

City of Durham Parish Council

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Date of summons: 22nd January 2026

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 28th January 2026 at 7:00pm** for the purpose of transacting the following Agenda business as shown.

Members of the public and press are also cordially invited to attend. Members of the public may address Council, Committee or Sub-Committee meetings for up to three minutes, with the agreement of the Chair of the meeting, provided that the statement is related to an item on the agenda. The speaker should approach the Clerk before the meeting commences to request to speak during the meeting.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, Civility and Respect and Human Rights plus Social, Economic and Environmental matters.

Yours faithfully,

A. Shanley

Mr Adam Shanley
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council

AGENDA

- 1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**
- 3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 26TH NOVEMBER 2025**
- 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- 5. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- **Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 14th and 28th November 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 enhanced protections for homeowners on freehold estates
- Report on a proposed Article 4 Direction to protect against the loss of front gardens within the City of Durham parish area

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

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

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

- Proposed criteria for the establishment of an annual *Durham Student Landlord of the Year* Awards scheme.

- **Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 19th November 2025**

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

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

- Report from the community centre support working group – including a proposed advert for a bid writer/ fundraiser in order to support a cultural venue within the City

- **Business Committee minutes from the meeting held on 18th November 2025**

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

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

- Response to the Government consultation on a proposed visitor levy in England

- 6. CHAIR'S UPDATES**

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 26th November 2025

- 7. ELVET GREEN - ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE NOMINATION**

- 8. REPORT ON THE PARISH COUNCIL'S INTERNAL CONTROLS**

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Wednesday 26th November 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**), V Ashfield, L Brown, T Cleaver, R Cornwell, D Freeman, R Handy, E Hopgood, G Holland, C Lattin, P Layton, F Robinson and E Scott

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and 3 members of the public.

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

Apologies were received and **accepted** from Councillors G Bignardi and L Wilson.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 22ND OCTOBER 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor L Brown presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 17th and 31st October 2025. There being no queries from Members, Councillor L Brown moved on to Committee reports.

Response to the proposed World Heritage Site Management Plan 2025-2035 consultation

Councillor L. Brown presented a detailed report concerning the Parish Council's proposed response to the consultation on the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site Management Plan 2025–2035. Councillor Brown reminded Members that the draft Management Plan sets out a long-term strategic framework for the protection, management and enhancement of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site and that the consultation seeks to ensure the Plan is informed by local perspectives, priorities and community engagement.

Members were advised that the Parish Council had recently supported the World Heritage Site Coordinator and Durham Cathedral in delivering a public consultation event at the Town Hall, which had received positive feedback.

Councillor Brown outlined the key objectives of the draft Plan, including safeguarding the architectural and historic fabric of the Site, preserving its setting and important views, guiding sustainable development and visitor management, and linking the Site's heritage value to wider benefits such as education, community identity and the local economy.

It was noted that the Plan is intended to act as a material consideration in planning and development management and to underpin future policy documents, including the County Durham Plan and the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan. Members were further advised that the Plan seeks to align with the wider visitor economy agenda, enhancing vibrancy, pride of place and inward investment, and that the consultation period remains open until 4 December 2025.

Councillor L Brown presented the substantive response proposed by the Planning and Licensing Committee. This placed on record the Parish Council's unreserved support for the Management Plan and emphasised that Durham Castle and Cathedral are living heritage assets at the heart of the City, continuing to serve roles in worship, learning, research and community life. The response highlighted the Plan as a shared vision for stewardship, conservation, access and regeneration, and commended the World Heritage Site Partnership Board and partners for producing a comprehensive, collaborative and people-centred document that reflects both UNESCO requirements and the aspirations of local communities.

Particular support was expressed for the Plan's emphasis on improving accessibility, interpretation and public engagement, especially the actions associated with the "Share" theme. Councillor Brown reported that the Parish Council welcomed the focus on increasing access to stories, spaces and experiences that have historically been less visible, and reaffirmed its longstanding view that the Fulling Mill should be brought back into meaningful public use as an interpretative and engagement asset.

Members noted that this direction had been discussed positively at the public engagement event co-hosted by the Parish Council on 4 November 2025. The response also reflected consultation feedback indicating a strong desire for improved physical access, better storytelling of social history and clearer wayfinding across the Site, and welcomed recent progress such as extended Cathedral bus services, new signage, improved accessible facilities, works at the Deanery Garden and forthcoming plans relating to riverbanks and public rights of way.

Councillor L Brown addressed the issue of the World Heritage Site boundary and buffer zone. Councillor L Brown reported that, although the Parish Council had previously supported the principle of extending boundaries or establishing a buffer zone where this would strengthen protection of the Site's Outstanding Universal Value, the detailed explanation provided within the draft Plan had been carefully considered.

In light of UNESCO guidance and the conclusions set out in the Plan, the Clerk advised that the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee had accepted that a formal buffer zone would not, at present, deliver additional protection. Instead, Members welcomed the alternative and more precise measures proposed, including strengthened planning controls, clearer definition of the Site's setting, systematic use of Heritage Impact Assessments and the integration of World Heritage considerations into statutory planning documents.

Members unanimously **approved** the Parish Council's response to the World Heritage Site Management Plan consultation, as set out in the above report.

• **Environment Committee**

Councillor C Lattin presented the Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 14th October 2025. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee reports.

Proposal to support the establishment of an annual Durham Landlord of the Year Awards scheme in collaboration with *Rate Your Landlord*.

Councillor C. Lattin presented a report proposing that the Parish Council supports the establishment of an annual *Durham Landlord of the Year* awards scheme, to be delivered in partnership with the independent housing review platform *Rate Your Landlord*.

Councillor C Lattin explained that the purpose of the scheme is to recognise high-performing landlords, celebrate good practice in property management and encourage higher standards within the private rented sector. Members were advised that *Rate Your Landlord* was introduced in Durham in September 2025 through a partnership between Durham University and the Durham Students' Union and is already providing students with a transparent means of sharing feedback on their renting experiences.

Councillor C Lattin outlined that the proposed award would be based on a combination of tenant feedback gathered through the *Rate Your Landlord* platform and qualitative input from the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Wardens. This approach would ensure that the assessment reflects not only the tenant experience but also wider community impacts, such as property upkeep, responsiveness to issues and cooperation in addressing neighbourhood concerns.

Councillor C Lattin proposed that the Environment Committee be responsible for reviewing shortlisted landlords and determine the final award recipient, ensuring an evidence-based and balanced process.

Members were advised that the Environment Committee has requested a budget allocation of £500 for the establishment of the award and that, if approved, it is proposed that the award be presented annually at the Parish Council's Annual Meeting of the Parish from May 2026.

Councillor C Lattin highlighted that the scheme would benefit students, residents and landlords alike, while supporting the Parish Council's wider objectives of

improving housing standards and neighbourhood wellbeing. Members were asked to consider and approve the proposals set out in the report.

Councillor E Scott advised that she would like to see more detail about the assessment criteria for this award and Councillor V Ashfield proposed that this be taken back to the Environment Committee to propose a set of criteria to the next Full Council meeting.

A decision on this proposal was deferred, subject to an appropriate set of criteria for this award coming forward to the next Full Council meeting in January.

- **Finance Committee**

Councillor S Walker presented the Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 10th September 2025. There were no queries from Members.

