



City of Durham Parish Council

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SUMMONS

To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council: Councillors V Ashfield, G Bignardi, L Brown, T Cleaver, R Cornwell, D Freeman, R Handy, G Holland, E Hopgood, C Lattin, P Layton, F Robinson, E Scott, S Walker and L Wilson.

You are hereby summoned to attend the **Annual Meeting of the Council** to be held in the **Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF** on **Wednesday 28th May 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. ELECTION OF CHAIR

To elect the Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing year. The Parish Council Chair will read and sign the Declaration of Acceptance of this Office.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

To elect the Vice Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing year. No Declaration of Acceptance of this office is required.

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

4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

5. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24TH APRIL 2025

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

7. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 24th April 2025

8. PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW THE PARISH COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COUNCIL POLICIES

9. TO DECIDE ON APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

10. TO DECIDE ON PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

11. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR 2024/25

(i) to consider and agree any actions arising from the report of the internal auditor 2024-25 (copy attached)

(ii) to approve the annual governance statement 2024-25 (copy attached)

(iii) to approve the draft annual accounts for 2024-25 (copy attached)

(iv) to approve the register of assets 2024-25 (copy attached)

(v) to approve the accounting statement and explanation of variances 2024-25 (copies attached)

12. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S CLIMATE LEAD

13. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S ARMED FORCES CHAMPION

14. CYCLE OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Suggested Cycle of Meetings (all commencing at 7pm)

2024

Wednesday 25th June
Wednesday 23rd July
Wednesday 24th September
Wednesday 22nd October
Wednesday 26th November

2025

Wednesday 28th January
Wednesday 25th February
Wednesday 25th March
Wednesday 22nd April

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 will be 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 will be asked to leave the room.

15. ARRANGEMENTS FOR UPCOMING REMEMBRANCE EVENTS

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 24th April 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, R Friederichsen, R Hanson, G Holland, C Lattin and E Scott.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and 5 members of the public.

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

Apologies were received from Councillor R Ormerod. No further apologies were received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

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

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

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Rupert Benjamin updated the Parish Council on the ongoing situation at Homer Terrace, advising that he had been working with local neighbouring students on waste issues and advised that, whilst he had had some success in addressing on-street and side waste problems, he had noticed that some waste is being disposed of into the incorrect waste bins. The Chair highlighted that the Parish Council circulates on an annual basis a leaflet to all households to raise awareness of the waste products which should go into which each waste bin.

Mr Benjamin advised that he would continue to keep the Parish Council updated on the situation at Homer Terrace.

Mr John Lowe took the opportunity to thank the current Councillors on the City of Durham Parish Council for their outstanding work on behalf of the City of Durham parish community over the last four years and also advised that it had been a real pleasure as Chair of the City of Durham Trust to work alongside the Clerk and Members. The Chair thanked Mr Lowe for his kind remarks.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Planning and Licensing Committee**

Councillor G Holland presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 21st March and 4th April 2025. There were no queries from Members on these minutes.

• **Environment Committee**

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

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

Councillor C Lattin opened the discussion by highlighting the importance of clean air for the City of Durham Parish Council area and specifically highlighted key areas of the City which still experienced high levels of NO₂ levels due predominantly because of vehicle usage.

Councillor R Friederichsen echoed those concerns and expressed his view that clean air should be a human right for every resident and his intention, in supporting the proposed motion on the paper, was to see the good work the current Parish Council has started in this area, continued to be championed by the next Parish Council.

Councillor C Lattin proposed and Councillor R Friederichsen seconded the following 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."

Councillors E Scott and D Freeman expressed their concern that there is no protocol to tie a new Parish Council to a previous Council's direction through a motion as proposed.

Councillor D Freeman also expressed his concerns at a number of the initiatives proposed as part of the paper and background to this motion and felt that these perhaps focused on one small area of the City, as opposed to taking a City-wide look at how to address the very important issue of clean air.

Councillor A Doig advised that he felt it should be clear that, in agreeing to whatever wording of a motion on clean air, that this must be viewed as a) separate to; and b) not tie the new Council to the proposals as listed on the paper before Members. This was unanimously **agreed** by Members.

