

City of Durham Parish Council

The City of Durham Parish Council. Office 3, Clayport Library. 8
Millennium Place. Durham. DH1 1WA.

Telephone: 07510 074875

Email: parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk

Date of summons: 18th September 2025

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 **Meeting of the Council** to be held in the **Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF** on **Wednesday 24th September 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. PRESENTATION BY MR ARTHUR LOCKYEAR MBE, VOLUNTEER REMEMBRANCE COORDINATOR, ON THE DURHAM CITY REMEMBRANCE PARADE**
- 4. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 23RD JULY 2025**
- 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 6. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 11th July and 25th July 2025**

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

<https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/meetings/planning-and-licensing-committee/>

- Consultation on proposed countywide Article 4 Direction to improve the management of HMOs
- Proposal to support the consultation and engagement for the Durham Castle and Cathedral UNESCO World Heritage Site Management Plan 2025-2035

- Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 8th July 2025**

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

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

- Proposal to support the re-siting of the Houghall Boundary Stone between the City of Durham and Shincliffe parish boundaries at Maiden Castle
- Proposal to support the Merryoaks Community Hall Energy Resilience Project

- Business Committee minutes from the meeting held on 10th July 2025**

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

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

- Proposal to provide further support to the City's ShopWatch initiative

- Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 20th June 2025**

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

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

- 7. CHAIR'S UPDATES**

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 23rd July 2025

- 8. SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CENTRES/FACILITIES AS A KEY STRATEGIC AIM OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**
- 9. MID-YEAR REVIEW OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**
- 10. PROPOSED RELOCATION OF THE CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE**
- 11. COMPLETION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S EXTERNAL AUDIT 2024/25**
- 12. REPORT ON PLANNING FOR THE REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2025 EVENT.**
- 13. REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**
 - Report by Councillor C Lattin on the most recent meeting of Durham University's Community Engagement Task Force Lived Environment Sub-Group.

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Wednesday 23rd July 2025 at 7:00pm in the Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF.

Present: Councillors V Ashfield, L Brown, T Cleaver, R Cornwell, D Freeman, R Handy, E Hopgood, C Lattin, F Robinson, S Walker and L Wilson.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley.

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

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors E Scott, G Bignardi and G Holland.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No declarations of interest were received.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 25TH JUNE 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 25th June 2025 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public wished to speak at this point in the meeting.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor L Brown presented the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd April and 27th June 2025.

Proposed responses to the Government consultation on reforming Local Authority planning committees

Councillor L Brown presented the minutes of the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings held on 22nd April and 27th June 2025. There being no queries from Members, Councillor L Brown moved on to Committee updates.

Councillor L Brown introduced the Committee's detailed responses to the Government's technical consultation on planning committee reform. This consultation, issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in May 2025 following the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, sought views on a proposed national scheme of delegation for planning decisions,

mandatory controls on the size of planning committees, and nationally administered training for elected members. Councillor L Brown explained that the Committee had reviewed the proposals comprehensively and concluded that they would severely erode local democratic oversight. She emphasised that Durham County Council already delegated over 90% of planning applications to officers, and therefore a mandatory national system was both unnecessary and harmful. It was noted that apparently minor residential developments could be of considerable significance in small communities, while reserved matters applications could raise issues of great local contention.

The Committee's proposed responses therefore strongly rejected the imposition of a two-tier delegation system and called instead for advisory guidance to improve national consistency while preserving local discretion.

The responses supported high-quality, nationally coordinated training, but again stressed the importance of flexibility to reflect the local context of Durham City, including issues around student housing and the World Heritage Site.

Members **agreed** that these responses provided a robust defence of local democracy and endorsed them unanimously. It was further agreed that a formal letter be sent to Durham's Member of Parliament urging her to raise these concerns with the relevant Minister.

Report on licensed *sui generis* HMOs within the City of Durham parish area

Councillor L Brown also presented the Committee's report on licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) operating in the *sui generis* category. She reported that data from December 2024 indicated that at least 150 such HMOs existed within the parish, yet initial research revealed that 103 of these – representing 68.7% – did not have any corresponding planning consent visible on the County Council's online planning register.

The Committee expressed particular concern about properties claimed to have operated as HMOs prior to the 2010 changes in national regulations, where the standard and type of evidence accepted by the County Council's licensing team remained unclear. Concerns were also raised about the lack of transparency of the current HMO register, which required postcode-by-postcode searches.

Councillor L Brown highlighted the serious consequences of any disconnect between the licensing and planning regimes, particularly in terms of community balance, amenity, antisocial behaviour, and confidence in local regulation.

Members unanimously **agreed** that the Parish Council should seek a joint meeting with Durham County Council's HMO Licensing Team and Planning Department to clarify verification procedures, evidence requirements, and steps towards greater transparency. It was **agreed** that the Clerk and Councillor L Brown should meet with officers on behalf of the Parish Council.

Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the minutes of the Environment Committee meetings held on 8th April and 24th June 2025. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee updates.

Proposals to support places of safety and residents during an emergency as part of the Parish Council's Community Emergency Plan.

Councillor C Lattin reported on the Parish Council's Community Emergency Plan, which had been developed in partnership with Durham County Council's Civil Contingencies Unit, residents' associations, and other stakeholders. The Plan identified designated Places of Safety across the city, including Durham Cathedral, St Cuthbert's Church on North Road, St Oswald's Institute, the Radisson Hotel, Merryoaks Community Centre, and other key venues.

Councillor C Lattin explained that, following consultation with a residents' working group, it was recommended that emergency supply boxes should be provided at these venues. These boxes would contain A-boards to identify venues, loud hailers, water purification devices, foil blankets, torches, high-visibility jackets, ID badges for volunteers, and non-perishable food.

Each box would be tailored to the most likely risks in the area, such as flooding or power loss. The total budget allocation of £4,000 would allow the provision of boxes to those sites most likely to require them, and basic training would be offered to volunteers in their use.

Members welcomed the proposal as a practical step in improving community resilience and unanimously **agreed** to allocate the £4,000 and to delegate procurement and distribution to the Environment Committee.

Update on the proposal to introduce 3 x new green-roofed bus shelters within the Elvet and Gilesgate parish ward.

Councillor C Lattin went on to update Members on the proposal to install three new green-roofed bus shelters within the Elvet and Gilesgate division, at two locations on Lower Claypath and one on Church Street near St Oswald's Church.

Councillor C Lattin advised that these shelters, which were intended to contribute to improved air quality and biodiversity in line with Durham County Council's Air Quality Action Plan, had received strong support from residents' groups. Durham County Council's Public Transport team had confirmed that the Council would adopt and maintain the shelters themselves, but responsibility for the green roofs would rest with the Parish Council.

A formal quote had been received for 20 annual maintenance visits, at a cost of £1,050 across the three shelters. Councillor C Lattin emphasised that this commitment was essential to secure the Section 106 funding and deliver the project, which would not only improve air quality but also capture carbon and enhance the urban environment.

Members expressed their support for the innovative design and unanimously **agreed** that the Parish Council assume responsibility for maintaining the green roofs at the quoted annual cost, subject to annual review.

Renewing the Service Level Agreement with Durham County Council for an enhanced Neighbourhood Warden service

Councillor C Lattin also presented the report on the renewal of the Service Level Agreement with Durham County Council for the enhanced Neighbourhood Warden Service. She reminded Members that the service, introduced in 2019 and most recently renewed in 2022, had made a significant contribution to tackling littering, fly-tipping, dog fouling, and antisocial behaviour.

The Parish's dedicated Wardens, Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson, had built strong relationships with residents and were recently recognised with the Good Citizen of the Year Award. The SLA was now due for renewal for a further three years, from July 2025 to July 2028. Durham County Council had advised that the annual cost would increase from £10,000 to £13,000, reflecting inflation and salary pressures.

The Clerk emphasised that this cost had not risen since 2019, that residents consistently valued the service highly, and that continuity was essential.

Members warmly praised the work of the Wardens and unanimously **agreed** to renew the SLA for a further three years, to approve the revised annual cost of £13,000, and to confirm their strong preference to retain Kirk and Antony as the officers delivering the service.

Business Committee

Councillor E Hopgood then presented the minutes of the Business Committee meeting held on 18th March 2025. There were no questions from Members on these minutes.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair began her update by thanking all those who had supported the launch of the most recent landlord appeal. She advised that last year's appeal had enabled the funding of four full days of additional waste collections during student move-out, which had made a very real and visible difference to the City. She was pleased to report that this year's appeal, launched only a few weeks ago, had already attracted contributions of over £3,500. The Chair placed on record her gratitude both to the landlords who had generously donated and to the Members who had worked so hard to ensure the success of this initiative, stressing that such efforts continued to help keep the City clean and green throughout the year.

The Chair also extended her thanks to all those involved in producing the Parish Council's most recent newsletter, which she described as an excellent reflection of the wide-ranging work of the Council. She reminded all Committee Chairs to submit their content for the next edition by no later than the following day at midday, so that the publication could proceed to schedule.