- **Business Committee**

Councillor E Scott presented the Business Committee minutes from the meeting held on 16th September 2025. There were no queries from Members but Councillor E Scott took the opportunity to highlight to Members the upcoming Jazz Festival in October 2026 and the decision by the Committee to support this multi-day festival with a grant of £5,000. Members welcomed this initiative as a means of driving footfall to the City and offering visitors something new.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATES

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 22nd October 2025 as follows:

The Chair reported on a number of matters arising since the previous meeting. The Chair firstly offered sincere congratulations to all those involved in the planning and delivery of the recent Remembrance events in the City, including the Festival of Remembrance, Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day. Particular thanks were extended to Arthur Lockyear and his team for their significant efforts, and to Members who attended the Remembrance Sunday service and parade. The Chair noted that this had been the busiest Remembrance event in living memory and reported that the Lord-Lieutenant had conveyed her congratulations and thanks to the Parish Council via the Clerk.

The Chair informed Members that His Majesty The King has appointed Brigadier Michael Butterwick (Retd) CBE DL as the new Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham, with effect from 1 April 2026. The Chair advised that congratulations had already been conveyed to Brigadier Butterwick on behalf of the Parish Council and expressed confidence that the Council would work closely with the new Lord-Lieutenant, particularly in relation to future Remembrance events.

The Chair also thanked Members for their support of the recent blue plaque unveiling in honour of former Crossgate Councillor Sam Green. Members were advised that the event was well attended, including by Sir Ed Davey, and that thanks had been extended to Roger and Jean for hosting the plaque, as well as to speakers at the reception and to Professor Simon Forrest of Hild/Bede College for

hosting the event. The Chair noted that the event had received positive coverage across local television and print media.

Members were reminded of the ongoing consultation on Durham County Council's budget and medium-term financial plan. The Chair expressed disappointment that comments made by the Parish Council during the first phase of consultation appeared to have had limited influence on the second phase. Members were encouraged to engage with the Clerk, who is preparing the Parish Council's formal response.

The Chair reminded Members that the Parish Council will host its annual Durham City Christmas Civic event on 9 December and thanked partner organisations and colleagues who have confirmed their attendance. Members were also reminded that the Environment Committee will be leading a fruit tree giveaway in the Market Place on the forthcoming Saturday and were encouraged to volunteer where possible. The Chair reported positive feedback from local businesses in relation to the initiative, which includes encouraging recipients to support local independent traders.

The Chair further reported on the Parish Council's involvement in forthcoming events, including the Christmas light switch-on, the Christmas Festival and Lunar New Year celebrations, and thanked the Business Committee for its work in supporting these events and driving footfall and business viability in the City. Finally, Members were advised that the Parish Council office will relocate to the Redhills site from 1 December, with arrangements being overseen by the Clerk.

7. PARISH COUNCIL STRATEGY 2026/27

The Chair reminded Members that the aim of the Parish Council's strategy is to give local residents, Councillors and Officers a clear understanding of what the council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver its aims and objectives.

The strategy sets out what the areas of development or change the Council intends to focus on over the next year outlining those areas of service that are identified as priority aims and objectives.

Members unanimously agreed that the five overarching priorities for the Parish Council are:

1. Being an ambitious voice for the city
2. Enhancing the physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish
3. Upholding the Neighbourhood Plan and representing the parish on planning matters
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.

Members also unanimously **agreed** that the priorities for each Committee in 2026/27 should be as follows:

Planning and Licensing Committee

Council priorities 2026/27	Planning priorities 2026/27	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Representing the Parish as a consultee on planning matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Consulting the Parish on planning matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Ensuring schemes deliver the required levels of affordable housing and adapted housing for the disabled and elderly.	Theme 4. A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Protect existing Rights of Way and promoting the creation and adoption of new Public Rights of Way and ensuring that they are accessible to all. Ensuring that all accommodation, including that for students, is safe and of a suitable standard.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
	Protecting our green infrastructure and assets within our parish boundary and ensuring that they are	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

	used to the best possible public benefit.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Upholding the development plans for the area i.e. Neighbourhood Plan and County Durham Plan. Representing our residents during the review of the County Durham Plan	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	To maintain and develop an evidence-base to update the Neighbourhood Plan and comment on planning applications.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Protecting our World Heritage Site, Conservation Areas and designated and non-designated heritage assets.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Delivering a Conservation Area Management Plan	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Protecting against overdevelopment	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

		Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Supporting accommodation above retail units in the City centre.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Supporting tourist attractions and transport infrastructure for the visitor economy	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Putting green future at the heart of planning considerations	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Resisting schemes which do not deliver net zero by 2030 and supporting those which do.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

Council priorities 2026/27	Licensing priorities 2026/27	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Representing the Parish on licensing matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City

2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Ensuring that all new licensing applications and existing premises promote the four licensing objectives. Lobbying central Government on ensuring that health impacts become the fifth licensing objectives.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Empowering our residents to make informed representations on licensing matters.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
	Supporting a cumulative impact policy for the parish Supporting a late night-levy on licensed premises in the parish.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
	Making licensing as open as possible by supporting DCC's new online licensing portal	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Making the City more accessible to all by representing the needs of all users in relation to pavement and outdoor seating applications.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Ensuring that the objectives of licensing and planning are aligned.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City

		Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Promoting the early evening economy to families and tourists	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	To encourage all new taxi licenses granted by DCC to be for low emissions/ electrical vehicles only.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

Environment Committee

Council priorities 2026/27	Environment priorities 2026/27	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Engaging with and responding to residents of all ages and backgrounds in environment-related work Mobilise Volunteer groups Work with young people and respond to their concerns	Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life.
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Promote cleaner air, a cleaner river, green spaces, and streets for living across the city. Reduction in light pollution. Reduction in night time noise. Sustainable travel Supporting the creation of a Community Emergency Plan	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Work with all relevant committees to ensure the climate and ecological emergencies are considered	Theme 4: A City with attractive and affordable places to live

	in all planning matters. Sustainable housing	
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Improve and protect the appearance of the city and its heritage.	Theme 2: A Beautiful and Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Be proactive and collaborate with all partners (including Parish Council committees, Durham County Council, residents, developers, landlords, and other businesses) to coordinate our impact on the climate and ecological emergencies and increase community resilience. Encourage sustainable Travel Increased awareness and action on climate change. Tackle the ecological emergency	Theme 1: A City with A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

Business Committee

Council priorities 2026/27	Business priorities 2026/27	Looking Forwards initiative(s)
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Engaging with local businesses, including improving the visitor economy	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Promoting responsible and environmentally sound businesses	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the	Supporting new businesses and attempting to fill empty units across the City and promoting the overnight stay	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy

parish on planning matters.	economy/ businesses across the city	
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Marketing Durham as a place to visit, particularly the overnight stay sector	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy Theme 5: A City with a modern and sustainable transport infrastructure
	Promoting footfall in the city centre and encouraging a variety of businesses to ensure wide range of choice for visitors.	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Reducing food miles by encouraging the use of local suppliers and emerging green technologies and services	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life

8. PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27

The Clerk presented a detailed report on the proposed Parish Council budget for the Financial Year 2026/27. Members were reminded of the statutory requirement for the Parish Council to agree its budget and submit its precept request to Durham County Council by the end of January 2026.

The Clerk advised that all Committees of the Parish Council had now met and submitted their proposed expenditure requirements, and that the budget proposals before Council reflected those submissions alongside the Council's agreed medium-term priorities.

Members were further reminded that the budget-setting process had been informed by an online questionnaire, an informal strategy session in July 2025 and a Members' Away Day held in September 2025, through which a number of key strategic principles had been agreed.

Whilst Members approved most of the strategic principles agreed through this process, it was however **agreed** that the principle that: *"the precept should only rise in line with inflation over this term of the Parish Council, unless an emergency issue occurs"* should be removed entirely.