Councillor V Ashfield proposed an amendment to the motion and this was seconded by Councillor A Doig as follows:

"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 hopes that the next Council is aware of the request to continue the work to improve the City's air quality. We hope that the new Council reflects on the priorities listed above for the benefit of the city as a whole whilst continuing to support the most affected residents."

This amended motion was **agreed** by 7 votes in favour, 3 votes against and 1 abstention.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

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

The Chair expressed her delight at a real day of pride for our City last Thursday as we welcomed Their Majesties the King and Queen to Durham Cathedral for the Royal Maundy Service. His Majesty handed out Maundy Money to 76 men and 76 women for outstanding service in their communities. The Chair advised that it was a joy to see such a large crowd for this historic occasion. The Lord Lieutenant Mrs Sue Snowden has already been in contact with the Clerk following the event to thank both the Parish Council and representatives of the Operation Maundy Working Group for their tireless work in dressing the City with bunting and knitted displays, putting on musical entertainment and getting the businesses involved with a Royal eatery offer for visitors.

The Chair echoed those thanks and advised that the Clerk has arranged for Mrs Snowden to write directly with a letter of thanks to all those involved with this work. The Chair thanked our friends at Durham Cathedral too for a stunning and unforgettable service.

The Chair also congratulated the 2,500 bikers who revved their way through the City as part of this year's annual Easter Egg run. The Chair advised that this event was an enormous success which saw Easter Eggs being delivered right across the region to children in hospital this Easter. A hugely worthy cause which also raises funds for charities such as the Teenage Cancer Trust, Stray Aid, Feeding Families, Miles for Men and the Northumbria blood bikes amongst others. Terrific work all involved!

The Chair thanked the Clerk and the Durham Markets Company for the exceptional work they are doing in arranging events to mark the VE Day anniversary in May. On 5th May, the Chair reminded Members that the Parish Council will be jointly hosting a community street party in the Market Place. On the 8th May Veterans will be joining colleagues at the Durham Rowing Club for a special display on the River Wear and the Clerk is also liaising with Durham Fire and Rescue on a quiet and dignified lighting of the beacon.

The Chair expressed her shock and concern at the serious attack on prison guard officers at HMP Frankland some weeks ago. The Chair noted that the local press is reporting that this is being reviewed at the very top of Government and advised that this acts as a further reminder of the dangerous and dedicated service of our

public sector and emergency services. The Council sent best wishes for good health and healing to the officers involved.

The Chair thanked local authorities in the LA7 who have already responded to our letter relating to the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility. The Chair advised that the Clerk has been liaising with Alan Patrickson at DCC regarding a follow-up meeting to his correspondence and the Environment Committee have particularly stressed a desire to speak with Alan on ways in which the Parish and Town Council sector can support DCC and others in recycling work. The Chair advised that she found it appalling that the North East lags so far behind other regions in its recycling figures and we must all work together to see a change to this.

The Chair encouraged all Members to read the recent appeal decision circulated by the Clerk yesterday relating to a further C3 to C4 application. In addition to our success in preventing the change of use for the Dentist on North Road, the Chair advised that this appeal decision comes as very welcome news and is a strong indication of the hard work and effort undertaken by our Planning and Licensing Committee in resisting further loss of family homes and primary facilities.

Finally, the Chair asked all Members, whether retiring, returning or unreturned after May 1st, to please join the Council for its annual meeting of the parish on 21st May. The Chair advised that she will present an annual report of the work all Members have helped to deliver over the last year and the wider term of this Parish Council and advised that she was also aware that residents will wish to express their appreciation to you all.

7. PARISH COUNCIL EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Members unanimously **approved** the adoption of the following 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).

Review of this strategy

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

End of report

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

Members **agreed** the following operational arrangements between the May elections and the annual meeting of the Parish Council, noting that all prospective candidates for the Parish Council should also receive a copy of these arrangements:

- 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.