The Chair went on to offer congratulations to Canon Pastor Michael Everitt of Durham Cathedral on his appointment as Interim Dean of Carlisle Cathedral. She noted that Canon Everitt had been a longstanding friend of the Parish Council, providing support with the delivery of numerous events, and she wished him and his family every success in this new role.

The Chair further thanked those Members who had participated in the recent meeting with Durham University regarding the proposed redevelopment of the Hild/Bede site. She observed that this was a project of major strategic significance for the University, but also one that faced significant challenges. She reported that it was unlikely that firm updates would be available for at least the next 12 months.

On the issue of student housing, the Chair expressed her delight at the announcement during the recent Annual Housing Group meeting of the forthcoming launch of the "Rate Your Landlord" scheme by Durham University and the Durham Students' Union. She explained that this scheme would function in a manner similar to TripAdvisor, allowing students to rate their landlords and thereby improve transparency and standards. The Chair noted that the Parish Council's Environment Committee had championed such a scheme for some time, and she encouraged colleagues to work with partners to develop it further into a formal awards programme.

The Chair expressed her deep disappointment at the announcement of the closure of the Customer Access Point at Clayport Library. She reminded Members that this building also housed the Parish Council's offices and noted that this development raised fresh concerns about the long-term future of the site. The Chair reported that she had therefore requested that the Clerk include this matter on the agenda for the following day's strategy session, in order that Members could begin planning appropriate contingencies.

The Chair also reminded Members of the Parish Council's forthcoming beacon lighting event to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day. She emphasised the national and local importance of this commemoration and strongly encouraged all Members to support the Clerk in ensuring the event's success.

The Chair highlighted that Neville's Cross Community Association would be holding a public meeting on highway safety along the A167 on 3rd September at Merryoaks Community Hall. She explained that proposals to reduce the speed limit to 30mph along certain stretches of the road would be discussed and she urged local Members in particular to attend this important meeting.

Finally, the Chair offered her congratulations to Steve Cronin and his team on the launch of this year's Durham Fringe Festival. She noted that the festival, which would run until 27th July, had already generated strong interest and carried the ambitious target of exceeding 10,000 ticket sales. The Chair commented that the Parish Council wished the organisers and all performers every success with this year's event.

7. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COUNCIL POLICIES

The Clerk presented the report of the Working Group on the annual governance review. The Clerk advised that this review had incorporated statutory updates and introduced a number of significant changes, including increasing the membership of the Personnel Committee from five to six, requiring the election of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, and requiring members of the public to register in advance if wishing to speak.

The Clerk advised that the Communications Policy had also been updated to include explicit reference to the Nolan Principles of Public Life, and the Grants Policy now required the refund of funds where an organisation failed to provide an impact report.

In addition, it was agreed that all Section 106 consultations should henceforth be delegated to the Finance Committee.

The Working Group also proposed a new Gifts and Hospitality Policy, setting clear expectations for Members on the receipt and declaration of gifts.

The Chair highlighted that she had proposed an amendment to the Planning and Licensing Committee's Terms of Reference, such that the membership would be reduced from 7 Members to 6 Members. Councillor D Freeman proposed this as an amendment and this was seconded by Councillor S Walker. Following a vote of Members, it was **agreed** by majority, that the membership of the Planning and Licensing Committee should remain at 7 Members.

Members unanimously **approved** all revised documents and formally **adopted** the new Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

8. REPORT ON GRANT FUNDING IMPACT FROM 2024/25

The Clerk presented the report on the impact of grants awarded in 2024-25. Members noted that projects supported had delivered significant community benefits, including volunteer engagement, enhanced wellbeing programmes, improvements to local facilities, and cultural activities. Members welcomed the evidence of positive outcomes and unanimously endorsed the report.

9. MOTION BY COUNCILLORS R CORNWELL AND V ASHFIELD ON THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Councillor R Cornwell introduced the motion, supported by Councillor V Ashfield, deploring Durham County Council's decision of 16th July 2025 to rescind its Climate Emergency Declaration of 2019.

Councillor R Cornwell addressed the Council in detail, noting that the County Council's decision did not alter the scientific reality of the climate emergency or the pressing need for action. Councillor R Cornwell observed that Durham had

experienced extreme weather events in recent years, including flooding and heatwaves, and stressed that these were likely to intensify.

Councillor R Cornwell stated that the decision sent the wrong message to residents and young people who were looking for leadership and reassurance on environmental issues. He argued that rather than stepping back, councils at all levels should be accelerating action, particularly through planning policy, investment in sustainable infrastructure, and community-led initiatives.

Councillor R Cornwell reaffirmed the City of Durham Parish Council's own Climate Emergency Declaration made in March 2019 and emphasised that the Parish Council had a duty to continue championing local responses, however modest, as part of a global effort.

Councillor R Cornwell urged Members to approve the motion and to ensure that the Council's position was widely publicised.

Councillor R Cornwell's remarks were echoed by Councillor V Ashfield who advised that she was proud to support a motion reaffirming the Parish Council's commitment to addressing the climate emergency. Councillor V Ashfield highlighted that one did not need to rescind the climate emergency declaration to also acknowledge that there is also a care emergency in County Durham and that both have serious importance.

Members unanimously **agreed** the motion as follows:

This Parish Council:

- 1. Deplores the decision of Durham County Council on 16th July 2025 to rescind the Climate Emergency Declaration it made on 20th February 2019;*
- 2. Notwithstanding the DCC resolution, the climate emergency continues, so the Council reaffirms the City of Durham Parish Council Climate Emergency Resolution of 28th March 2019.*
- 3. Instructs the Parish Clerk to publicise the Parish Council position through the Parish website, newsletter and social media channels, and to the print and broadcast media."*

10. RECRUITMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Members noted the recruitment process for parish and town council representatives to the County Council's Standards Committee. Members unanimously welcomed the opportunity to contribute to upholding high standards of conduct and **agreed** to nominate Councillors S Walker and G Holland as representatives of the Parish Council to go forward for consideration by CDALC.

11. TO APPOINT A CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE ONTO THE CDALC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

This item was deferred.

12. CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

The Clerk presented a report on Durham County Council's consultation regarding the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for working age residents from 2026/27.

Members were advised that since 2013 local authorities have been required to design and operate their own schemes for working age claimants, while pension age residents remain protected under national rules. Durham's current scheme has remained unchanged since its inception and continues to allow up to 100% support, mirroring the former national Council Tax Benefit system. The Clerk explained that almost 80% of claimants were now in receipt of Universal Credit, a figure expected to rise to 96% by 2026.

The current model has therefore become increasingly administratively complex, generating on average eleven council tax bills per claimant per year due to fluctuating Universal Credit payments. This cycle has created confusion for residents, considerable costs for the authority, and growing pressures on collection and enforcement.

The Clerk outlined the four options under consultation: Option 1a, an income-banded scheme retaining up to 100% support for eligible households; Option 1b, a banded scheme capped at 90% support, requiring a 10% minimum contribution from all working age residents; Option 1c, capped at 80% support with a 20% minimum contribution; and Option 1d, capped at 75% support with a 25% minimum contribution. All options would simplify administration by replacing the current means-testing system with fixed income bands, disregarding Department for Work and Pensions benefits and £10 of weekly earnings, and ensuring minor fluctuations did not require reissued bills.

However, the Clerk stressed that three of the options introduced a minimum contribution requirement for all working age households, which would reduce the overall cost of the scheme but risk increasing council tax arrears and enforcement actions.

Following consideration of the consultation and the Equality Impact Assessment, Members unanimously agreed to support Option 1a. Members noted that this option retained the principle of up to 100% support for the most financially vulnerable, safeguarding households already struggling with basic living costs. It was highlighted that capping support, as proposed under Options 1b to 1d, would inevitably impose new liabilities on low-income households, exacerbate debt, and increase the need for costly recovery actions, including enforcement by bailiffs.

Members further noted that Option 1a delivered administrative savings of over £131,000 through simplification without reducing entitlement, offering a more stable and predictable system for residents and the authority alike.

In particular, Members recognised that 44.7% of claimants were from households with a disability, and over 62% of claimants were women. Any reduction in support would disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups and risk worsening inequality. Members also drew attention to the high levels of deprivation in parts

of the County where council tax support claims are concentrated, emphasising that the Council had a responsibility to protect residents in those communities.

The Parish Council therefore unanimously **agreed** to endorse Option 1a as the Council's preferred option for reform of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

13. REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Report by Councillor E Scott on the most recent meeting of Durham University's Community Engagement Task Force's economic sub-group

In her absence, Members noted the written report provided by Councillor E Scott from the latest meeting of the University's Community Engagement Task Force's economic sub-group. Members warmly welcomed the visitor stats numbers in particular and the contribution of the visitor economy to the wider county.

Report by Councillor S Walker on the most recent meeting of the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) meeting

Councillor S Walker presented the following report to Members from the most recent meeting of the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) meeting:

Report to Member Councils – CDALC Executive and Ordinary Meetings (June–July 2025)

CDALC Executive Committee Meeting – 18 June 2025

The Executive Committee agreed to support the City of Durham Parish Council's motion to lobby for the inclusion of health as an additional criterion in determining licensing applications.