Members considered the budget proposals and unanimously **agreed** the budget for 2026/27 as follows:

Budget for 2026/27 (expenditure only)

Planning and Licensing Committee

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

Environment Committee

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

Business Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Increasing footfall through events	
Hosting events in Durham City (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, D-Day Anniversary, miscellaneous).	£45,000.00
Sponsoring community events with local businesses – a specific focus on improving the early evening economy	£15,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Improving shop frontages in the City	
Christmas Frontage Awards (previously under Environment Committee)	£1,500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£61,500.00

Finance Committee

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

Full Council

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

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

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

9. PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT REQUEST FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27

The Chair reported on the proposed Parish Council precept request for the Financial Year 2026/27. Members were reminded that, following approval of the budget under Item 8, the Parish Council is required to submit its precept request to Durham County Council by the end of January 2026.

The Chair advised that details of proposed expenditure by Committees had been set out in the preceding budget report and formed the basis for calculating the required precept.

Members were informed that the City of Durham Parish Council Tax Base for 2026/27 has been calculated at 4,688.8, representing an increase of 65.9 compared to the 2025/26 figure of 4,622.9.

The Chair also reported that no Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant will be payable to the Parish Council for 2026/27, noting that no grant was received in

2025/26 and that Durham County Council proposes to cease payment of this grant to parish and town councils from 2026/27.

The Chair advised that the Parish Council's current Band D precept charge stands at £63.20 and remains among the lowest in County Durham, despite the City's relatively high population and reduced tax income arising from the significant number of council tax-exempt student properties.

The Clerk highlighted that the Finance Committee met on 19th November 2025 and unanimously recommended that the precept be increased in line with the current rate of inflation at 3.81%. This would result in an increase of £2.41, setting the Band D charge at £65.61 for 2026/27 and generating a total precept of £307,632.17, which would provide a modest surplus against the proposed budget.

Members unanimously **agreed** to increase the precept by 3.81% in line with inflation.

10. COUNTY DURHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

The Chair reported that the City of Durham Parish Council, as a member council of the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC), has been invited to consider nominations to the CDALC Executive Committee following structural changes agreed at the recent CDALC Annual General Meeting.

The Chair outlined the role of CDALC as the representative body for parish and town councils across County Durham and explained that the Executive Committee acts as its principal governing and strategic decision-making body, overseeing operational work, responding to consultations, coordinating representation and supporting the Executive Officer. Members were advised that the revised structure is intended to strengthen governance, ensure wider participation and provide clearer representation of both larger and smaller councils.

The Chair further reported that nominations are being sought for all positions on the Executive Committee, with a deadline of 31 January 2026, and that all appointments will be confirmed at a Special General Meeting provisionally scheduled for March 2026. Members were advised of the commitment expected of Executive Committee members, including attendance at quarterly meetings and relevant forums, and of the requirement for nominations to be submitted by the Clerk using the designated online process, with supporting statements where applicable.

The Chair invited Members to consider whether the Parish Council wishes to nominate candidates for any of the available positions within the revised Executive Committee structure.

Members unanimously **agreed** to nominate local MP Mary Kelly Foy as CDALC President, Councillor A Blakemore as Honorary Treasurer and Councillor S Walker as a Member of CDALC's Executive Committee.

11. REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Councillor S Walker presented the following report relating to the County Durham Association of Local Council's (CDALC) Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday 25th October 2025:

Membership Fees 2026/27

- CDALC fee: to rise by 3.3%, from 15p to 15.5p per elector. NALC fee: proposed at 8.6p per elector, subject to ratification at the NALC AGM on 13 November 2025.
- This gives a combined total of 24.1p per elector for 2026/27.

The increases are in line with inflation and designed to maintain a balanced budget.

Executive Committee reform

Following the abolition of the County Council's Area Action Partnerships, CDALC agreed to move to a new structure for its Executive Committee based on council size (larger/smaller) rather than geography.

- *Nominations will open in November 2025, closing end of January 2026*
- *A Special General Meeting will be held in late February or early March 2026 to elect the new Executive Committee and approve related constitutional amendments.*
- *Existing Executive members will continue until the new structure is in place.*

Future Meetings (2026)

- *Forum meetings: 19 Feb, 21 May, 16 Jul, 19 Nov*
- *Executive Committee: 18 Mar, 17 Jun, 16 Sep, 2 Dec*
- *AGM: 24 Oct*

North East Combined Authority Presentation

Tracey Elvin, Assistant Director of People and Transformation at NECA, gave a presentation outlining the Authority's achievements in its first year, including:

- *£70m NE Investment Fund for small businesses*
- *£800m transport investment (including Metro expansion, zero-emission buses, and new cycling routes)*
- *Programmes for skills, housing, and child poverty reduction*

Councillors raised questions about communication between NECA and local councils, to which Ms Elvin committed to improving dialogue and returning with future updates.

Health and Well Being as a Statutory Licensing objectives

- *CDALC will continue to lobby for health and wellbeing to become a statutory licensing objective.*

- *Parish councils were encouraged to respond to the current government consultation on licensing reform.*

End of report

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

12. NOMINATION FOR A 'FREEDOM OF THE PARISH' AWARD

Members received a nomination for the *Freedom of the Parish* Award, recognising the outstanding contribution of Inspector Dave Clarke to community safety, partnership working and public wellbeing within the City of Durham parish area.

Members unanimously **agreed** that the nomination clearly demonstrated exceptional dedication and significant impact to the wellbeing of the City. It was therefore **unanimously agreed** that the nomination be approved as submitted and that Inspector Dave Clarke should receive the Freedom of the Parish Award.

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 January 2026)**

ITEM 5: CONSULTATION ON ENHANCED PROTECTIONS FOR HOMEOWNERS ON FREEHOLD ESTATES

As Members are aware, the Government has recently launched a consultation on proposed protections for homeowners living on freehold estates. A copy of the full consultation can be found online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enhanced-protections-for-homeowners-on-freehold-estates>

The City of Durham Parish Council lobbied our Member of Parliament Mary Kelly Foy on this issue in October 2024, citing concerns about rising costs for these maintenance fees on our residents and asked that the new Bill protecting homeowners on freehold estates be expedited. Earlier this month, our Member of Parliament raised this in the House with the Local Government Minister and called for local authority adoption to be the default position for all new build estates.

What are freehold estate charges?

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

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

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

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

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

What rights do freeholders currently have?

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

Where the developer employs a management company, a freeholder can lodge a complaint with the relevant redress scheme. Property management companies in

England must belong to a government-approved redress scheme: The Property Ombudsman or The Property Redress Scheme. These schemes provide for independent resolution of disputes. There is government guidance on the schemes.

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

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

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

In the City area alone, these so-called fleecehold charges are already imposed on local residents in Sheraton Park, Aykley Woods, Mount Oswald as well as new built estates on the edges of the City, such as the new Sherburn Road development in Gilesgate. These charges go towards the maintenance of communal areas such as roads, parks, or open spaces, despite homeowners already being responsible for their property.

In all cases, the local authority has refused to adopt these areas and these management charges apply – in addition to Council tax - to approximately 40% of all new housing estates built across England in the last five years.

This consultation is mainly about how the Government should implement Part 5 of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 so that freehold (and some leasehold) homeowners who pay estate management charges get leaseholder-style protections. These charges are controversial as residents have next to no rights to challenge these (potentially uncapped) charges nor to change the management company in the event of poor service.

Some of the main headlines from what is being proposed in this consultation include:

- Introducing a right to challenge "reasonableness" (in relation to estate management charges and administration charges) at tribunal
- Introducing an 18-month time limit for charging for works after costs are incurred — unless a compliant future demand notice is served.
- Introducing a standard demand form and an annual report so that homeowners can scrutinise what they're paying for.
- Introducing a major works consultation requirement when planned spend exceeds a set threshold, giving homeowners input before big bills land.

- Introducing the right to apply to a tribunal to appoint a replacement management company where there is serious management failure.
- Introducing mandatory minimum qualifications for the management company so “anyone can run an estate” stops being the norm.
- Plans to legislate to fund free advice for homeowners on privately managed estates.
- Exploring options so resident-controlled management becomes the default rather than third-party management companies.

