively promoting local democracy and involving our residents and businesses in decision-making where possible
- the messages we send are transparent, consistent, accurate, clear and timely and in keeping with the Parish Councils' overall strategy
- we provide an open, professional, fair and efficient service to our media where we are honest and proactive
- we always aim to support and protect the reputation of the Parish Council, its staff and elected Parish Councillors
- our communications are always legal and adheres to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (published in March 2011)

Proactive engagement and communications

It is the responsibility of everyone working within the City of Durham Parish Council to identify newsworthy items; these will include a range of Parish Council activities and decisions. It is the responsibility of the Parish Clerk and the Chair of the Parish Council to make the decision as to whether or not a press release should be issued on any given topic.

Handling media enquiries

The Parish Clerk co-ordinates all formal media enquiries to the Parish Council. Members and Parish Council staff who are directly approached by the media should not attempt to answer questions themselves without establishing the full facts. If Members are in any doubt they should consult the Parish Clerk and the Chair of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council should not pass comments on leaks, anonymous allegations or allegations about individual staff or Members. The phrase "no comment" should not be used as a response to a media enquiry. The City of Durham Parish Council is open and accountable and should always try to explain if there is a reason why it cannot answer a specific enquiry.

Managing negative issues

From time to time the Parish Council may need to respond to negative issues. It is important that these situations are managed carefully so as to limit the potential for negative publicity.

Members should alert the Parish Clerk as soon as a potentially negative issue which may attract media interest is known. They should not wait until contact is made by the media.

Members and staff must be prepared to work together to prepare holding statements, other information and carry out research even if no media have contacted the Parish Council about an issue.

Should the issue relate to a formal standards complaint against a particular elected Member, the Parish Council cannot interfere in this process – this is managed through Durham County Council – nor should the Parish Council or any other Member make any public comment as to the detail of the issue or the process by which this is being dealt with.

Correcting inaccurate reporting

Should the media publish or broadcast something inaccurate about the Parish Council, a quick decision needs to be taken on any action necessary to correct it. The issue should be discussed with the Parish Clerk and Chair of the Parish Council to decide what action is appropriate. This could be a letter or press release, a conversation with the journalist concerned, a personal letter to the editor or, in exceptional cases, legal advice sought.

It should be noted that in the case of minor inaccuracies which have little or no impact on the message being conveyed, it can sometimes be counterproductive to complain; each case should be judged individually.

Occasionally the Parish Council will get something wrong. In these cases, damage limitation is the key – this can usually be achieved by admitting the mistake, apologising and stating how the Parish Council will learn from the error or put it right.

Press releases

The use of press releases is a key technique for publicising Parish Council activities, decisions and achievements. The work of the City of Durham Parish Council is very often subject to significant media attention, largely because of the nature of the parish we represent and all Members and staff should be mindful of this.

An official Parish Council release is made on behalf of the Parish Council as a whole; it will be written and issued by the Parish Clerk once agreed with the Chair of the Parish Council and (where required) the Chair of a relevant Committee of the Parish Council.

Official Parish Council releases will follow a corporate style appropriate for the media being targeted and a central record will be maintained. All releases will accurately reflect the corporate view of the Parish Council, contain relevant facts and will always include an approved quotation from an appropriate Parish Councillor.

Parish Council press releases will not promote the views of specific political groups, publicise the activities of individual Parish Councillors, identify a Member's political party or persuade the general public to hold a particular view.

Interviews

Any member of staff or elected Member who is contacted by a journalist requesting an interview in their capacity as a representative of the Parish Council should refer the matter to the Parish Clerk.

The situation and the information required by the journalist will inform the choice of person put forward for interview. Officers should never give their opinion on specific Parish Council policy but must keep to the corporate line and key messages, their role being to provide expertise and factual knowledge only in support of the Parish Council's approved and agreed policies.