2. CDALC Ordinary Meeting – 17 July 2025

CDALC AGM and Future Executive Structure

It was noted that the current CDALC Constitution references Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), which have now been replaced by 11 Local Networks (LNs). AAP groupings currently form the basis for 13 of the Executive Committee's 22 seats. Reducing this to align with 11 LNs raises concerns about reduced representation and an increased risk of meetings being inquorate.

The meeting agreed that CDALC should consider moving away from a structure dependent on criteria set by Durham County Council. A final decision on the future structure will be made at the CDALC AGM.

3. National Updates of Interest to Parish and Town Councils

Neighbourhood Planning – Withdrawal of Government Funding

As part of the Chancellor's Spending Review announced on 11 June, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government has cut funding for neighbourhood planning.

Remote Meetings

The government plans to amend legislation to allow councils to hold remote and hybrid meetings. Proposed changes would give councils the power (not obligation) to implement proxy voting for members unable to attend due to serious illness or parental leave.

*New NALC publication – Local Councils Explained
The latest version of this booklet is available [here](#).*

4. Guest Speaker Reports

*Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) – Patrick Hetherington, DCC Resources
Durham County Council is consulting on proposed changes to its CTRS to simplify the scheme and reduce administrative costs. Since its launch in 2013, CTRS has provided up to 100% discount for eligible working-age residents and now supports over 32,000 households. However, the move to Universal Credit has created complexity and high admin costs, with over 190,000 updates processed in 2024/25.*

From April 2026, four income-banded options are under consideration:

- Option 1a: Up to 100% support*
- Option 1b: Up to 90% support (10% minimum contribution)*
- Option 1c: Up to 80% support (20% minimum contribution)*
- Option 1d: Up to 75% support (25% minimum contribution)*

These changes would simplify the process and reduce the number of revised bills. Pension-age households are unaffected, and exemptions may apply for vulnerable residents. Public consultation runs from 16 July to 23 September 2025.

Council Plan Consultation – Simon Moss, DCC Corporate Policy & Partnerships

The current Council Plan ([DCC Council Plan](#)) was ratified in February but is now being revised by the new administration. While detail in the presentation was limited, the consultation period will run from 21 July to 18 August 2025. Member councils are strongly encouraged to respond to ensure local priorities are heard.

End of report

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
(24th September 2025)**

ITEM 6: CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED COUNTYWIDE ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF HMOS

1. The County Council's Cabinet agreed on 21 July to introduce an Article 4 direction to control the spread of HMOs in that part of the County not currently covered by an Article 4 direction. A consultation is now under way with a closing date of 26 September. If it is felt that the Parish Council should respond then the Planning and Licensing Committee could prepare a response which could if necessary be put to the Full Council on 24 September.
2. Conversions to large HMOs (more than six inhabitants) already require planning permission throughout the County and indeed throughout England and Wales. It is the conversion of family homes (use class C3) to small HMOs (use class C4 – three to six inhabitants) that would be covered by this measure.
3. Not all of the Parish is covered by the existing Article 4 Direction. Consequently, the proposal would change the planning status of part of the Parish. The main area not covered is the Aykley Woods development on the former Police HQ site. The boundary runs along the B6532 and everything on the Aykley Heads site to the east of this road is not covered. The other area not covered is the countryside to the south of the built-up area, plus the University Maiden Castle site and Howlands Farm. This area includes Burn Hall and Low Burnhall.
4. The direction is non-immediate. It is being delayed by a year so no compensation is due to any landowner whose property is affected. It would come into force on 17 August 2026.
5. The legislation requires that the Secretary of State be sent a copy of the direction so that they can consider whether to intervene either by blocking the proposal or amending the area covered by it. If the Secretary of State does not intervene the Council is free to make the order.
6. The legislation also requires the Council to consider representations made and this might result in changes.
7. The driver for this direction may have been the decision by councils in London to move homeless and vulnerable families to the North East, as reported for example in the *Northern Echo*¹. But when a *family* is moved their new home would be occupied by a single household and therefore not a house in *multiple* occupation, which is when a number of different households share accommodation.
8. The evidence offered states that there are 235 licensed HMOs outside of Durham City (data correct as of 12 June 2025). This number is made up of around 67 with mandatory licenses and 168 selectively licenced. Only parts of the County are subject to selective licences and this does not include Durham City. By way of contrast there are around 2,530 properties in the City available

¹ <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24656159.london-councils-breaking-law-moving-families-durham/>

for letting to students². 876 of these are on the HMO register leaving around 1,654 smaller HMOs. These figures are approximations but clearly there are easily ten times more HMOs in Durham City (defined as the DH1 postcode district) than in the rest of the County put together.

9. There are 2,357 properties on the landlord licence public register with addresses in the SR8 postcode district, which is Peterlee. However, the vast majority of these are let to a single household. The question arises as to whether privately rented properties let to recent arrivals from other parts of the UK are being mis-identified as HMOs by those local residents who have complained to their local councillors.
10. In order to control the number of HMOs sound local policies are needed. In Durham City such a policy exists as Policy 16.3 of the County Durham Plan, which states that applications for HMOs can be refused where the percentage of student lets within 100 metres of the property in question exceeds 10%. However, in other parts of the County HMOs are not usually lived in by students so a different measure would be needed, which would have to be implemented via the new County Durham Plan or in the interim via a supplementary planning document.
11. Until these policies are in place then existing policies will have to be used, as they are currently in parts of Durham City where the HMO percentage is below 10%. Where HMOs have been refused it has been on amenity grounds due to overcrowding and car parking problems, using CDP Policies 29 and 31. But many have been permitted, and appeals are pending.
12. A recommendation that could be made is to introduce additional licencing to the whole of County Durham. This would provide a mechanism to measure HMO percentages directly instead of using the percentage of properties with a student exemption from Council tax as a surrogate, which only works in Durham City. However, there would be resource implications and the current administration, with its emphasis on cost-cutting, might be reluctant to implement it.
13. Given that the reform of Council Tax is a live political issue, student exemption from Council Tax may cease to be the case. Were that to happen then additional licensing, which we have in any case argued for, would provide the necessary replacement measure.
14. The proposal is for the Article 4 to cover the entire County. The justification is "By introducing the Article 4 Direction in all areas, and not just in those we are currently seeing issues, it will avoid concentrations of HMOs moving to other areas." We have certainly seen HMOs moving to fringe areas around the City core, so including areas near to but outside the areas seeing issues might be justified, but to include the entire County seems like overkill.

² <https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/housing-hub/housing-analysis/>

15. In general, the evidence advanced is sketchy and does not consider whether the concerns of local residents have any factual basis, and whether the proposed measures will address them. There is no information about which towns and villages currently have growing numbers of HMOs. Nor is there any evidence, e.g. from Police reports, of increasing crime in these areas. No estimate has been made of the number of HMOs in those parts of the County not subject to selective licensing.
16. The consultation takes the form of a short survey with a series of questions. These limit the scope of what can be said. The questions asked (all optional) are:
- *Do you agree or disagree with the proposed Article 4 Direction for HMOs? Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree (multiple choice) Please give any reasons for your answer. (optional)*
 - *Do you feel the proposed Article 4 Direction for HMOs will have a positive or negative impact upon you or your household? Positive / Neither positive nor negative / Negative Please give any reasons for your answer. (optional)*
 - *Are you responding mainly as (choose one):
A resident within the current Article 4 area
A County Durham resident outside of the current Article 4 area
A Durham County Council employee
A Durham County Council elected member
A town or parish councillor
On behalf of an organisation
On behalf of a voluntary sector group
Other*
 - *If you are replying on behalf of an organisation or voluntary sector group, who do you represent?*
16. The statutory procedures for Article 4 directions require the council to "specify a period of at least 21 days, stating the date on which that period begins, within which any representations concerning the direction may be made to the local planning authority". This does not restrict the scope of any representation so a free text response would be possible.
17. It is suggested that the Parish Council response might be along these lines:
- We would welcome the extension of the Article 4 Direction to include all of the Aykley Heads electoral division. This is the only part of the built-up area of Durham City that is not included. The arguments that were used to justify the surrounding areas apply here too, now the development has been built out.

- We are neutral as to whether the Direction need be extended to those parts of Neville's Cross electoral division currently excluded, as these are largely countryside.
- A more robust evidence base is needed to show which areas of the County are particularly affected by growing numbers of HMOs. This will assist the Secretary of State should he decide that it is not appropriate to include all of County Durham in the Direction.
- There is quite simply no evidence to justify including the entire County. If there is to be an Article 4 Direction it should be confined to those areas where there are growing numbers of HMOs plus the adjacent areas.
- Additional licensing of small HMOs should be introduced to include all areas covered by an Article 4 Direction, existing and proposed. This would enable the location of HMOs to be monitored in detail and facilitate appropriate planning policies to be devised. These could be similar to Policy 16.3 of the County Durham Plan, which is used to refuse applications if the percentage of HMOs within a 100-metre radius would exceed 10%.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to approve the City of Durham Parish Council's response to this consultation.
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ITEM 6: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT FOR THE DURHAM CASTLE AND CATHEDRAL UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-2035

Purpose of the Report

To inform Members about the forthcoming public consultation on the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site Management Plan 2025–2035 and to seek the Parish Council's support in funding the production of the consultation document and hosting a drop-in consultation event.