The Parish Council’s Planning and Licensing Committee recently met to review this consultation and is recommending the following response:

RE: Open consultation - Enhanced protections for homeowners on freehold estates

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this important consultation relating to enhanced protections for homeowners on freehold estates.

Whilst the City of Durham Parish Council fully supports the calls by our Member of Parliament Mary Kelly Foy MP to eradicate this practice entirely and ensure that local authority adoption becomes the default position for any new housing estate, we recognise that this is not Government policy at this time and is not proposed as part of this consultation. Our response should therefore be seen as a judgement of the existing proposals only.

Firstly, the Parish Council supports the general direction of travel set out in this consultation and considers these proposals to be a second-best option to correcting a long-standing structural injustice affecting homeowners on privately managed estates.

The present model, which sees residents pay estate management charges for infrastructure and services whilst also paying full council tax, is simply unsustainable and inequitable. The Parish Council therefore urges the Government to implement the proposed reforms in full and without dilution and to ensure that the secondary legislation under the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 delivers practical and enforceable protection for our residents.

The Parish Council has experience of the harms caused by “fleecehold” arrangements. Multiple estates within our parish area alone, including St. Margaret’s Garth, Sheraton Park, Aykley Woods and Mount Oswald, are subject to private estate management regimes that require homeowners to fund the maintenance of roads, street lights, green spaces and other communal infrastructure despite paying full council tax. Residents have repeatedly reported a lack of transparency, limited accountability and an inability to challenge costs or influence management decisions.

In Aykley Woods alone, the Parish Council is aware that estate charges have increased by nearly 300% over a short period, with households paying approximately £200 per year on top of council tax. Meanwhile our residents are left trapped in “adoption limbo”; unable to secure local authority adoption or escape from private management fees. This experience is not isolated and sadly

reflects a growing national problem affecting new-build estates across England and Wales.

In St. Margaret's Garth, the management company originally appointed to manage the public realm has been liquidated and our local authority has refused to adopt this street and resolve issues such as broken street lights and the poor condition of the road. This leaves our residents in a ridiculous and wholly unacceptable limbo.

The Parish Council strongly supports the proposed introduction of a statutory right for homeowners on privately managed estates to challenge the reasonableness of both estate management charges and administration charges before the appropriate tribunal. This right is long overdue but fundamental to restoring fairness in a market where homeowners do not choose, appoint or meaningfully control the entities that determine what they must pay. However, for this right to be effective, the Parish Council would urge that the procedural framework must place a clear evidential burden on the estate manager to justify costs, demonstrate value for money and prove that charges were reasonably and properly incurred. We would also argue that the tribunal process must be accessible and proportionate to the sums at stake, so that ordinary homeowners are not deterred from seeking redress by cost, complexity or imbalance of expertise.

The Parish Council also supports the proposed 18-month time limit for recovering the cost of works, subject only to the service of a compliant future demand notice. The current ability of estate managers to issue delayed and/or retrospective charges undermines accountability and prevents homeowners from scrutinising works while evidence is still available. A clear statutory time limit will protect residents from unexpected and unchallengeable liabilities, while also incentivising better financial management and prompt billing. Any future demand notice should be tightly defined, requiring meaningful information about the nature, scale and anticipated cost of works so that homeowners can understand and prepare for potential liabilities.

The Council strongly endorses the introduction of standardised demand forms and mandatory annual reports. One of the most persistent problems faced by residents in Durham is the inability to obtain clear, intelligible and complete information about what they are being charged for and why. Estate charge demands are often opaque, poorly itemised and unsupported by evidence of actual expenditure. Standardised forms and annual reporting, if properly designed, will transform this situation by ensuring that charges are transparent and open to scrutiny our residents should expect. As a starting point, these documents should include full itemisation of costs, explanations of apportionment, disclosure of contractors and related-party arrangements and clear signposting to complaint and redress routes.

The Parish Council further supports the proposed requirement for consultation on major works. Large and unexpected bills are one of the most damaging aspects of private estate management, particularly where residents have had no opportunity to influence the scope, timing or cost of works. A statutory consultation process, triggered when planned expenditure exceeds a defined threshold, will give homeowners a voice before decisions are taken and liabilities incurred. This should include the provision of detailed specifications and a

reasoned explanation of how and why these works are necessary in the Parish Council's view.

The Council further welcomes the proposal to allow homeowners to apply to a tribunal for the appointment of a replacement management company in cases of serious management failure. For many estates applicable to these charges, the core injustice is not merely high charges but the absence of any practical mechanism to remove poorly performing or unresponsive managers. The criteria for serious management failure should be clearly defined and should include repeated failure to maintain a site or infrastructure to reasonable standards as well as persistent refusal to engage with residents. However, the availability of a credible replacement management company will be essential to ensure that standards improve rather than stagnate.

The Parish Council also strongly supports the introduction of mandatory minimum qualifications and professional standards for estate managers. At present, companies with little or no demonstrated competence can control significant expenditure and the quality of the local environment. This lack of regulation would not be tolerated in other consumer-facing sectors and should not be tolerated here. Mandatory qualifications, backed by a regulatory framework and enforceable sanctions, will undoubtedly raise standards but more information on how each company will be expected to train their staff, etc. would be useful in better understanding this aspect of the consultation.

In addition, the Council welcomes the Government's intention to legislate to fund free advice for homeowners on privately managed estates. Access to independent advice is a prerequisite for the effective exercise of new rights, particularly for residents who lack the resources to obtain professional support. Funded advice will help homeowners understand their charges, challenge unfair practices and engage constructively with estate managers and tribunals. We would suggest that further funding for organisations such as Citizens' Advice Bureau would be a useful first step in this regard.

Finally, whilst City of Durham Parish Council supports the Government's exploration of options to make resident-controlled management the default rather than third-party control. The Council's experience is that private management companies often lack alignment with the long-term interests of residents, whereas resident-led arrangements, where feasible, promote accountability, value for money and community cohesion. The Government should therefore ensure that both new and existing estates have a clear, affordable and workable route to resident control, and that developers are prevented from embedding structures that entrench third-party dominance.

These proposals are a long-overdue response to the growing problem of fleecehold and private estate management across England and Wales. The experiences of Durham residents demonstrate the urgency of reform of this system. We urge the Government to proceed rapidly with the implementation of these measures through robust secondary legislation, ensuring that homeowners on privately managed estates receive the same basic protections, transparency and fairness that any other homeowner is entitled to expect.

End of response

**DECISION
REQUIRED**

For Members to consider the above report and approve the City of Durham Parish Council's response to this important consultation.

ITEM 5: REPORT ON A PROPOSED ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION TO PROTECT AGAINST THE LOSS OF FRONT GARDENS WITHIN THE CITY OF DURHAM PARISH AREA

As Members are aware, following the previous Council's approval in January 2025 to progress work towards a new Article 4 Direction, Jo-Anne Garrick was instructed to prepare a robust evidence base to support the potential removal of permitted development rights relating to the creation of hardstanding in front gardens.

At present vehicle crossovers and hardstanding for dwellinghouses are permitted development and, as a result, the local planning authority cannot exercise any control if the works are completed within the provisions of Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended.

Classes of permitted development which could facilitate parking are, as follows:

Hard Surfaces

A hard surface can be made anywhere within a residential garden. This is subject to a condition that where they are between a front wall of the house and the road, and measure more than 5 square metres, they should either be made of porous or permeable materials, or drain into a permeable area in the garden. It applies to both new surfaces and the repair and replacement of existing surfaces.