- To ensure that all elected Members sign their Acceptance of Office and Declaration of Interests Forms, the Clerk will be available to get these to you and signed on one of the following dates: **2nd May, 6th May or 12th May**. Please contact the Clerk via email at parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk in order to arrange a mutually acceptable time on these days to meet and do this.
- 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.
- No Parish Council Committees shall sit during the month of May.
- 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 are 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 has now agreed 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.

End of report

9. FAREWELL REMARKS BY RETIRING COUNCILLORS

Councillors E Ashby, J Ashby, N Brown, R Hanson and R Friederichsen took the opportunity to thank all colleagues on the Parish Council for their collective work and good comradery over this term of the Parish Council, highlighting particularly a number of successes over that period. All Members wished the Parish Council and its Members and staff well into the future.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all those Members retiring at this election for their hard work and dedicated service to the City of Durham Parish Council community. The Chair highlighted specific projects she was particularly delighted to work with colleagues on and she felt that this had been a really excellent and successful term of the Parish Council.

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

Signed,

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(28th May 2025)**

ITEM 8: PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW THE PARISH COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COUNCIL POLICIES

Members are asked to consider the formation of a dedicated, time-limited Working Group to conduct the annual review of the Parish Council's core governance documents, including our Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Committee Terms of Reference and Council Policies.

The existing documents can be found via our website here: <https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/important-documents-and-policies/>

In addition to these documents listed, the Working Group will also be asked to consider a new Gifts and Hospitality Policy, following correspondence by the Clerk earlier this month.

The primary objective of this review is to ensure that all documents remain current, legally compliant and reflective of best practice in Parish Council governance.

The Parish Council has an established tradition of maintaining high standards of governance, transparency, and accountability. As part of this commitment, and although not required to do so by statute, the Council reviews its principal documents on an annual basis. This approach ensures that the Council continues to operate within a robust and up-to-date framework and that all Members are kept updated on the Council's procedures, etc.

The Working Group will be asked to: review each of the listed documents in detail; take advice from the Clerk on any changes in legislation since the last review of these documents in 2024; identify any sections requiring amendment or clarification; and recommend any updates or revisions as necessary to the next Full Council meeting on 25th June whereupon it is hoped that they will be formally adopted.

This review usually takes place in April each year with recommendations for any amendments to these documents being formally adopted at the annual meeting of the Council in May. However, it was felt that this should be delayed by one month to allow newly elected Members of the Council to familiarise themselves further with these important documents. Following approval of these documents in June, it is proposed that the next review takes place in April 2026 for adoption in May moving forward.

It is proposed that the Working Group be composed of a minimum of three Parish Councillors as well as the Parish Clerk.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to approve the formation of this Working Group as set out in the above report. 2) If 1 is approved, for Members to approve the membership of this Working Group.
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ITEM 9: TO DECIDE ON APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The Parish Council has historically appointed representatives to serve as its representative(s) on outside local organisations, where the aims of these are aligned with the strategic objectives of the Parish Council in the exercise of its functions.

These roles provide valuable channels of communication and offer Parish Councillors the opportunity to contribute to the strategic direction of key community partners.

Moreover, having representatives on these organisations supports collaborative working, promotes strong relationships with community groups and ensures the Parish Council remains informed and engaged with wider local initiatives.

The below table shows the list of organisations the previous Parish Council agreed to be represented on along with their previous representatives.

Members should be aware that, as per the terms of reference of the CDALC Larger Councils Forum, the City of Durham Parish Council may have up to a maximum of three representatives, which may include either three Parish Councillors or two Parish Councillors and the Clerk.

Members should also note that, as per the terms of reference of the City Safety Group, this group is an officer only group and therefore the representative of the Parish Council on this group must be the Clerk. The same applies to the Durham BID board.

Members are also reminded that there is a need for all Parish Council representatives to provide a report to Full Council on the work of these organisations/ bodies following each meeting they attend.

There is also a need for the Parish Council to review its membership of these organisations on an annual basis.