Background

Durham Castle and Cathedral was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986, the first cultural property in the United Kingdom to achieve this status. The site is of outstanding universal value, recognised internationally for its exceptional Norman architecture, its dramatic setting on the River Wear peninsula, and its continuous role as a place of worship and learning for over a thousand years. It lies at the heart of Durham City's identity and contributes significantly to its cultural life and visitor economy.

All UK World Heritage Sites are required by UNESCO and UK Government policy to have an up-to-date Management Plan, setting out how their outstanding universal value will be protected, conserved, and shared. The current draft Management Plan covers the period 2025–2035. It provides a strategic framework organised around the themes of conserving, sharing, and regenerating the site, and has been developed collaboratively with partners and stakeholders.

The Plan will be subject to full public consultation in October 2025, coordinated by Durham County Council through its Let's Talk platform. To ensure the Plan is accessible to all, DCC Design Services have provided a quotation of £1,680 to design, format, and prepare the 109-page document as a fully accessible PDF.

Alongside the online consultation, the World Heritage Site Coordinator, Dr Anne Allen, has invited the Parish Council to support the hosting of a drop-in consultation event in Durham City. This would provide an in-person opportunity for residents to view the Plan, ask questions, and give feedback directly, complementing the digital consultation and ensuring inclusivity.

It is important to note that Durham University has already committed £1,500 towards the production of a summary prospectus and case-for-support document to accompany the Plan and the City of Durham Trust is providing £100 towards the cost for DCC Design Services. This complementary publication will present the Plan in a concise and engaging format for wider circulation, strengthening advocacy and outreach. The University's commitment underlines the importance of partner contributions in supporting the success of the consultation.

As the elected body for the historic core of Durham City, the Parish Council has a unique custodial role in relation to the World Heritage Site. Supporting both the

production of the accessible consultation document and a local drop-in event would:

- Demonstrate the Parish Council's leadership as a custodian of the City's heritage.
- Reinforce the Parish Council's commitment to community engagement and inclusivity.
- Foster a sense of local ownership of the World Heritage Site Management Plan.
- Ensure residents' voices are heard in shaping the future of the City's most iconic place.

It is proposed that the Parish Council contributes up to £1,500 towards:

- The production of the accessible consultation document, and
- The hosting of a drop-in consultation event in Durham City.

Members are reminded that a total budget of £7,350 has been agreed as part of the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee's budget and towards professional support on planning matters (this includes a carry-over towards Jo-Anne's Article 4 report).

An additional £2,000 has been agreed as part of the Parish Council's work on the County Durham Plan (CDP) review. Due to the timetable set out by DCC on the CDP review, it is unlikely that £2,000 will be spent this financial year.

Moreover, only £800 of the £7,350 has been spent from the planning support budget and funds could comfortably come from either of these budgets to support this important work.

This contribution would directly support the delivery of both elements, complementing both Durham University's and the City of Durham Trust's financial commitment and ensuring the consultation is both accessible and meaningful.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to agree to contribute £1,580 to support the production of the World Heritage Site Management Plan consultation document. This will be drawn from existing Planning and Licensing Committee budgets. 2) For Members to also agree to support a drop-in consultation event at the Town Hall, part-funded by the Cathedral, in November 2025.
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ITEM 6: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE RE-SITING OF THE HOUGHALL BOUNDARY STONE BETWEEN THE CITY OF DURHAM AND SHINCLIFFE PARISH BOUNDARIES AT MAIDEN CASTLE

The purpose of this report is to outline to the City of Durham Parish Council the historic background of the Houghall Boundary Stone, the importance of its re-siting near Houghall College on the A177 and a suggested timeline for implementation.

1. The first part of the report (see below, Siting of the Houghall Boundary Stone: Mapping Evidence) outlines the research undertaken by Steve Bryan, Secretary of Shincliffe Local History Society, in order to pinpoint its original location in the 1870s and then its relocation following the building of Houghall College in the 1930s.
2. The second part of the report provides the suggested wording for the board and commission a graphic designer to carry out the works.
3. It is acknowledged that DCC be contacted and consulted about the stone and placing it on a firm foundation. It has been suggested by John Ashby that an aluminium rod may need to be used for this purpose to prevent it rotting internally and being weakened.
4. Given the recent gas works along the A177 during the summer of 2025, it would seem appropriate to seek reassurances from DCC that any future works will not have an impact on the stone and the board once they have been erected.
5. An estimated total cost for this project is circa. £2,000 – this is made up as: £379 for the planning application, £700 for the information board (including graphic design), £500-600 for the base of the Stone and the information board and the remaining funding for a small reception for the unveiling.
6. The history society has suggested that the original location is clearly not suitable. Recent pipelaying by the gas board may have similarly rendered the most recent location problematic. Consideration, therefore, needs to be given to an appropriate siting. Further thought should be given to locating the stone at the second location but at the rear of the footway, between the footway and the Houghall hedge (subject to space and discussion with Houghall).

Next steps would be:

- Get Highways on board to agree location and requirements. Secure resource requirements.
- Agree the content for the information board (required prior to submitting a planning application).
- Submit a planning application to the Local Planning Authority for these works.
- If planning is approved, to commission DCC or another contractor to build a foundation and attach the boundary stone.
- Installation of the stone and the board.

The aim is to get this completed prior to the end of March 2026.

Members are reminded that the Parish Council has agreed a total budget of £5,000 this financial year towards a heritage project and, albeit this is specifically allocated towards the blue plaque initiative, there has been no draw on this funding to date and the Environment Committee is happy to allocate £2,000 towards this initiative.

Siting of the Houghall Boundary Stone: Mapping Evidence

Shincliffe Local History Society holds a single photograph of the Houghall Boundary Stone, dated 15/12/2014 (Fig 1). It is taken from a height of perhaps 60cm, facing broadly westwards away from the line of the A177. The stone is shown as being positioned immediately adjacent to the eastern edge of the modern footpath, with the footpath at this point close by the hedge that forms the boundary to Houghall College.



Fig 1. Houghall Boundary Stone from The Milestone Society - geograph.org.uk/p/6069062 cc-by-sa/2.0.

The boundary stone is thought to have been first positioned at the roadside in the late-1870s. It appears on the second series 1:2500 ('25-inch') Ordnance Survey map of the area (Durham XXVII 5, revised 1895), where it is marked 'B.S' (Fig 2).

