



## City of Durham Parish Council

The City of Durham Parish Council. c/o The Enginemen Secretary's Office  
The Miners Hall. Flass Street. Durham. DH1 4BE

Telephone: 07510 074875

Email: [parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk)

Date of summons: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026

### SUMMONS

**To all Members of the City of Durham Parish Council:** Councillors V Ashfield, 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 22<sup>nd</sup> April 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**

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## **AGENDA**

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

**2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

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

**3. TO RECEIVE WRITTEN APPLICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF PARISH COUNCILLOR AND TO CO-OPT A CANDIDATE TO FILL THE EXISTING VACANCY**

*The meeting shall re-open to the press and public for items 4-9.*

**4. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2026**

**5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**6. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

**• Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

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

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

- Consultation response to Durham County Council's proposed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Interim Policy.

**• Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

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

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

**7. CHAIR'S UPDATES**

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026

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

**9. REPORT ON THE LATEST UPDATES IN RELATION TO THE OVE ARUP MOBILE POLICE MAST**

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#### **10. PARTNER OF THE YEAR AWARD NOMINATIONS**

**Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026 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**), L Brown, T Cleaver, R Cornwell, D Freeman, R Handy, E Hopgood, C Lattin, P Layton, F Robinson, E Scott and L Wilson.

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

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

Apologies were received from Councillors V Ashfield and G Holland.

**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 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

**4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None received.

**5. BITESIZE COUNCILLOR TRAINING – PARISH COUNCIL SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

The Chair advised Members that she wished to introduce a new initiative at the beginning of meetings of Full Council, whereby brief, bite-sized training updates would be provided to support Councillors in their roles and responsibilities. The Chair noted that this approach would assist in maintaining a consistent understanding of key governance principles and strengthen effective decision-making across the Council.

The Chair then delivered an overview of the Council's Scheme of Delegation, outlining its purpose as a framework established under the Local Government Act to enable the efficient and timely conduct of Council business.

Members were advised that the scheme ensures that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level, balancing operational efficiency with democratic accountability, with strategic and policy matters reserved for Full Council determination.

The Chair highlighted that the Scheme of Delegation confers defined responsibilities upon the Parish Clerk, including his statutory roles as Proper Officer and Responsible Finance Officer. The Clerk is authorised to manage the

day-to-day administration of the Council, implement decisions, and ensure compliance with legislative and procedural requirements, whilst maintaining transparency through regular reporting of delegated decisions to Council or Committee meetings.

The Chair further outlined that delegated powers extend across key functional areas, including general administration, financial management within approved budgets, staffing matters in accordance with Council policies, and the management of Council land and property. Provision is also made for the Clerk to act in cases of urgency or emergency, subject to appropriate consultation and subsequent reporting, thereby ensuring continuity of service and responsiveness to unforeseen circumstances.

Members were reminded that, whilst delegation is essential for operational effectiveness, it remains underpinned by the principle of openness, with the expectation that Members, the press, and the public are kept appropriately informed of decisions taken under delegated authority. The Chair advised that the Clerk would always bring back a decision made in writing to the next Full Council meeting so that Members may ratify this accordingly.

The Chair highlighted that it is in very rare circumstances where a decision is needed to be taken outside of the usual schedule of meetings and reminded Members that they have a right to request an extraordinary meeting of the Council if they feel that the issue is so urgent and important, that it cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting.

There were no queries from Members following the Chair's presentation. The Chair thanked Members for their continued support in upholding this important Scheme of Delegation.

## **6. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **• Planning and Licensing Committee**

Councillor L Brown presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2026. There being no queries from Members, Councillor L Brown moved on to Committee reports.

### **County Durham Plan Houses in Multiple Occupation Interim Policy**

Councillor R Cornwell presented a report on the proposed HMO Interim Policy; as presented to the last DCC Cabinet meeting.

Councillor R Cornwell presented a report to Members regarding the County Durham Plan Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Interim Policy, advising that Cabinet, at its meeting on 18 March 2026, had approved a proposal to undertake a six-week public consultation on a new interim planning policy. It was explained that the purpose of the policy is to respond to emerging concerns about the increasing number of HMOs across parts of County Durham not currently covered by existing Article 4 Directions, and to provide a clear policy framework pending the wider review of the County Durham Plan.

Members were informed that HMOs, defined as properties occupied by three or more individuals from separate households sharing facilities, provide an important source of affordable accommodation but can give rise to planning challenges where concentrations become excessive. Councillor Cornwell outlined that the proposed interim policy seeks to ensure that such developments contribute to mixed and balanced communities, whilst safeguarding residential amenity and maintaining appropriate living standards.

The meeting was advised that, under current national planning regulations, smaller HMOs may be created without planning permission unless permitted development rights are removed through an Article 4 Direction. Existing Article 4 controls already apply within defined areas of Durham City; however, evidence indicates that HMO numbers are increasing outside these areas. In response, Durham County Council has approved a further Article 4 Direction covering the remainder of the county, which will come into effect on 17 August 2026, requiring planning permission for most new HMO conversions.

Councillor Cornwell further highlighted key elements of the proposed interim policy, including the introduction of thresholds to prevent over-concentration of HMOs and measures to avoid the “sandwiching” of residential dwellings between HMOs or non-residential uses. It was noted that the policy also requires the submission of management plans and sets expectations regarding accommodation standards in order to mitigate impacts on neighbouring residents and ensure acceptable living conditions.