Local organisation/ body	City of Durham Parish Council representative
Community Engagement Task Force	(Previously Victoria Ashfield)
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Economic	(Previously Esther Ashby)
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Lived Environment	(Previously Carole Lattin)
CDALC Larger Councils Forum	(Previously Esther Ashby, Adam Shanley and Richard Ormerod)
City Safety Group	Adam Shanley
Durham BID board	Adam Shanley
Durham University Housing Group	(Previously John Ashby)

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to agree which of these local organisations they wish for the Parish Council to remain represented on. 2) With 1) being agreed, for Members to agree who the Parish Council representatives should be on these organisations.
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ITEM 10: TO DECIDE ON PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

There is a need for the Parish Council to agree its committee membership for this year of the Parish Council.

At present, the Parish Council has five Committees as well as Full Council. Each of these Committees carries out a specific function of the Parish Council, as summarised below:

Planning and Licensing Committee

- Reviews all planning applications and appeals and responds accordingly.
- Reviews licensing applications (mainly alcohol licensing) and ensures they comply with the licensing act and local licensing policy.
- Engages in policy reviews, appeals and traffic regulation consultations.
- **Meets once every two weeks**

Business Committee

- Plans events throughout the year to increase footfall to our local businesses.
- Promotes Durham as a business hub, focusing on filling empty retail spaces, and addressing issues affecting businesses.
- Facilitates communication between businesses and residents.
- Engages with stakeholders like Durham BID, Durham County Council and Visit County Durham to promote business and tourism.
- **Meets once every two months**

Environment Committee

- Oversees the Parish Council's bulb/ tree/ plants planting schemes.
- Oversees our allotments on Larches Road.
- Lobbies on issues such as footways, street lighting, litter bins, bus shelters, and road safety.
- Advises on climate change and environmental issues, including traffic and air quality.
- Promotes recycling and maintaining a clean and green parish area.
- **Meets once per month**

Finance Committee

- Develops and recommends the annual budget and financial plans.
- Monitors Council accounts, insurance and financial procedures.
- Considers and makes recommendations on the small grants scheme.
- Provides financial oversight and advice to other Committees and the Council.
- Considers all Section 106 applications within the parish area.
- **Meets four times per year and as and when required.**

Personnel Committee

- Manages staffing matters: recruitment, appointments, pay, conditions, and health and safety.

- Handles grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- Oversees the hiring process, ensuring compliance with employment and equality standards.
- **Meets once per year and as and when required.**

In some cases, a committee has delegated authority to act on behalf of Full Council (for example the Planning and Licensing Committee responds on behalf of Full Council to planning applications, the Business Committee organises events on behalf of Full Council, etc.) however all decisions on expenditure (where delegated authority does not exist) and/or of a strategic nature, are taken by Full Council.

In all cases, the quorum (the minimum number of Members in attendance necessary to conduct the business of the Committee) for the Parish Council's Committees is three or one third of the total Committee membership (whichever is the greater) but not less than three.

In all cases, the (at present) maximum number of Members per committee is set out within the Terms of Reference for each Committee and is included in the grid below. In addition, to support the creation of an annual timetable of meetings, a proposed provisional date and time for each committee is included here also. In all cases, a special meeting of each Committee may be called at any time.

No Committees sit in August or December.

Please note that it is the responsibility of each Committee to elect its Chair and Vice-Chair at its next meeting.

Planning and Licensing Committee (7 Members) (Proposed to meet at 10:00am every other Friday starting from 27th June)	Environment Committee (6 Members) (Proposed to meet on Tuesday 24th June at 13:00pm and thereafter every second Tuesday of the month at 13:00pm)
Personnel Committee (5 Members)	Business Committee (6 Members)

(Proposed to meet on Wednesday 5th
November at 11:00am)

(Proposed to meet on Tuesday 15th July at 13:00pm and thereafter every third Tuesday of every other month at 13:00pm)

Finance Committee (6 Members)

Proposed to meet on Friday 20th June
at 11:00am and then 10th
September, 14th January 2026 and
11th March 2026.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

- 1) For Members to agree the membership of each Committee for this year of the Parish Council.
- 2) For Members to approve the meeting dates and times for each Committee to support the creation of an annual meetings timetable.