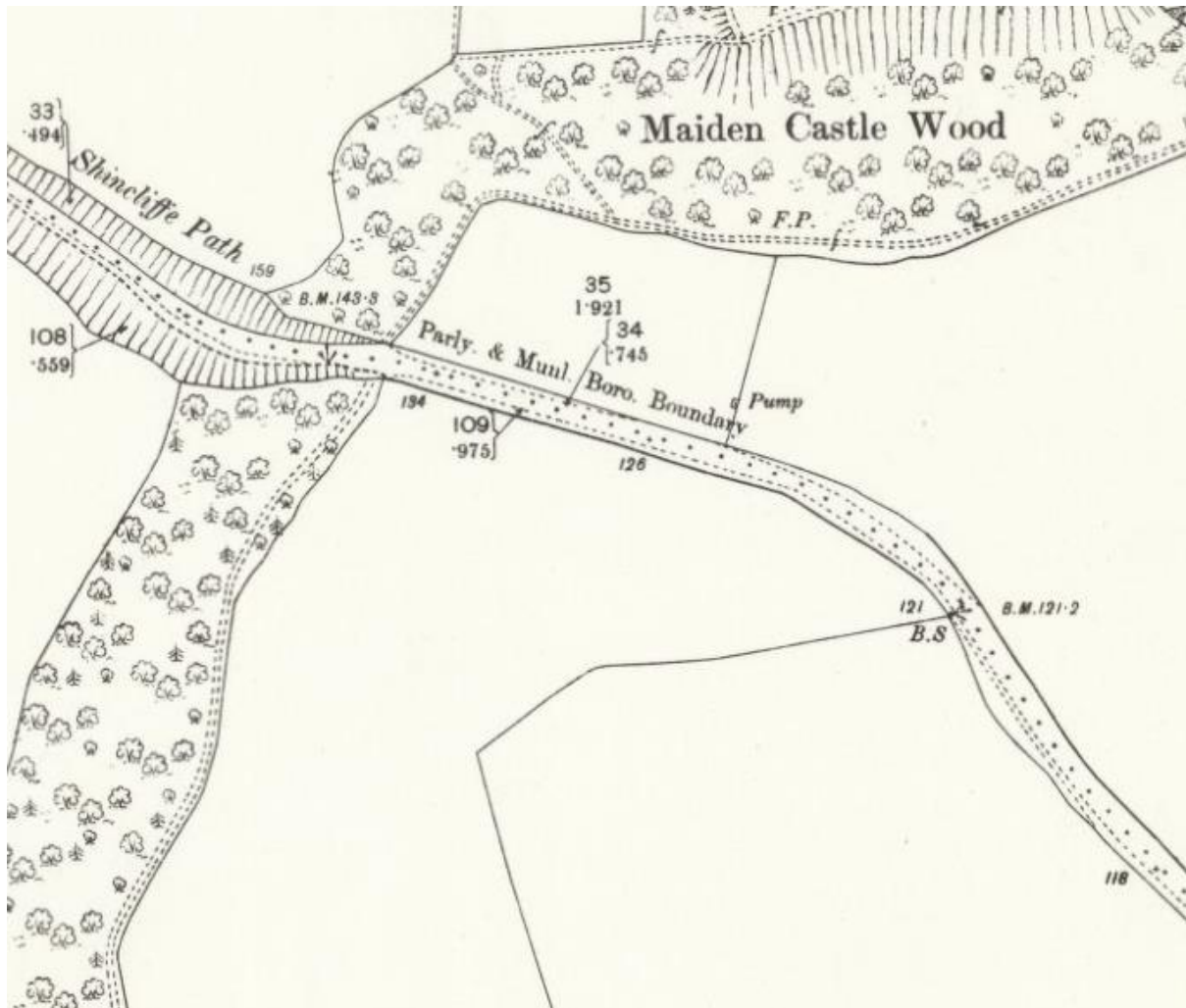


Fig 2. Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Durham XXVII 5, revised 1895 (extract) (*National Library of Scotland*: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/120936549>)

From the map it is evident that the stone was at that time positioned on the immediate roadside and at the boundary intersection of two fields on land now forming part of Houghall College. It appears also to have served as a benchmark reference point. Modern geo-locating available on the NLS website establishes it as then situated at a Lat./Long. position of N 54.76711, W 1.56148.

The stone is similarly marked on the third series 1:2500 OS map of the same area revised in 1915 (not shown here but essentially identical to the earlier version shown above).

The fourth series revision of 1:2500 Durham XXVII 5 was surveyed in 1939 and shows changes in the immediate vicinity resulting from the construction of Houghall College in the late-1930s (Fig 3). Notable here is that the field boundary forming the edge of the college site has moved back from the roadside by some metres. The reference to 'B.S' has also disappeared.

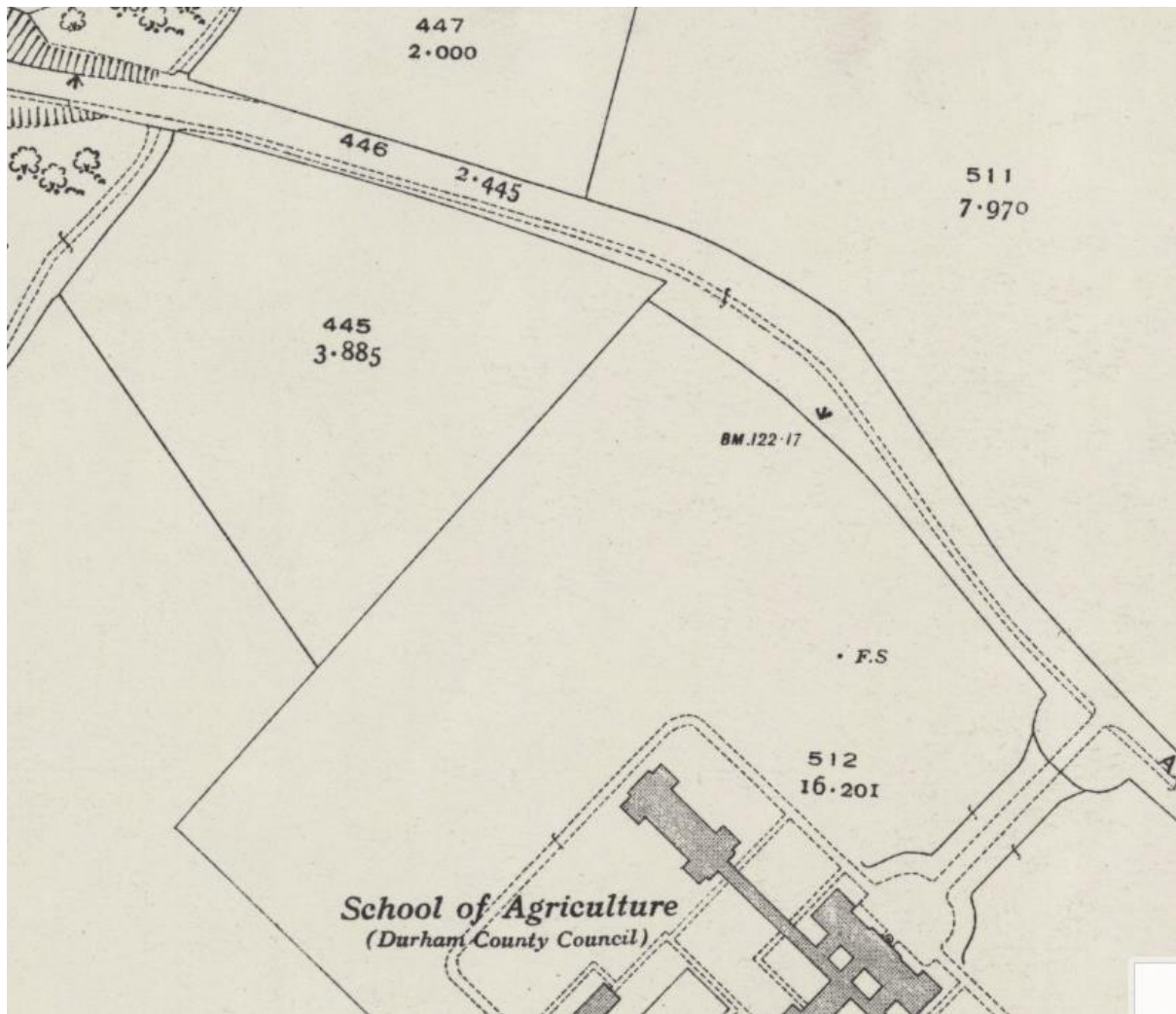


Fig 3. Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Durham XXVII 5, revised 1939 (extract) (*National Library of Scotland*: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/120936555>)

A comparison of Fig 3 with the 1915 revision of the 1:2500 map suggests that widening of the roadway took place at some point between the dates of the respective surveys. Whether this was done at the same time as the construction of the college or at some earlier date in the period is unknown to SLHS, but either event could have necessitated disturbance of the position in which the stone was originally mounted.

The NLS website includes the facility to overlay past 1:2500 maps with modern satellite imagery, allowing the position of historic objects to be compared with modern surroundings. This has been applied to the Boundary Stone as it appears on the 1:2500 mapping of the late-C19 and produces the image shown in Fig 4. (The accuracy of the image overlay on the NLS website and the map geo-locating for this area has been tested with some spot checks and appears to be reliable.)