Hard Surfaces - Vehicular Accesses

The formation, laying out and construction of means of access to a highway which is not a trunk or classified road, where the access is required in connection with other development which is permitted within the schedules of the General Permitted Development Order.

Demolition of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure

Any building operation consisting of the demolition of the whole or any part of any gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure.

As Members are aware, an Article 4 Direction can be adopted to remove permitted development rights.

The purpose of this work was to respond to growing concern about the cumulative loss of front gardens across parts of the City parish and the consequent impact on local character, visual amenity, environmental quality and street scene, both within and outside of the Durham City Conservation Area.

The report included with this Agenda provides a detailed and proportionate assessment of the extent and effects of hard surfacing within front gardens across defined areas of Durham City outside the existing Durham City Conservation Area.

The cost of producing this report was included in this year's budget and the Council has incurred £1,500 expenditure to have this produced.

The report is grounded in national planning policy and guidance, including the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that Article 4 Directions should only be used where necessary to protect local amenity or wellbeing, should be supported by robust evidence, and should apply to the smallest geographical area possible. The report is explicitly intended to inform discussions with Durham County Council, as the local planning authority, on whether such a Direction would be justified and capable of being progressed

The evidence base identifies that, while large parts of the parish have either not experienced significant loss of front gardens or have retained meaningful soft landscaping and boundary treatment, there are specific streets and clusters of development where the cumulative replacement of front gardens with hardstanding has begun to erode local character.

In these areas, hard surfacing frequently extends across the full width of the frontage, with little or no planting or enclosure retained, resulting in increased visual dominance of vehicles, loss of green infrastructure, and weakening of the spatial rhythm and sense of enclosure that contribute to the quality and identity of established residential areas.

The report also highlights wider consequences associated with such changes, including increased surface water run-off, urban heat effects, reduced biodiversity and incremental harm to the overall attractiveness of the street environment

Importantly, the assessment distinguishes clearly between areas where intervention may now be justified and those where continued monitoring is the most appropriate response. It identifies a limited number of discrete locations where sufficient intact front gardens remain such that further incremental change could result in significant and potentially irreversible harm to local character.

In these circumstances, the report concludes that an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights for hardstanding in front gardens could represent a proactive and proportionate mechanism to allow future proposals to be assessed through the planning application process, with appropriate consideration of design, materials and the retention of soft landscaping

In light of the findings of the evidence base and the requirements of national policy, it is recommended that the City of Durham Parish Council now seeks an early meeting with planning officers at Durham County Council.

The purpose of this meeting should be to formally present the evidence base, to discuss its conclusions, and to explore how the Council might work collaboratively with the local planning authority to progress the potential introduction of a targeted Article 4 Direction.

The Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee agreed that this engagement will be essential to agree whether the evidence is sufficient, to refine the precise geographic scope of any proposed Direction, and to establish the procedural steps and additional evidence, if any, required to move forward.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) Councillors are asked to note the content of Jo-Anne Garrick's substantive report and to re-affirm the Parish Council's commitment to progressing this initiative. 2) If 1) is approved, for Members to agree that Members of the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee should seek a meeting with DCC's planning and policy teams as soon as possible to look at next steps of progressing this new Article 4 Direction.
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ITEM 5: PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ANNUAL DURHAM STUDENT LANDLORD OF THE YEAR AWARDS SCHEME

At its meeting on 26th November, Full Council considered a report proposing the establishment of an annual landlord awards scheme delivered in collaboration with *Rate Your Landlord*. At that meeting, Members resolved to defer a decision on the report, subject to the Environment Committee carrying out a review of the proposed award criteria

The Environment Committee subsequently met on 13th January to consider the matter and has now agreed a revised approach to the award criteria, which is set out in this report for Members' consideration.

Rate Your Landlord is an online review platform designed to allow student tenants to share detailed feedback on their landlords or letting agents. The service is run in partnership with Unipol Student Homes and local student unions and provides an accessible, transparent means for students to record their experiences in private rented housing.

In Durham, the platform was introduced in September 2025 following an agreement between Durham University and the Durham Students' Union. Its launch has already begun to create a public record of landlord performance, helping students make informed decisions while encouraging landlords to maintain higher standards.

<https://www.rateyourlandlord.org.uk/landlord-rankings/durham-rankings/>

The University and colleges are also listed as a landlord as part of the scheme as one of the major student accommodation providers in our City.

The original report proposed that the Durham Landlord of the Year award would be determined using a combination of Rate Your Landlord data and qualitative assessment by Neighbourhood Wardens.

The November report stated that:

"The Rate Your Landlord platform assesses landlords across several structured criteria intended to capture the full renting experience. These criteria include:

- the quality of the signing and letting process;
- customer service provided by the landlord;
- efficiency in dealing with repairs; the overall safety and security of the property;
- the value for money of the accommodation; how much the property felt like a home;
- the quality of the moving-out process; and
- the fairness with which deposits were handled.

Only tenants who rented the property in the relevant academic year are permitted to submit reviews, ensuring that ratings reflect recent and direct experience."

The November report further proposed that: “The proposed Durham Landlord of the Year award would be based on a combination of Rate Your Landlord scores together with qualitative assessment by the Parish Council’s Neighbourhood Wardens. The Wardens’ perspectives—gained through their direct engagement with landlords, tenants, and neighbourhood issues—would provide a crucial layer of insight not captured in online reviews alone. Their feedback would cover matters such as routine property upkeep, responsiveness to community concerns, cooperation in resolving incidents of anti-social behaviour, and general standards of property management within the City.”

Under the original proposal, the Environment Committee would review this combined evidence and determine the final award winner.

Whilst Members were generally supportive of the principle of the award, Full Council requested that the criteria for this award be reviewed to ensure that community impacts were adequately reflected alongside student feedback and Members could have greater confidence in the evidential basis for the award decision.

Following its review, the Environment Committee has agreed a more structured, staged approach to the use of the criteria.

The Committee agreed that:

- Rate Your Landlord scores will be used as the primary quantitative tool to generate an initial shortlist of high-performing landlord
- Once a shortlist has been identified, the Committee agreed that additional qualitative feedback will be sought from both Neighbourhood Wardens and local residents’ groups.

This feedback will focus on landlords’ performance against broader community-based considerations, including but not limited to:

- standards of external and internal property maintenance;
- responsiveness to neighbourhood and environmental concerns;
- willingness to engage constructively with Wardens and residents; and
- cooperation in addressing anti-social behaviour and wider neighbourhood impacts.

The Environment Committee also agreed that property inspections of shortlisted properties would strengthen the credibility of the award. The Committee is therefore seeking support from Members to assist with inspections, noting that this will be a significant undertaking, but one that aligns with the aims of the scheme. Members of the Environment Committee have highlighted that garden condition and compliance around returning bins are key components to these inspections.

The Committee also reaffirmed that the purpose of the award is to recognise landlords who provide a high-quality renting experience for students as well as

making a positive contribution to the local community and environment through responsible property management.

As such and to better reflect this focus, it was agreed that the award should be titled: "*Durham Student Landlord of the Year.*"

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to approved the establishment of the (now rebranded) <i>Durham Student Landlord of the Year</i> scheme, as set out in the above report. 2) If 1) is approved, for Members to agree to delegate responsibility for determining the winner of such an award to the Parish Council's Environment Committee, following feedback from local residents' groups, Neighbourhood Wardens and the result of the proposed property inspections. 3) If 1) is approved, for Members to agree to present this award each year at the annual meeting of the parish.
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ITEM 5: REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY CENTRE SUPPORT WORKING GROUP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Working Group is therefore proposing that the Parish Council supports the City Theatre through an alternative budget, by providing access to a grant fundraiser/bid writer to help the organisation secure substantial external funding from regional and national sources. This approach would offer meaningful and targeted support while remaining consistent with the intended purpose of the community centres funding programme.