ITEM 11: INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT – 2024/2025

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

1. Background

- 1.1. Following the abolition of the Audit Commission a new organisation has been established which is responsible for issuing proper practices in relation to the accounts of smaller authorities. It is called the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Board (SAPPB), and is made up of members of the SLCC, NALC, CIPFA, the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government (DHCLG), the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the National Audit Office and a representative of the external audit firms appointed to smaller authorities.
- 1.2. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 must complete Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) at the end of each financial year. The AGAR is made up of 3 sections along with an annual internal audit report. which is to be completed by the Parish Council's independent internal auditor, who is to give an opinion of the Parish Council's internal controls.
- 1.3. CDALC have provided Councils with a checklist to be used, this annual audit uses this list as the minimum of the tests to be carried out.

2. Objectives of the Audit

- 2.1. To examine the system of internal controls to ensure that the Council may obtain an adequate level of assurance for its activities during the year.

3. Scope of the Work and the areas of Audit Work examined.

- 3.1 The Scope of Work covers the key control tests identified in the AGAR.
- 3.2. To properly complete the audit the following areas of activity have been examined and tested by the Internal Auditor:
 - Payroll
 - Creditors
 - Risk Management
 - Income collection and Banking arrangements
 - Petty cash (none held)
 - Assets
 - Debtors
 - Budgetary Control (including year-end procedures)
 - Exercise of public rights
- 3.3. City of Durham Parish Council was formed 1st April 2018 with its first Council meeting on 10th May 2018. These accounts examined are for the year 2024/25.

4. Findings

4.1. Payroll

- 4.1.1 The City of Durham Parish Council currently has 1 employee a Parish Clerk.

4.1.2. Durham County Council administered the salary and payroll deductions of the Clerk for the 2024/25, and produce payroll control reports, which is a good independent internal control for the Council, and payments are made for his salary by BACS from the Council's bank account. These were found to be correct.

4.2. Creditors (Accounts Payable)

4.2.1. City of Durham uses Rialtus finance system (used by most Town and Parish Councils). All payments and receipts are input into this system with adequate reports produced throughout the year and at the year end.

4.2.2. All payments made are reported to the Finance Committee each month, which meet every quarter where it is reported under Financial Position. The Parish Council makes all payments via electronic banking. Two Members of the Council from the current list of five authorised signatories (excluding the Clerk who acts as administrator) must authorise every payment against invoices before authorising the payment using their own login details provided by the bank. There is a facility for making urgent payments out of meeting if necessary. Such payments are also reported to the Parish Council's Finance Committee meeting and all decisions to spend funds as urgent action are ratified at the next Full Council meetings and minuted as such.

4.2.3. The Clerk sends details in emails to Councilors with the attached invoices ready for payment. After logging in the approval is returned by email by the Councilors to the Clerk as evidence of seeing the invoice. All payments are then detailed in the next Committee.

4.2.4 The Cash book 1 payments report for 2024/25 was used to identify all payments and this was checked to the invoices and the bank statements. All invoices had payment date recorded on them.

4.3. Risk Management

4.3.1. The Council carries out regular risk assessments in respect of actions with the Clerk making an annual risk management report to the Council, which is agreed with the statement of accounts.

4.4. Income collection and Banking arrangements

4.4.1. Income for the Council is for the precept, Vat claim and any grant monies. The Council does not collect any income. VAT claim for 2023/24 was received 17th February 2025.

4.4.2. Bank reconciliations are properly carried out to the bank reconciliation reports and bank statements.

4.5. Accounting Records

4.5.1. The Accounting records for 2024/25 produced reports from the Rialtus finance systems and the completed statement of accounts as shown on the AGAR was confirmed to these reports.

4.6. Assets

4.6.1. The Council has completed an asset register which is approved with the

statement of accounts.