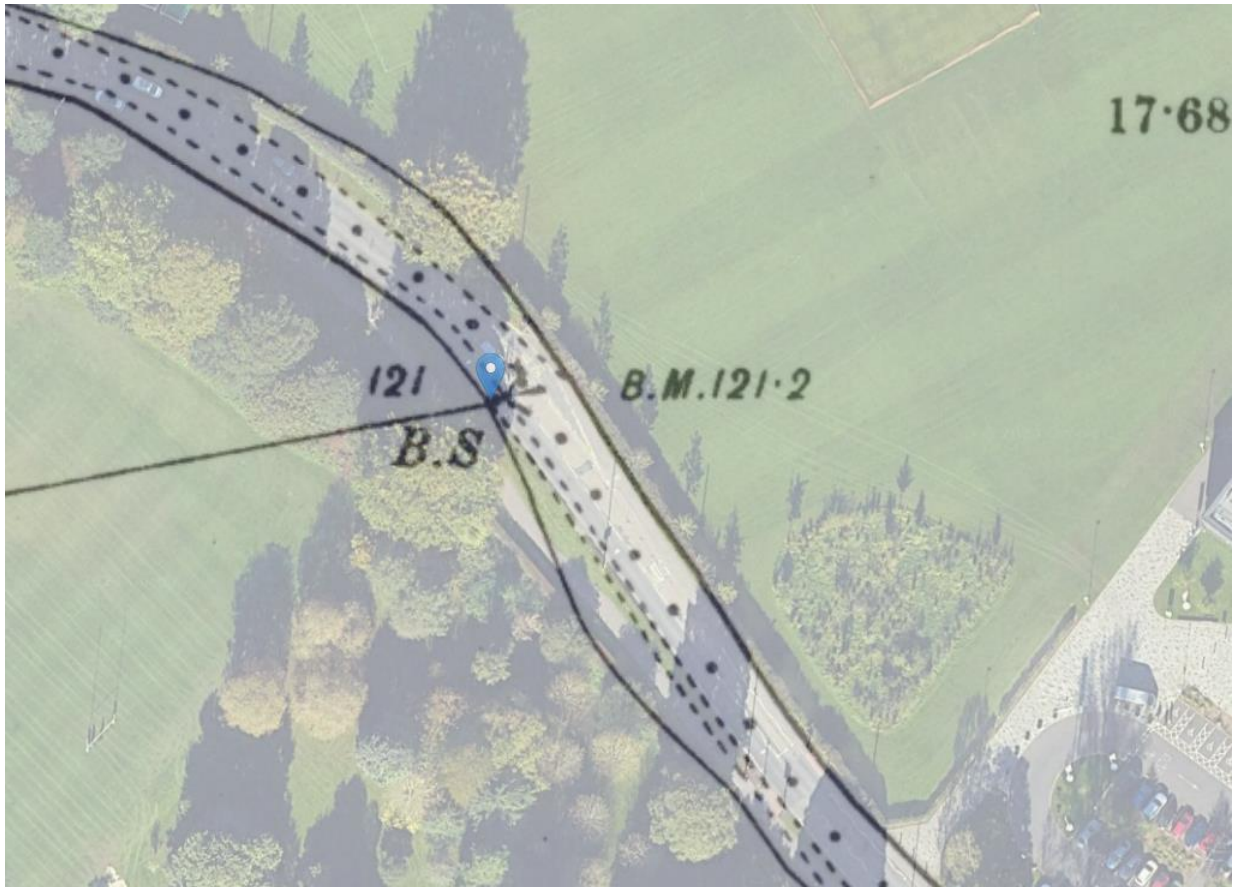


Fig 4. Overlay of Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Durham XXVII 5 with modern Google satellite imagery (*National Library of Scotland website*)

The blue marker in this image is the original position of the Boundary Stone, which was on what is now the kerb of the modern road and more or less directly opposite the current bus stop. The change in alignment of the field/campus boundary can also be seen. This location is *not* consistent with the recent photographic evidence of Fig 1 and strongly suggests that the stone's position was moved at some point.

Evidence for the more recent positioning of the Boundary Stone has been found on satellite imagery available on Google Earth. Fig 5 shows an image of the area dated 21/04/2015. Circled in red on this image can be seen a small object casting a shadow and located immediately adjacent to the modern footpath on its north-eastern edge. The footpath at this point has deviated away from the road and is adjacent to the modern hedge forming the frontage to Houghall College. The position appears to be entirely consistent with the evidence offered by our archive photo (Fig 1.), and it is therefore believed that the object in the satellite image is the Boundary Stone in its more recent position.

Geo-referencing of this location via Google Earth establishes its position as N 54.76688, W 1.56131, around 25 metres SE of the supposed original position of the stone.



Fig 5. Google Earth image, dated 21/04/2015, showing the supposed more recent location of the Boundary Stone

The next available image of this area on Google Earth is dated 17/07/2017 (Fig 6). Although lighting and foliage conditions are slightly different, the definition is sufficiently clear to suggest the stone was no longer in position at that date.



Fig 6. Google Earth image, 17/07/2017

Conclusions

1. The available mapping evidence suggests that the Houghall Boundary stone was originally located in the late-1870s immediately adjacent to the roadside of what is now the A177 at a position of N 54.76711, W 1.56148.
2. At some point between 1915 and 1939 the stone appears to have been moved from its original location. The date of this has not been established, but it is conceivable that it occurred either when the road was widened or when Houghall College was constructed on the adjacent site in the late-1930s.
3. More recent evidence from satellite imagery places the stone at N 54.76688, W 1.56131, some 25 metres in a roughly south-easterly direction from its original position.
4. Satellite imagery from April 2015 suggests the stone was still in its new position at that date. Imagery from July 2017 and later, however, shows no sign of the stone, suggesting it was removed from the site sometime in the intervening period.

Below is the suggested wording for the notice-board to be erected in the vicinity of Houghall College

Shincliffe Local History Society has worked with Shincliffe Parish Council, Durham City Parish Council, Durham County Council and David Butler (formerly of the Durham Records Office) on the re-siting of the historic Houghall Boundary Stone. This stone, probably erected in the late 1870s, has been a significant landmark and is a Grade 2 listed building.

Historical Background:

- The Houghall Boundary Stone was first positioned at the roadside in the late 1870s and appears on the second series 1:2500 Ordnance Survey (1895) map of the area, marked as 'B.S'.
- The stone was erected to mark a boundary for highway purposes such as road maintenance. The respective responsibilities were those of the Durham Urban Sanitary Authority and the Durham and Chester-le-street Highway Board.
- It also served as a benchmark reference point for Ordnance Survey mapping and was located at a Lat./Long. Position of N 54.76711, W 1.56148.
- It is believed the stone was moved from its original location between 1915 and 1939, possibly due to road widening or the construction of Houghall College which was opened in 1938.

The boundary marker would have had its plain back facing towards Houghall College, with the carved faces towards the road.



Grade II listed. List Entry Number: 1161264 / Milestone Society National ID: DU_DUR01p

Left side inscribed: D.U./S.A.

Right side inscribed: D.&.C.L.S. / H.B.

Sloping top facing east (towards Sports Centre)

H & L A

1878

Left face facing south (towards Shincliffe)

D & C L S

H B

Right face facing north (towards Durham)

D. U.

S. A.

H[ighways] & L[ocomotives (Amendment)] A[ct] 1878

D[urham] & C[hester] L[e] S[treet] H[ighway] B[oard]

D[urham] U[rban] S[anitary] A[uthority]

The Milestone Society (www.milestonesociety.co.uk) also provides some useful information about the role of other markers in the development of our town and country landscape.

If you have more information, please contact SLHS at contact@slhs.uk.

Thank you for your support in preserving our local heritage.

**DECISION
REQUIRED**

For Members to approve the allocation of £2,000 from the agreed heritage project budget towards the re-siting of the Boundary Stone, as set out in the above report.

Report to Council: Proposal to support the Merryoaks Community Hall energy resilience project

The Parish Council, when setting its budget for the current financial year, allocated £2,500 towards a clean air initiative within the parish. At the time, no specific project was designated for this funding. The Environment Committee now proposes that this allocation be directed towards the Merryoaks Community Hall Energy Resilience Project, as it directly supports the Council's objective of fostering a greener community that is better prepared for the impacts of climate change.

The Lowes Barn Community Project (LBCP) has successfully secured a grant of £20,000 from the Northern Powergrid Foundation to fund the installation of additional solar panels, battery storage, and a hybrid inverter at Merryoaks Community Hall. The total project cost amounts to £24,883.25, leaving a funding shortfall of approximately £4,883. To bridge this gap, LBCP is requesting a contribution of £2,500 from the Parish Council, with the remaining £2,383 expected to be met directly by the Hall. This Council contribution would ensure that the project can proceed without delay.

The purpose of the project is to strengthen the resilience of Merryoaks Community Hall by enabling it to operate independently of the mains electricity supply during power outages. This enhanced capability will allow the Hall to act as a local resilience hub, providing heat, lighting, hot food and drinks, as well as facilities for charging phones and medical equipment during prolonged power cuts. The project will deliver particular benefits to vulnerable residents, including older people, those with health conditions, individuals living alone, and households experiencing fuel poverty.

In addition to emergency support, the project will also reduce the Hall's ongoing energy costs through the generation and storage of renewable electricity. These savings will be reinvested into community services and activities, thereby strengthening the Hall's long-term financial sustainability. The project demonstrates a forward-looking and environmentally responsible approach by reducing reliance on fossil fuels, promoting climate resilience, and enhancing community wellbeing.

The wider community benefits include increased energy security during emergencies, reduced fuel poverty through the provision of a warm and powered refuge, lower operating costs for the Hall to sustain community services and a positive environmental contribution through greater use of renewable energy. Furthermore, by providing a safe neighbourhood hub during crises, the project will help to strengthen social cohesion and mutual support among residents.

It is therefore recommended that the Parish Council approve the allocation of £2,500 from its reserves, or from an appropriate budget line, in support of the Merryoaks Community Hall Energy Resilience Project. This contribution will secure the necessary match funding, unlock the grant already awarded, and enable the timely installation of the proposed infrastructure, ensuring lasting benefits for the parish community.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to approve the allocation of £2,500 from the clean air budget towards supporting the Merryoaks Community Hall energy resilience project, as set out in the above report.
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ITEM 6: Proposal to provide further support to the City's ShopWatch initiative

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members for the allocation of £2,000 in additional financial support to the Durham City ShopWatch scheme. This funding will finance the hire of eight further ShopWatch radios for a period of twelve months. The intention behind this proposal is to extend the scheme's coverage to include a number of charity shops as well as Durham Market traders, thereby strengthening crime prevention measures and enhancing community safety across the city centre.

The Durham City ShopWatch initiative was relaunched in November 2022 by then PCSO Michael Ashurst, working in partnership with Durham Constabulary and local daytime-economy businesses. The scheme functions as a business crime reduction partnership that links retailers, police officers and other stakeholders through the use of a dedicated radio network and the SentrySIS crime reporting platform. This structure allows businesses to share information rapidly with one another and with the police, improving the speed and effectiveness of responses to incidents of shoplifting, anti-social behaviour and suspicious activity.