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

The Finance Committee met on 14th January 2026 and agreed that the Parish Council should therefore seek bids from contractors with the below proposed advert going live as soon as possible:

Advert for fundraising / bid writing contractor

Cultural infrastructure project – Durham City

The City of Durham Parish Council is seeking tenders from an experienced fundraising and bid writing contractor to support an iconic cultural venue located within Durham City to secure significant external investment in its infrastructure and long-term sustainability.

About the Parish Council

The City of Durham Parish Council is an ambitious and proactive local authority committed to strengthening community wellbeing and supporting valued local assets. The Council recognises the vital contribution that cultural venues make to the social, economic and cultural life of the city and is keen to enable one such venue to access the scale of funding required to secure its future.

About the project

The Parish Council has identified the need for specialist fundraising expertise to support a well-established and highly valued cultural venue that is seeking substantial capital investment in its building and infrastructure. The scale and complexity of the funding required goes beyond the Council's own grant programmes, and this contract will therefore focus on securing regional and national funding from appropriate external sources.

The successful contractor will work closely with the venue and the Parish Council to develop compelling, high-quality funding applications and a clear pathway towards long-term sustainability.

Scope of the contract

This is a time-limited, contractual appointment. The successful contractor will be responsible for the research, development and submission of funding bids, drawing on a strong understanding of the cultural sector and capital funding programmes.

Key responsibilities will include (non-exhaustive):

- *Researching and identifying suitable grant, trust and foundation funding opportunities relevant to cultural infrastructure projects*
- *Writing, editing and formatting high-quality, persuasive funding bids and supporting documentation*
- *Working collaboratively with representatives of the cultural venue to capture need, impact, vision and future sustainability*
- *Liaising with funders and partners to clarify requirements and strengthen applications*
- *Developing project budgets and financial costings for funding submissions*
- *Managing the bid process from initial research through to submission and follow-up*
- *Using online funding portals and tendering systems as required*
- *Tracking and recording bid progress and outcomes*
- *Ensuring accuracy, consistency and quality through thorough proofreading and review*
- *Attending meetings with the Parish Council and project partners where necessary*
- *Ensuring compliance with all relevant Parish Council policies, procedures and requirements*

Required experience and skills

Bidders must be able to demonstrate proven experience in fundraising and bid writing, specifically within the cultural or creative sector.

Essential criteria include:

- *A strong track record of successful fundraising, ideally for cultural venues, arts organisations or heritage buildings*
- *Experience of securing funding for capital or infrastructure projects*
- *Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to produce clear, compelling and funder-focused narratives*
- *Experience of working independently while engaging effectively with multiple stakeholders*
- *Strong organisational and time-management skills*
- *Confidence in developing budgets and financial information for bids*
- *Good IT skills and experience of using online funding systems*

Experience of working with public sector bodies and an understanding of public accountability requirements would be advantageous.

Bids should include:

- A fixed fee proposal clearly stating the anticipated time commitment.
- Details of relevant experience and approach to delivering this contract.
- Evidence of recent successful fundraising projects, particularly within the cultural sector.

All bids should be submitted by 5.00pm on **XX** via email to:
parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk

It is anticipated that funding secured through this work will support delivery during 2026, though the Council can be flexible regarding timescales.

For further information or queries regarding this opportunity, please contact:

Adam Shanley

Parish Clerk

Email: parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk

**DECISIONS
REQUIRED**

- 1) For Members to note the content of the above report and await applications from all eligible organisations listed above by Thursday 19th February 2026, whereupon each application will be assessed by the Parish Council's Working Group.
- 2) For Members to approve the use of part of the funding towards a fundraiser to support the City Theatre, as set out in the above report.
- 3) If 2) is approved, for Members to approve the content of the proposed advert, to be advertised by the end of January 2026.

ITEM 5: RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED VISITOR LEVY IN ENGLAND

As Members are aware, the Government has launched a formal consultation on the design of a new power that would allow Mayoral Strategic Authorities in England to introduce a visitor levy on paid overnight stays. The consultation is being led jointly by HM Treasury and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and will run for twelve weeks, closing on 18 February 2026.

A full copy of the consultation and the list of 36 questions pertaining to this consultation can be found here:

Background paper: [Overnight visitor levy in England](#)

Consultation: [Overnight Visitor Levy consultation - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - Citizen Space](#)

The proposals form part of a wider programme of fiscal devolution intended to give local and regional leaders greater control over revenue-raising and investment decisions in order to support economic growth and improve local outcomes. England is currently highly centralised by international standards, and the visitor levy is presented as one mechanism to address this imbalance by enabling locally retained funding linked to the visitor economy.

The consultation makes clear that the introduction of a visitor levy would be entirely discretionary. No Mayor or strategic authority would be required to implement a levy, and the Government has stated explicitly that there would be no reduction in central government funding for authorities that choose either to introduce or not to introduce such a charge.

The consultation is therefore concerned with shaping the framework within which a levy could operate, rather than mandating its adoption. Although the primary focus is on Mayoral Strategic Authorities, the consultation also seeks views on whether the power should be extended to Foundation Strategic Authorities. This aspect is particularly relevant to County Durham, which does not currently operate within a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Under the proposals, a visitor levy would apply to paid, short-term overnight stays in commercially let visitor accommodation. The Government's preferred approach is a percentage-based levy calculated as a proportion of the accommodation cost, rather than a flat per-night or per-person charge.

This model is described as fairer and more proportionate, as visitors staying in higher-cost accommodation would contribute more than those staying in budget accommodation. The levy would potentially apply across a wide range of accommodation types, including hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, hostels, self-catering accommodation, short-term lets, campsites and similar provision, unless specific exemptions were applied.

The consultation proposes that a small number of exemptions should apply nationally, for example where accommodation constitutes a person's only or usual place of residence, or where accommodation is provided on a charitable or non-commercial basis for shelter, refuge or similar purposes.

In addition, the Government is seeking views on whether local leaders should have discretion to introduce further local exemptions where there is a clear and justified rationale. There is also discussion about whether very small or infrequent accommodation providers should fall outside the scope of a levy through the use of a minimum threshold, in order to reduce disproportionate administrative burdens.

Revenue raised through any visitor levy would be retained locally and could be used to support a wide range of interventions intended to drive economic growth and enhance the visitor economy. These include investment in visitor infrastructure and attractions, support for cultural and sporting events, improvements to transport and connectivity, enhancements to the public realm, and skills and workforce development within the hospitality and tourism sector.

The consultation recognises that many of the services and facilities used by visitors are delivered at local authority level and, in some cases, at parish or town level. It therefore seeks views on whether a share of levy revenues should be distributed to constituent local authorities within a strategic area to reflect the localised impacts of tourism.

Strong emphasis is placed on transparency, accountability and engagement. Before introducing a levy, the relevant authority would be required to publish a detailed prospectus setting out the proposed scope, rate, exemptions and intended use of revenues and to undertake a formal public consultation with businesses, residents and other stakeholders. Authorities would also be required to provide a minimum of twelve months' notice prior to implementation and to publish annual reports detailing how much revenue has been raised and how it has been spent.

In considering the relevance of these proposals to Durham, it is important to recognise the distinctive nature of the visitor economy in Durham City. Durham is characterised by a very strong day-visitor market linked to its heritage, cultural and educational assets, but a relatively small overnight accommodation base. It is estimated that only around 9% of visitors to Durham City stay overnight, with the proportion falling to approximately 8% across the county as a whole.

County Durham has around 17,000 beds across the entire county, a figure that contrasts sharply with larger metropolitan destinations such as Manchester or Liverpool, each of which has more than 12,000 beds within their city centres alone. This context is critical when considering both the potential revenue that a levy might generate locally and the possible impacts on accommodation providers.