4.7. Debtors

4.7.1. There are no accounts raised for debts.

4.8. Budgetary Control

4.8.1. Preparing for budget setting for the financial year 2025/26. - All of the Parish Council's Committees meet to consider their own budget request to go forward for the Finance Committee to consider. A recommended budget and precept request is then agreed at the Parish Council's Full Council meeting in January,

4.8.2. The 2025/26 budget and precept were discussed and agreed at the 15th January 2025 Finance meeting and approved at Full Council on 22nd January 2025.

4.9. Governance arrangements

4.9.1. The Council has agreed its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which is the backbone of good governance arrangements. The Annual Governance Report as part of the AGAR will highlight if any improvement in governance arrangements is needed along with any audit recommendations.

4.9.2. A review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and some policies were agreed and adopted at Council's Annual General Meeting on 23rd May 2024.

4.9.3. The Council has a responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of: The Full Council The Clerk to the Council who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment and managing risks The independent Internal Auditor who reviews the Council's systems of internal control Mazars, the Council's external auditors, who make the final check using the AGAR, which is completed and signed by the Responsible Financial Officer, the Chairman and the Internal Auditor. A report on the Parish Council's Internal Controls was agreed by the Full Council on 22nd January 2025.

4.9.4. The announcement of the public rights for 2023/24 was announced 27th June 2024 with the inspection of the accounts available between 28th June 2024 and 8th August 2024 and was placed on the Council's website.

5. Conclusions/Recommendations

5.1. The Council has good Standing orders and Financial Regulations in place and there are good governance arrangements in place.



Gordon Fletcher (C.M.I.I.A.),
Internal Auditor for the Town Council
Date: 9th May 2025

ITEM 12: TERMS OF REFERENCE AND APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S CLIMATE LEAD

In May 2023, in recognition of the importance of activities to address climate change at a local level, the Parish Council agreed to appoint a Member of the Parish Council as its chosen Climate Lead. In doing so, the following Terms of Reference for this position were also established.

This role and these Terms of Reference must be reviewed on an annual basis at the Council's annual meeting of the Council.

Climate Lead Terms of Reference

1. The Nomination

The Parish Council shall nominate one councillor of the Environment Committee at its annual meeting in May to undertake various roles consequential on the Parish Council's declaration of a climate emergency in March 2019. The councillor will be termed 'City of Durham Climate Lead' and will act to strengthen the Council's climate-related work in the short and long term. Strong climate action is strategic; it integrates the various parts of the Council, and covers mitigation as well as adaptation.

2. The Nomination process

Any councillor may nominate themselves for the role. Any nomination should be submitted in writing to the Clerk 7 clear working days before the meeting. Any nomination should be seconded by another councillor whose name should be recorded on the written submission. The nomination will be subject to a majority vote of the full Council. In the event of two or more nominations, there will be an election whereby the successful nomination will have a majority of votes cast; in the event of a tie, the Chair will have the casting vote.

3. The Length of Nomination

The period of nomination shall be for one calendar year; it may be renewed annually.

4. The Roles

The Climate Lead's roles are as follows:

- to support the Chair and Vice-Chair on climate-related discussions and decisions relating to the Full Council;
- to advise on and support coordination of climate action across the Committees of the Council through the Committees' Chairs and Vice-Chairs;
- to provide guidance on, and - where tasked to do so - coordinating, the actions of the Parish Council as a whole and its committees;
- to provide guidance on those areas of Parish Council where there is a climate aspect, including:

- procurement and commissioning;
 - place shaping (planning, development, transport);
 - showcasing;
 - partnerships;
 - involving, engaging, communicating (see Local Government Association (2021; point 3.2) A councillor's workbook on the local pathway to net zero).
- to support the development of external relationships when tasked to do so by the Parish Council and its Committees;
 - to attend meetings of external partners to provide guidance on, and - where tasked to do so – coordinating, the actions of the Parish Council as a whole and its committees;
 - to support learning and development regarding climate policy;
 - to access technical expertise to inform the Parish Council's climate action.

5. Reporting

The Climate Lead reports to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment Committee and to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Full Council, as appropriate.

6. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The nomination should act at all times within the Parish Council's Standing Orders, with particular reference to SO18 (Financial Controls and Procurement), SO22 (Relations with Press/Media), SO24 (Communicating with District and County or Unitary Councillors), SO25 (Restrictions On Councillor Activities), FR 10 (Orders for work, goods and services), FR11 (Contracts), FR15 (Insurance) and FR17 (Risk management). The nomination should also act in accordance with City of Durham Parish Council policies on Communications, Environment and Sustainability, Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Social Media.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to agree the Terms of Reference for the Climate Lead role. 2) If 1) is agreed, for the Council to appoint a Climate Lead from within its membership for this year of the Parish Council.
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ITEM 13: TERMS OF REFERENCE AND APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S ARMED FORCES CHAMPION

As Members are aware, the Parish Council has taken a lead at a local level on events such as the Battle of Britain, VE and VJ Day anniversaries, D-Day commemorations, Remembrance Day and many more.

In order to promote the role of the Parish Council in its support for our Armed Forces personnel, in June 2023, the Parish Council agreed to establish a new Armed Forces Champion role from within its membership and agreed that one Member be asked to assume this role.

The agreed primary aim of the Armed Forces champion is to maintain the Parish Council's commitment to support the Armed Forces and their families and veterans, and raise the profile of the support provided by the Council and the community as a whole.

To help define this role, the following Terms of Reference were also agreed:

Armed Forces Champion Terms of Reference

1. The Nomination

The Parish Council shall nominate one Member at its annual meeting in May to undertake various roles consequential on the Parish Council's activities to honour our Armed Forces and continued links with the DLI. The councillor will be termed 'City of Durham Parish Council Armed Forces Champion' and will act to strengthen the Council's work on events such as D-Day, the Battle of Britain, Armistice Day, Remembrance Day, etc.

2. The Nomination process

Any councillor may nominate themselves for the role. Any nomination should be submitted in writing to the Clerk 7 clear working days before the meeting. Any nomination should be seconded by another councillor whose name should be recorded on the written submission. The nomination will be subject to a majority vote of the Full Council. In the event of two or more nominations, there will an election whereby the successful nomination will have a majority of votes cast; in the event of a tie, the Chair will have the casting vote.

3. The Length of Nomination

The period of nomination shall be for one calendar year; it may be renewed annually.

4. The Roles

The Armed Forces Champion's roles are as follows:

- Principal objective - raise the profile and needs of the Armed Forces community, within the Council and the parish area.
- Foster and maintain good working relationships with the Armed Forces community.
- Represent the Parish Council at key events centred around honouring the Armed Forces community both past and present, e.g., Durham City Remembrance Day.
- To act as the cultural link between the Parish Council and the DLI, County Council, Armed Forces and other stakeholders on the redevelopment of the DLI museum.
- Understand the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) and the needs of the Armed Forces Community in relation to Council policies and service delivery. Ensure awareness is cascaded to staff who have daily contact with the public through engagement.
- Actively communicate the AFC and the work in promoting it within the Council and the community, ensuring that Armed Forces Champion names and contact details are publicised and known both internally and externally through various communication channels.
- Act as the first point of contact for local Armed Forces Units and other key stakeholders, such as Service charities and other service providers.
- Ensure all areas of Council services recognise the needs of the Armed Forces community
- Understand Armed Forces activities and events within the parish area

5. Reporting

The Armed Forces Champion reports to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Full Council, as appropriate.

6. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The nomination should act at all times within the Parish Council's Standing Orders, with particular reference to SO18 (Financial Controls and Procurement), SO22 (Relations with Press/Media), SO24 (Communicating with District and County or Unitary Councillors), SO25 (Restrictions On Councillor Activities), FR 10 (Orders for work, goods and services), FR11

(Contracts), FR15 (Insurance) and FR17 (Risk management). The nomination should also act in accordance with City of Durham Parish Council policies on Communications, Environment and Sustainability, Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Social Media.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to agree the Terms of Reference for the Armed Forces Champion. 2) If 1) is agreed, for the Council to appoint an Armed Forces Champion from within its Membership for this year of the Parish Council.
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