Since its redevelopment, ShopWatch has provided enhanced communication channels between businesses, DCC's CCTV team and the police, creating a rapid alert system that has already resulted in a tangible reduction in retail crime. Retailers have reported fewer incidents of stock loss and a more secure trading environment, which in turn has improved public confidence in Durham as a safe place in which to shop and work.

There are currently 65 retailers/ venues in the City using the ShopWatch radios and ShopWatch, through support from bodies such as Durham BID, meets on a monthly basis with the police to discuss retail crime and other issues. The ShopWatch initiative is currently chaired by the Manager of Next in Durham City.

In September 2023, the Parish Council provided financial support that enabled the hire of fourteen radios for a twelve-month period. This was on the basis that the Parish Council would provide these radios free-of-charge to the business so that the business could recognise the benefits of these radios without too much of a financial commitment in the initial stages and then decide thereafter if they wish to continue the contract with Apex Radios (radio provider) directly. All of the fourteen businesses supported in the first year continued with the radios. Businesses have highlighted the improved liaison with the police, the deterrent effect on offenders and the reassurance provided by the increased visibility of police officers in the city centre.

It is recommended that this funding be allocated in the same way as in 2023, i.e. as an initial 12-month commitment only. It is proposed that the Parish Council allocates £2,000 to finance the hire of eight additional ShopWatch radios for twelve months. The distribution of these radios will be directed towards charity shops in Durham City, which are often particularly vulnerable to theft but lack the resources to invest in additional security measures, and towards traders in the covered market and surrounding areas, where petty theft and anti-social behaviour continue to present difficulties.

This targeted provision will enable all sectors of our high street to participate fully in ShopWatch, ensuring that they benefit from the same protections as larger retailers. It will also broaden the coverage of the scheme across the city centre, creating a more inclusive and cohesive safety network.

The allocation of additional funding will deliver several key benefits. Expanding ShopWatch to charity shops and market traders will extend the scheme's coverage and ensure that all sections of Durham's retail community are able to engage in crime prevention measures. By including these smaller and often more vulnerable businesses, the Parish Council will be supporting a more inclusive partnership that strengthens the collective resilience of the city's trading environment.

Evidence from the existing scheme shows that ShopWatch has already contributed to a reduction in shoplifting and anti-social behaviour. The introduction of further radios will increase this deterrent effect and improve the speed with which incidents are reported and resolved. This will not only protect retailers from financial loss but also provide reassurance to customers and staff, helping to foster a safer and more welcoming city centre.

The proposal also recognises that many charity shops and independent traders operate on very limited budgets and would otherwise struggle to finance participation in such schemes. By providing targeted financial support, the Parish Council will be enabling these organisations to access the same protective infrastructure as larger businesses, thereby levelling the playing field and reinforcing the principle of shared responsibility for community safety.

The total cost of hiring eight additional radios for a twelve-month period is £2,000 and this was agreed as part of our budget-setting process in January 2025. As stated above, no ongoing financial commitment is proposed.

It is therefore recommended that the City of Durham Parish Council approve the allocation of £2,000 to finance the hire of eight additional ShopWatch radios for a twelve-month period. It is further recommended that the Council endorse the inclusion of local charity shops and Durham Market traders as the direct beneficiaries of this support.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to approve the allocation of £2,000 from the agreed ShopWatch budget towards supporting the City's ShopWatch scheme, as set out in the above report. 2) If 1) is agreed, for Members to endorse the inclusion of local charity shops and Durham Market traders as the direct beneficiaries of this support.
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ITEM 8: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CENTRES/ FACILITIES AS A KEY STRATEGIC AIM OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The purpose of this report is to seek the formal agreement of the Parish Council to the establishment of a new initiative to support community centres and facilities across the City of Durham parish area. This initiative reflects the strategic commitment made by the Council, through the various strategy meetings which have taken place, to put support for community facilities at the heart of its work over the course of the current Council term, which runs until May 2029.

Community facilities provide an essential service to residents of our parish. They represent safe, welcoming and accessible spaces where individuals of all ages and backgrounds are able to come together, take part in activities, and benefit from opportunities that may not otherwise be available to them. These facilities are often operated by dedicated community groups and volunteers, and they play a vital role in enhancing social cohesion, tackling isolation, and ensuring that residents have access to a wide range of cultural, educational and recreational opportunities.

In recognition of this, through its strategy sessions, the Parish Council has resolved to establish a dedicated annual funding stream to support community facilities throughout this Council term. The fund will make available each year, to be awarded on a competitive basis, with the Council's intention being that at least one centre within the parish will benefit from support in each financial year.

The funding may be used flexibly, in order to best meet the individual needs of the centres concerned. For example, funding may be directed towards improvements to physical infrastructure, the expansion or diversification of services and activities, or the enhancement of accessibility, thereby ensuring that these centres can continue to serve the broadest possible cross-section of the community.

The Council is clear that this funding is to support only secular activities. However, applications from faith-based organisations will be welcomed, provided that the activity or project for which support is sought delivers a clear, non-religious benefit to the wider community. This reflects the Council's commitment both to inclusivity and to ensuring that public resources are used to maximise benefit for all residents of the parish.

In order to invite applications and to assess the funding needs of the various organisations across our parish, a draft Expression of Interest letter has been prepared for circulation to community facilities. The letter sets out the Council's commitment, the broad purposes for which funding may be sought, and the process for registering an expression of interest. Interested organisations will be asked to contact the Parish Clerk in the first instance, who will provide the necessary application form. The draft letter is provided for consideration and approval as Appendix A to this report.

It is further proposed that the Council contact directly all known community facilities within the parish area in order to ensure that the opportunity is widely promoted and that no eligible centre is inadvertently excluded. The list of facilities

proposed to be contacted is drawn from the survey of community assets within Durham City and is provided as Appendix B, following consultation with Members.

It is a point of policy which needs to be determined whether the Council supports just one organisation each year or several depending on the needs of each organisation. This can be determined upon receipt of all feedback. It is however recommended that the Parish Council agrees a total fund to specify to each facility so that they can make an informed decision of the value of making an application.

If approved, it is proposed that this funding stream runs each financial year as 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29 and 2029-2030 (the budget for the latter FY being agreed in January 2029 within this term of the Parish Council).

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to agree to the establishment of this new funding stream to support community centres/ facilities within the parish area, as set out in this report. 2) If 1) is approved, for Members to specify a total budget for (at least) FY 2026-27 in order that potential applicants may assess the extent of support being provided. 3) If 1) and 2) are approved. for Members to agree to determine, at the point of receipt of each expression of interest application, whether to support one centre or a multitude depending on needs. 4) If the above are approved, for Members to approve the proposed letter set out at Appendix A, the list of recipient facilities at Appendix B and the list of questions as part of the application process at Appendix C.
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Appendix A – Draft expression of interest letter

*City of Durham Parish Council
Office 3 D4.01d
Clayport Library
8 Millennium Place
Durham
DH1 1WA*

[Date]

Dear [Manager/Trustee],

Re: New funding opportunity for community facilities within the City of Durham parish area

I trust this letter finds you well.

I am writing to you on behalf of the City of Durham Parish Council to inform you of an important new funding opportunity. Following the local elections in May 2025, the Parish Council has resolved to put support of community facilities at the heart of its work over the course of this term of the Parish Council, which runs until May 2029.

The Parish Council recognises that community facilities such as your own play a vital role in the life of our parish. Centres such as your own provide safe and welcoming spaces where residents of all ages and backgrounds are able to meet, take part in activities and access opportunities that may otherwise be unavailable to them.

In recognition of the immense value which these facilities bring, the City of Durham Parish Council is in the process of establishing a dedicated funding stream of up to £XX; to be made available each year over the course of this Council term.

This funding will be awarded on a competitive basis, and it is the Council's intention that at least one centre within the parish will benefit from this support each year. Moreover, the Council anticipates that this funding may be used for a wide range of purposes. For example, it may enable a centre to improve its physical facilities so that they are better suited to the needs of the community; it may allow the expansion or diversification of services and activities on offer, thereby attracting a wider range of participants; or it may be used to increase accessibility so that the centre can be enjoyed by a broader section of the community.

This funding is available to support only the secular activities of community facilities. Applications from faith-based organisations are welcomed, provided that the project or activity to be funded delivers a clear, non-religious benefit to the wider community.

Should you be interested in ensuring that your facility may be considered for this support, I would be grateful if you could request an initial application form by contacting our Parish Clerk, Adam Shanley, via email at parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk by no later than [date].

The Clerk will be pleased to provide further information about the process and the criteria for applications.

Ultimately, the Council's aim is to support centres in continuing to flourish and in ensuring that they remain valued assets for generations to come.