The Mayor for the North East Combined Authority (NECA) Kim McGuinness has already given her public support for the introduction of a £2-per-night levy which it is suggested could raise up to £20million for the North East regional economy.

Initial engagement undertaken by Visit County Durham indicates that views across the local visitor economy are mixed and continue to evolve. Some stakeholders are interested in the potential for a visitor levy to provide a dedicated funding stream for reinvestment in local infrastructure and visitor management, while others have expressed concerns about competitiveness, administrative burdens on smaller providers, and the risk of discouraging overnight stays in a destination with a limited accommodation stock.

The wider UK context demonstrates that visitor levies are becoming increasingly common, although their application varies significantly by place. Scotland has legislated for a percentage-based visitor levy, with Edinburgh due to introduce a five per cent charge from July 2026, while Wales has legislated for a per-person, per-night model, although no authority will begin charging before 2027.

In England, some cities have pursued alternative approaches through accommodation-based Business Improvement Districts, following extensive consultation with businesses. These examples, however, generally relate to destinations with much higher volumes of overnight visitors than Durham, underlining the need for a flexible and proportionate national framework.

It was therefore recommended that the City of Durham Parish Council takes an active and positive approach to this consultation and, as such, the Parish Council's Business Committee considered the content of this consultation and is proposing the following response:

RE: Visitor Levy for England - a consultation on the design of a new Mayoral power to create visitor levies on overnight stays in England

Many thanks for this opportunity to respond to this important consultation on a proposed new visitor levy for England. The City of Durham Parish Council has carefully considered the content of consultation documentation and, in principle, supports the introduction of a tourism levy, subject to a number of important conditions being met.

Durham City is a nationally and internationally recognised visitor destination, anchored by its World Heritage Site, historic city centre, university presence and cultural offer. Tourism is a vital part of the local economy. Visit County Durham data identifies that tourism in Durham City alone is worth approximately £249 million annually, attracts around 3.88 million visitors, and supports in the region of 2,726 jobs, while the wider County Durham visitor economy contributes significantly more. The Parish Council therefore recognises the case for a mechanism that enables visitor-generated income to support the infrastructure and services that make the city an attractive place to visit and live.

However, the Parish Council is clear that any levy must be implemented in a way that is fair, transparent and manageable for both visitors and businesses. Many accommodation providers within Durham City are small-scale operators who are already subject to considerable regulatory pressures.

The Council therefore stresses that the administrative burden of any new levy must be kept to an absolute minimum, with clear guidance, streamlined digital processes, and alignment with existing reporting systems wherever possible. A complex or overly burdensome system risks undermining compliance and damaging the local visitor economy.

The Parish Council also has a clear preference that any overnight visitor levy should be charged on a per booking, per night basis, rather than per person. A per booking model would be simpler for accommodation providers to administer, easier for visitors to understand, and less likely to generate disputes or inconsistencies in application.

The Parish Council considers that a per person charging structure would be more administratively complex, particularly for larger group bookings and family stays, and could disproportionately affect certain visitor demographics to our city.

A further critical issue for the Parish Council is the distribution of revenues raised. The Council strongly supports the principle that funding should be allocated primarily on the basis of where revenue is generated, with the majority of funds flowing back to the local authority areas that experience the direct impacts of tourism.

In addition, City of Durham Parish Council believes there should be a clear and accessible mechanism through which Parish Councils can apply for a proportion of levy funding to support local events, cultural initiatives and community-led projects. Parish councils are often at the forefront of delivering or supporting activities that enhance the visitor experience while protecting residential amenity and community cohesion. Enabling access to funding at this level would ensure that levy revenues deliver visible, locally relevant outcomes.

The Parish Council also wishes to address the inclusion of short-term lets within the scope of any levy. Durham City has experienced a significant growth in short-term letting in recent years. A report commissioned by the Parish Council in January 2024 provides detailed evidence of the scale and concentration of short-term lets within the city.

Analysis of census data indicates that the proportion of dwellings with no usual residents across wards within the parish increased dramatically between 2011 and 2021, rising to approximately 28–36 per cent depending on the ward. In addition, a snapshot analysis of Airbnb listings undertaken for the report identified between 40 and 70 properties available within 1 kilometre of the city centre at any given time during 2024, and over 500 properties within a 3-kilometre radius, demonstrating the scale of short-term letting activity within and around the parish.

While the Parish Council accepts that including short-term rentals within the levy may be desirable from both an income and fairness perspective, it is concerned that, in the absence of a fully operational national registration scheme, it will be extremely difficult to apply and enforce a levy equitably.

The Parish Council notes that the consultation itself recognises the limitations of existing data sources and the importance of a national registration framework. The Parish Council therefore urges that any levy arrangements involving short-term lets are closely aligned with the national registration scheme once implemented, and that clear, usable data is made available to levy administrators to avoid under-collection.

The Parish Council further believes that any increases to the levy should not be automatic or solely linked to inflation. Instead, increases should be subject to public consultation, allowing communities, businesses and visitors to understand and comment on the rationale for changes.

Finally, the Parish Council considers that the timing of levy collection is an important practical issue. The Council's preference is that the levy should be applied at the point of booking or, alternatively, upon check-in. Applying the levy at these stages would provide clarity for visitors, reduce the risk of non-payment, and align with existing booking and payment processes used by accommodation providers.

Conclusion

The City of Durham Parish Council supports the introduction of a tourism levy in principle, provided it is implemented in a fair, transparent and proportionate manner.

The Parish Council's support is contingent on minimising administrative burdens on businesses, adopting a per booking, per night charging structure, ensuring revenue distribution reflects where tourism impacts are felt as well as enabling Parish Councils to access a portion of the funding raised.

The Parish Council looks forward to continued engagement as the Government considers responses to this consultation and, if approved, develops the final framework.

End of response

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) Councillors are asked to consider the content of this briefing paper as well as the Government consultation. 2) To approve the draft response to this consultation, as set out in the above report.
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ITEM 7: ELVET GREEN - ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE NOMINATION

As Members are aware, the City of Durham Parish Council was consulted by DCC in late December in relation to a nomination received for Elvet Green (map included in Appendix 1 of this report) to be included on the County Council's List of Assets of Community Value (ACV) under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

This nomination was submitted by the Hemp Garden Association and the Parish Council was invited to comment as part of the statutory consultation process. After consideration, Members resolved by majority to note the nomination and not to submit any formal comments in response.

The Hemp Garden Association was established in 2017 and the group is a volunteer-led organisation involved in the maintenance, informal use and promotion of this land as a community green space and the work of the group is positively received by local residents.

The land in question is owned by DCC and the Hemp Garden Association considers the site to be of importance for recreation, environmental enhancement and community wellbeing. The Association has sought to secure formal recognition of this through the Asset of Community Value nomination process.

The nomination documents have been circulated and the nomination includes a plan identifying the extent of the land as well as details explaining why the nominator considers the land to meet the statutory criteria.

The legal framework for Assets of Community Value is set out in Part 5, Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011 and the Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012. Under this legislation, eligible community bodies may nominate land or buildings to be included on a local authority's list of Assets of Community Value. Upon receipt of a nomination, the local authority must assess whether the statutory criteria are met and must determine the application within eight weeks. If the asset is listed, it remains on the list for a period of five years unless removed following review or appeal.

To be listed as an Asset of Community Value, the Local Authority must be satisfied that there is, or was in the recent past, a non-ancillary use of the land that furthered the social wellbeing or social interests (cultural, recreational, sporting) of the local community, and that it is realistic to think that such use can continue or resume in the future.

The Council must decide whether or not to list the asset within 8 weeks following receipt of the nomination. The decision as to whether the nominated assets are of community value will be taken by the Head of Inclusive Growth & Partnerships.