Media coverage of council meetings

Provision is made for members of the media to attend Parish Council and Committee meetings. During meetings, Members and staff should be mindful that any comments and messages are put across in a manner which gives the journalist an accurate picture rather than relying on the journalist's interpretation of what may be a complex issue.

Where a meeting of the Parish Council and its Committees includes an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Parish Council's Standing Orders. Both the media and the public are entitled to film and record council meetings held in public.

Information Requirements

Should the Parish Council receive a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 on a topic on which there is correspondence (written or email), that correspondence will normally have to be disclosed unless it is exempt. The fact that the disclosure may prove embarrassing would not, in itself, prevent disclosure. In addition, care should be taken when processing personal data.

The Data Protection Act 2018 prevents the use of personal information other than for the purposes for which it was supplied. Members should bear this in mind when using any personal data which may be supplied to them by their constituents. The Parish Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law.

The Parish Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Parish Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law. Parish Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the code of conduct adopted by the Parish Council, a copy of which is available via the Parish Council's website: <https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/important-documents-and-policies/>

Important guidance to Members

The City of Durham Parish Council's communications with the media will always seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Parish Council as a body. If the views of Parish Councillors are different to the Parish Council's corporate position and views, it is the responsibility of every Councillor to make this distinction clear and Members must always make clear that they are speaking in an individual capacity and not on behalf of the Parish Council.

Subject to the obligations on Parish Councillors not to disclose information referred to in the "Freedom of Information and data protection" section and not to misrepresent the Parish Council's position, Parish Councillors are free to communicate their position and views.

Councillors should not make personal statements that could damage the reputation of the Parish Council, or have a negative impact on partnerships with other organisations, or on the credibility of the Parish Council or other Members.

All individual Councillor communications should:

- be lawful
- be cost effective
- be objective
- be even-handed
- be appropriate
- have regard to the Parish Council's policies, particularly our Equality and Diversity Policy
- be issued with care, particularly during periods of heightened sensitivity (e.g. during election campaigns).

Methods of communication and engagement

The Parish Council will use a variety of methods based on what reaches people most effectively:

Parish Council's office	Residents will be asked to book an appointment to meet with the Parish Clerk either via our website or at the front desk at Clayport library. All meetings with residents should generally always include at least one relevant Councillor depending on the issue.
Correspondence (general)	The Council will respond promptly to all external correspondence requiring a reply.

	External consultations will be acknowledged and responded to within the consultation period.
Parish Council meetings	All meetings (including Committees) are open to the public and press and advertised on the Parish Council's website, Agendas and minutes are available to all electronically (NB: Agendas are circulated and published at least 3 working days in advance of the meeting, excluding the date of publication and the date of the meeting – a statutory requirement).
Annual parish meeting	The annual meeting of the City of Durham parish is for all residents to come together to discuss whatever aspects of community life they wish and for the Parish Council to showcase its work over the last year. This will usually be held on the third Wednesday of the month of May at 6:30pm at an appropriate and accessible location within the City of Durham parish area. The date, time and location of the parish meeting will be advertised online, via the noticeboards around the parish and, from 2025, via an invitation flier through each household door within the parish area.
Parish Council website	The Parish Council website is updated by the Clerk. It is the responsibility of all Councillors to check the site regularly for any issues of inaccuracy or omissions and to inform the Clerk who is the website controller.
Social media	The Parish Council has its own Facebook page, controlled solely by the Parish Clerk, with over 2,000 active followers and has proven to be an excellent tool for online engagement. Members should contact the Parish Clerk should they wish to have anything published on the Facebook page. The Facebook page should not be used as an alternative to the Parish Council's website which should be the one-stop shop for all information about Council events and services. The Parish Council has also adopted a Social Media Policy which governs how this page is managed.
Noticeboards	The Parish Council does not own any noticeboards within the parish area.