We look forward to hearing from you and thank you for all you do to make our parish the special place it is.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Susan Walker
Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council

Appendix B – Proposed list of community centres proposed to be contacted

1. Durham City Theatre
2. Alington House
3. Waddington Street Centre
4. Waddington Street United Reform Church and Hall
5. St. Margaret's Centre
6. St. Oswald Institute
7. Shakespeare Hall
8. St. Nicholas Church Youth Centre
9. Merryoaks Community Hall
10. North Road Methodist Church
11. St. Cuthbert's Church
12. Redhills
13. Christchurch Durham
14. Sanctuary 21
15. Durham Masonic Hall
16. St. John's Church
17. Antioch House
18. Scouts Hut
19. Elvet Methodist Church

Appendix C – Proposed questions to be put to community centres/facilities

Section 1: Organisation and governance

- Please provide the name, address and contact details of your community facility.
- Who is the main point of contact for this application (name, role, email and telephone)?
- Please outline the governance arrangements for your organisation (e.g. charity, CIC, voluntary group, trust, church committee).
- How many staff and/or volunteers currently support the running of the centre?

Section 2: Current facilities and services

- Please describe the facilities you currently provide (e.g. halls, rooms, outdoor spaces).
- What range of activities or services are currently offered at your centre?
- Who are the main user groups (e.g. children, older people, families, people with disabilities, community groups)?
- Approximately how many people make use of your centre each week?

Section 3: Need for support

- What are the main challenges currently facing your community facility?
- Why do you believe your centre requires additional support at this time?

- What impact would a lack of additional funding have on your centre and the community it serves?

Section 4: Proposed use of funding

- Please describe the project, activity or improvement for which you are seeking funding.
- How much funding are you requesting from the Parish Council?
- How will the funding be used in practice (please provide a breakdown of expected costs if possible)?
- Over what timescale would the project be delivered? (Please note that it is important that this project is delivered within 12 months of being awarded).

Section 5: Community benefit

- Who will benefit from this project or activity (please specify the groups or communities)?
- How will the proposed project enhance inclusivity and accessibility within your centre?
- How will you measure the success or impact of the project?

Section 6: Sustainability and future plans

- How will the project or activity be sustained once the funding from the Parish Council has ended?
- Do you anticipate that the project will generate new income streams or attract new users to your centre?
- How will the proposed improvement contribute to the long-term sustainability of your facility?

Section 7: Compliance and declarations

- Please confirm that the funding will be used only for secular activities that deliver a clear community benefit.
- Please provide details of any other funding you have secured or applied for in relation to this project.
- Please attach a copy of your most recent set of accounts, safeguarding policy and insurance documents.

ITEM 9: MID-YEAR REVIEW OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

In agreeing the membership of each of its committees at the annual meeting of the Council in May 2025, it was further agreed that the Parish Council should undertake a mid-year review of this matter in September 2025.

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.
- Has delegated authority to now respond to all Section 106 applications within the parish area on behalf of the Parish Council.
- **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.

In July 2025, it was agreed that the total number of Members on each Committee should remain the same, except for the Personnel Committee which has now been increased to 6 Members.

No Committees sit in August or December.

The current membership of each Committee is set out overleaf.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree the membership of each Committee for the remainder of this year of the Parish Council, to be re-assessed again at the annual meeting in May 2026.
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Planning and Licensing Committee (7 Members) Grenville Holland Liz Brown Susan Walker Carole Lattin Roger Cornwell Philip Layton Rory Handy Meets every other Friday at 10:00am	Environment Committee (6 Members) Carole Lattin Victoria Ashfield Tony Cleaver Giuseppe Bignardi Grenville Holland Fred Robinson Meets every second Tuesday of the month at 10:30am
Personnel Committee (5 Members) Susan Walker David Freeman Roger Cornwell Giuseppe Bignardi Victoria Ashfield (Meets at least once per year. Proposed to meet next on Wednesday 5 th November at 11:00am)	Business Committee (6 Members) Philip Layton David Freeman Elizabeth Scott Ellie Hopgood Rory Handy Les Wilson (Meets once every two months on the third Tuesday of the month at 11:00am)
Finance Committee (6 Members) Susan Walker Liz Brown Ellie Hopgood Elizabeth Scott Victoria Ashfield Les Wilson Vacancy Meets at least once per quarter with the next meeting scheduled for 19 th November 2025 at 6pm	

ITEM 12: REPORT ON PLANNING FOR THE REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2025 EVENT.

As Members are aware, the City of Durham Parish Council has civic responsibility for the Remembrance Sunday event in Durham City, which takes place on Sunday 10th November this year. In January 2025, Members approved a budget towards events in the City, with the Remembrance parade being a key aspect of the Council's calendar of events for financial year 2025-26.

Road and traffic matters

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

The closure points between 9:00 – 14:00 would be:

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

Use of land

The Parish Clerk is seeking permission from the University for the temporary occupation of Palace Green and the temporary occupation of the Marketplace. Both Durham University and DCC are aware of the event taking place this year as usual and this is a formality. The Parish Council will also be arranging the siting of the dais for dignitaries to be in place on the day.

Health and safety

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

There will also be a need for crowd management control in order to facilitate the day. The Parish Council usually contracts the services of Showsec (preferred supplier of DCC) for this and the Clerk is arranging for this to happen for the 2025 event.

The Parish Council will also need to fund the medical provision on the day. The Clerk has now contracted the services of Nerams Ltd (DCC's preferred supplier).

The Clerk has also arranged for the police to be on hand on the day to manage any incidents of disruption or anti-social behaviour.

The Clerk and the designated Safety Officer for the event will attend on the day and carry out a pre-event assessment and walkthrough. The Town Hall will once again be used as a meeting point for missing persons if needed.

The Clerk has engaged extensively with Artichoke – the company behind Lumiere – and we have managed to negotiate a position whereby the infrastructure for the event will not be in place until 14:30pm on Sunday 9th November – a significant help for us on the day so as to avoid any issues of infrastructure taking up space.

Siting of a Spitfire display on Remembrance Day

Durham County Council is arranging for the siting of a Spitfire display at Millennium Place on the day. Several meetings have taken place and DCC has agreed to accept full organisational responsibility and liability for this display on the day.

Albeit the initial location request was for the display to be in the Market Place, this has been assessed by the Police and considered unsafe.

Our insurers have also asked for a contract to be drawn up between the Parish Council and DCC setting out exactly what each party will be taking responsibility for on the day.

An additional hour has been added on to the road closure at the request of the police.

Notification of event

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

Service at the Cathedral and the parade

The order of service within the Cathedral would be managed entirely by the Clergy of the Cathedral and the Parish Council would not have any involvement with this but the seating of the Parish Councillors will be arranged with the Cathedral. The Parish Council will be expected to lay a wreath on Remembrance Day and the Chair of the Council will do this on the Council's behalf. The Clerk has arranged for the wreath to be provided. Durham City Parish Councillors form part of the official procession from the Cathedral to the Town Square with their position in this procession is to be determined in due course. A meeting is taking place with the Cathedral and army personnel on 30th September to run through the order of service and arrangements on the day. Access to the service is to be managed by the Cathedral staff.

Miscellaneous

The Parish Council's Parade volunteer Arthur Lockyear continues to support this event with fundraising and working with the Parish Council to enhance the parade.

Arthur is hoping to once again gain funding for 4 bands and catering after the event. The Parish Council has usually supported the costs for this.

The Parish Council will once again be supporting the Festival of Remembrance on Saturday 8th November this year.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to note the above report and the preparations being made for this event and to delegate all organisational and budgetary responsibility for this event to the Clerk.
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ITEM 13: Report by Councillor C Lattin on the most recent meeting of Durham University's Community Engagement Task Force Lived Environment Sub-Group – 15TH September 2025

This was a really positive meeting, thanks to the new chair, Ian Rooney., the new Director of Estates at the University. It was also very brief – over in three quarters of an hour.

He began by asking what issues those members of the committee were experiencing.

I reported:

The dilapidated state of buildings, particularly the Swimming Baths, owned by the university all over the city which cause distress to us and our residents.

Ian has had commissioned structural surveys of condition appraisal of the University estate. Their portfolio of buildings is 274. He reported that things are very serious on Palace Green and that the Castle needs much work – a full survey of that is about to take place. He acknowledges the significance of the condition of all buildings in an important civic area. The Bailey is also under consideration with work about to commence on replacing the windows in the Department of History. The university is planning to reduce its portfolio 'to reduce the university footprint' and to sell buildings and return them e.g. in Old Elvet, to residential use. Many of the older buildings are not fit for purpose. He assured us that the swimming baths was at the top of his priorities and promised action of some sort within 6 months. There are to be repairs at Dunelm House and repair the roof. There are concerns about Kingsgate Bridge.

The issue of illegal riders of electric and motorbikes over the university playing fields

The University is aware of these and some damage has been done, especially to a new cricket area. They are currently working to identify points of entry and are putting in measures hopefully to deter the bikers. University security and the police are aware of the issue but this is a great problem.

The spigot mortar gun emplacement

This is an ongoing issue for us as the university was alerted 4 years ago to the fact that they had this historic relic on their land. They cleared undergrowth around it and promised to erect an information board which has not happened. Matthew Wright has been charged with delivering this board by the end of October.

Swift boxes.

Walia raised, on behalf of DURF, the promised swift boxes which had been agreed, for Waterside building. We were assured that the Bio-diversity team are in the process of putting them in and they will be in place by the end of October.

Ian is introducing an action log, and will closely monitor the achievement of actions.