The land itself includes the former public toilet block which has been vacant for some 20+ years. The site is currently being marketed on DCC's website and the Parish Council understands that there is significant interest in the site.

In its response to the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan consultation, the Parish Council specifically highlighted this site, urging the Council to look at assets such as this as part of income raising measures and to develop a wider long-term strategy for how Durham County Council manages and/or retains its 850+ building assets across the county.

Listing an asset as an Asset of Community Value does not prevent its sale or development. However, if the owner intends to dispose of the asset, the legislation introduces a moratorium period during which eligible community bodies may express an interest in bidding to purchase the asset. The property owner is not obliged to sell to a community body, but the process is intended to provide communities with time to prepare a bid.

In addition, applicants do not currently have a statutory right of appeal under the Localism Act if these types of applications are refused and nor does an applicant have a statutory right for a review either.

An applicant may submit a new application if further information can be provided to support the application or what is being requested changes in some way (and there is no statutory waiting period before a community group can submit a new ACV nomination after a refusal either). The Council may refuse a repeat nomination on its merits if nothing has changed.

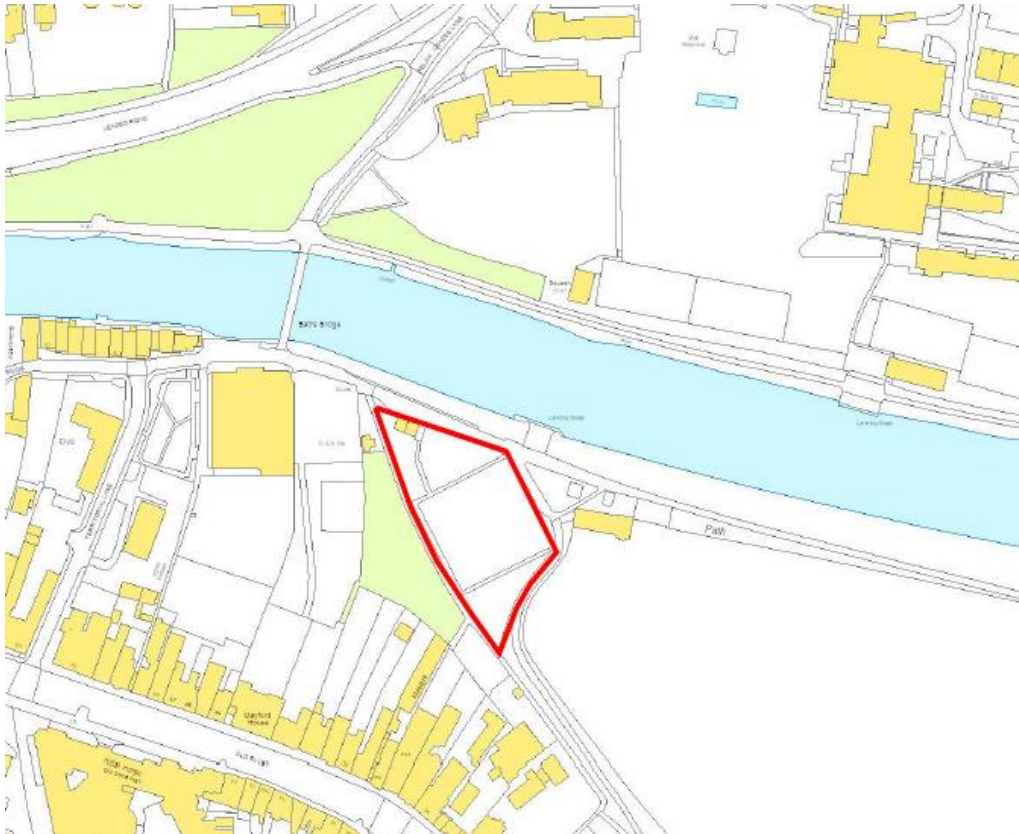
By way of additional information, the Government is looking to amend parts of the Localism Act through its English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill which is currently sitting at Committee Stage at the Lords. Things may well change but presently the Government is proposing a few positive changes including:

- Widening the "community value" test and expanding qualifying use to include economic wellbeing / interests (not just social or cultural).
- Introducing a new applicant review right after refusal meaning that a nominating community body gets a statutory right to ask the Council to review a refusal to list.
- There is also reference in the Bill that a new appeals process for unsuccessful applicants may be introduced but it specifically states that this will require new regulations.
- Switching from "right to bid" towards a "right to buy" mechanism and introducing concepts like a "preferred community buyer".

This is just background information however and clearly this Bill will not be in place ahead of a decision on this current application.

DECISION REQUIRED	Members are asked to formally ratify the decision to note this application without comment so that the decision can be formally recorded.
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Appendix 1 – map of the site



ITEM 8: REPORT ON PARISH COUNCIL INTERNAL CONTROLS

REPORT TO COUNCIL: 28TH JANUARY 2026

1. RESPONSIBILITY

Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 requires Councils to carry out a review of their internal controls annually before the end of the financial year.

The City of Durham Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

In discharging this responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them effectively, efficiently and economically.

The Parish Council has now adopted a risk register and this is under continuing review by the Clerk and any issues arising from risk assessments carried out will be reported to full Council.

The Council

The Council has elected a Chair who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings and together with the Clerk for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful.

The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets for the following year at its January full Council meeting each year. The January meeting of the Council also approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

The Full Council meets at least 10 times per year. The Parish Council does not usually meet in August or in December.

A budget report is prepared and submitted to all of the Parish Council's Finance Committee meetings showing income and expenditure together with a budget update for all Committee spends. Any budget revision reports are also reported for information and these set out any changes to the budget as per Council decisions or any known budget over or underspends.

Clerk to the Council

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations and advises the Council on managing risks. The Clerk also ensures that the Council's procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to. The Clerk also manages projects agreed by full Council and works with all suppliers and contractors agreed by full Council to carry out functions on behalf of the Council.

Payments

All payments made are reported to all Finance Committee meetings. The Parish Council now 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.

Risk Assessments/Risk Management

The Council carries out regular risk assessments in respect of actions. The Clerk makes an annual risk management report to the Council. A review of financial management risks is included as part of the review report.

Internal Audit

Last year, the Council appointed an independent Internal Auditor, Mr Gordon Fletcher, who reports to the Council on the adequacy of its:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations
- Risk management
- Reviews
- Insurance cover

A review of internal audit must be carried out before the end of each financial year.

Gordon Fletcher has indicated that he is willing to carry out an audit of the Parish Council again next year. The cost of this service is £175.

Gordon was previously the Audit Manager at Easington District Council before retiring when the Unitary Council was formed and set up his own business by providing an internal audit service for Town and Parish Councils. This has grown to a current portfolio of 7 local Town Councils and 24 local Parish Councils.

Gordon is C.M.I.I.A. (Chartered Member of the Institute of Internal Auditors) qualified and has his own professional indemnity insurance.

External Audit

The Council's External Auditors are Mazars, appointed by the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA). They submit an annual Certificate of Audit, which is presented to the Council, together with a copy of their report listing any issues to be raised. At the end of the Audit the Council must display the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for 14 days and must make the Annual Governance and Audit Return (AGAR) and Final Accounts available on request. These are also displayed on the Parish Council's website.

3. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

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.

4. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The external audit report for 2024-25 was carried out by Mazars and was completed in September 2025. No issues were raised by the external auditors.

5. INTERNAL CONTROL ISSUES

The Auditors did not raise any issues as part of the 2024-25 Audit.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) Councillors are requested to approve the report. 2) Councillors are asked to agree to the appointment of Mr Gordon Fletcher as the Parish Council's internal auditor for the financial year 2025/26.
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