	However, the Clerk has the contact details for all key holders of all the existing noticeboards within the parish area and – for events such as the date of the annual meeting of the parish as well as a photo and contact details of all Parish Councillors – will make use of these noticeboards, subject to the approval of their respective owners (in most cases this is DCC).
Parish Council newsletter	A quarterly online newsletter will be produced by the Clerk in conjunction with a selected Working Group. This will be in addition to the monthly Neighbourhood Warden report. In addition, a hard copy newsletter will be produced once per year and distributed in October as a "Year in Review" of the work of the Parish Council. This will coincide with the <i>"What to do if you have a local issue in Durham..."</i> annual leaflet in order to keep delivery costs to a minimum.
Press releases	Where the Parish Council decides to use external media to promote significant points of interest, local issues or achievement, it will issue a press release to the local media. The Parish Clerk will maintain an up-to-date list of media contacts.
Community events	The Parish Council will host ad hoc community consultations seeking to hear resident's views on specific issues or developments.
Surveys and Feedback	These are a key component of listening and it is important that the Council acts on the information gathered. At the annual meeting of the parish, attendees will be asked to complete a survey seeking their views on the main issues within the parish and how the Parish Council can improve its services. Similarly, ahead of the budget-setting process for the forthcoming financial year, the Parish Council will issue a parish-wide survey on resident priorities in October of each calendar year.
Fliers and leaflets	From time to time, the Parish Council will distribute fliers and leaflets to help advertise events or other work within the parish area. This is in addition to the regular <i>"What to do if you have a local issue in Durham..."</i> annual leaflet and

	the “Year in Review” annual hard copy parish newsletter (both distributed in October).
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Review of this strategy

Full Council will review this strategy on an annual basis in May at its annual meeting of the Council.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to approve the adoption of the external communications strategy, as set out in the above report.
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ITEM 8: PROPOSED OPERATIONS BETWEEN MAY ELECTIONS AND THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

- All candidates nominated for election are asked to attend the count on 2nd May as the Parish Clerk shall be present to ensure that all elected Members sign their Acceptance of Office and Declaration of Interests Forms on the day.
- All elected Members will be provided with a copy of the Good Councillors guide, the latest copy of the Council's Code of Conduct, the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan and '*Looking Forward*' document as well as copies of the Council's Strategy and Budget for 2025/26.
- For all retiring Members or those unelected following the 1st May local elections, the Parish Clerk shall be archiving your .gov.uk email accounts from 7th May 2025. This will mean that you will no longer have access to this email account. Members must not retain any personal information (such as email addresses, addresses, etc) from constituents on personal devices or otherwise, if they hold this solely through their capacity as a Parish Councillor and through their Parish Council email account, in accordance with GDPR.
- The existing Committee structure shall remain in place (i.e. Planning and Licensing Committee, Environment Committee, Business Committee, Personnel Committee and Finance Committee) until the annual meeting of the Parish Council on Wednesday 28th May.
- Only the Planning and Licensing Committee shall sit in May (9th and 23rd May 2025), given the statutory deadlines this Committee works to, and all elected Members will be asked to form a provisional Committee so that planning/ licensing applications may be dealt with accordingly. This Committee shall be chaired by either the existing Chair or Vice-Chair of the Committee or the Chair of the Parish Council. In the event that neither Member is returned after the election, Members will be asked to elect a provisional Chair for the purposes of these meetings.
- The annual meeting of the parish shall take place on Wednesday 21st May 2025 at 6:30pm.
- A timetable of future meetings of each of the Parish Council's Committees shall be agreed at the annual meeting of the Parish Council on Wednesday 28th May 2025.
- Members will be asked to arrive at Merryoaks Community Hall at 5:30pm on 28th May 2025 so that a photographer may take Members' official Parish Council photographs. All Members must attend this please and are encouraged to wear smart attire for this photograph.

- The Council agrees to delegate responsibility for any urgent matters, between the May elections and the annual meeting of the Parish Council, to the Parish Clerk.
- Members are asked to note that the Clerk shall be on annual leave between 2nd – 12th June 2025.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to approve the proposed operational arrangements between the local elections and the annual meeting of the Parish Council, as set out in the above report.
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