In addition, Councillor Cornwell outlined a number of key considerations which had informed the Parish Council’s developing position . It was noted that reliance solely on licensing data to identify existing HMOs may lead to underestimation, and that properties with planning permission but not yet implemented should also be taken into account. Reference was also made to the potential use of wider data sources, including council tax student exemptions and forthcoming national landlord registers, to strengthen the evidence base.

Members were advised that, whilst there was support for the proposed measures to address clustering and sandwiching, consideration should be given to applying a broader and consistent threshold approach, including a 10% limit of HMOs within a 100-metre radius. Concern was raised that the interim policy, as proposed, would not apply within existing Article 4 areas, which could lead to inconsistencies in decision-making and weaken the Council’s position at appeal. It was suggested that extending the policy across all relevant areas would provide greater clarity and robustness.

Councillor Cornwell also highlighted the importance of consistent accommodation standards across the County, noting that higher space standards proposed within the interim policy should be applied uniformly. The interaction between the interim policy and existing planning policies and supplementary planning documents was also raised, with an emphasis on ensuring alignment and clarity in their application.

Following consideration of the report, Members unanimously **agreed** to note the contents of the report and the associated Cabinet decision, **agreed** to engage positively with the forthcoming consultation and instruct the Planning and

Licensing Committee to prepare a draft response to the interim policy for consideration and approval at the April meeting of Full Council.

The Chair thanked Councillor Cornwell for his extensive analysis and report on this important issue.

#### • **Environment Committee**

Councillor C Lattin presented the Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee reports.

#### **Proposal to establish a new City of Durham Partner of the Year Award.**

Councillor C Lattin presented a report to Members regarding a proposal to establish a new City of Durham Partner of the Year Award.

In presenting her report, Councillor Lattin advised that draft criteria for the award had previously been circulated; however, feedback received from Members indicated that the criteria were considered overly prescriptive and may inadvertently restrict the inclusive and celebratory nature of the award. It was therefore reported that there was a clear preference for a simpler and more flexible approach that better reflects the overarching aim of recognising positive contributions to the parish.

In this regard, Councillor Lattin outlined that Members had expressed strong support for aligning the new award more closely with the established Citizen of the Year Award framework. This approach would focus on recognising outstanding commitment to parish life, including significant contributions to community activity, support for others, and achievements that benefit the wider community, whilst allowing appropriate discretion in determining recipients.

Members were further advised that it was proposed to replace the previously drafted detailed criteria with a concise statement recognising outstanding contributions made by organisations, groups, charities, social enterprises, public bodies, or businesses that have demonstrably benefited the City of Durham parish. It was noted that, consistent with existing arrangements, there would be no requirement for the organisation to be based within the parish, provided that a clear positive local impact could be evidenced, nor would the award be restricted to a single recipient in any given year.

Councillor Lattin also outlined the proposed nomination and selection process, advising that nominations would be submitted by Parish Councillors and supported by a brief written statement. Nominations would remain confidential and be considered by Full Council in closed session, with the outcome determined by secret ballot and any organisation receiving a straight majority of votes being declared the recipient. It was further noted that the presentation of the award would take place at the Annual Meeting of the City of Durham Parish in May.

Councillor C Lattin advised Members that the proposal to introduce a Partner of the Year Award replaced an earlier proposal to establish a Best Landlord Award. It was reported that, following further discussion, a clear consensus had emerged

that the Parish Council should not introduce a separate landlord award at this stage. Instead, it was agreed that the Council would support and promote the existing student-led scheme, utilising the allocated budget to raise awareness and encourage greater participation among students. Members noted that this approach would strengthen the existing arrangements without creating duplication or unnecessary complexity.

Councillor Lattin further advised that, in light of this position, consideration had been given to broadening the scope of recognition beyond a single sector. It was proposed that the Parish Council introduce a new Partner of the Year Award to recognise an organisation that had made a positive contribution to life within the City of Durham parish. Members noted that this approach would enable the Council to acknowledge a wider range of contributions, including those relating to community wellbeing, environmental improvements, and the overall quality of life in the city.

Members unanimously **agreed** to adopt the simplified criteria for the Partner of the Year Award, aligned with the principles of the Citizen of the Year Award, and further **agreed** to invite nominations for eligible organisations for consideration at the April meeting of Full Council.

### **Proposal to support students at Houghall College to showcase their work at Chelsea Flower Show 2026**

Councillor C Lattin presented a report to Members regarding a proposal to support floristry students from Houghall College in showcasing their work at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2026.

Councillor C Lattin warmly congratulated the students on their success; advising that the Houghall students had been selected to exhibit at this prestigious international horticultural event, which attracts significant public attendance, industry professionals, and global media coverage, and that the opportunity represented a substantial platform for students to demonstrate their creative and technical abilities.

Councillor C Lattin informed Members that the students would design, construct and present a floral installation within the Great Pavilion, responding to the theme "Floristry Laboratory." Councillor Lattin highlighted that participation in the event would provide a unique and potentially once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for learners, supporting their professional development, confidence, and future career prospects within the horticulture and floristry sectors.

Members noted that the total estimated cost of delivering the project was £15,457, with significant financial and in-kind contributions already secured from the Royal Horticultural Society and the College. Despite this support, a funding gap remained, and additional contributions were being sought to ensure full participation by all students, particularly in relation to accommodation, travel and materials. It was also noted that a number of costs were being mitigated through sustainable sourcing of materials and other forms of practical support.

Councillor Lattin reported that the Environment Committee had considered the proposal and recognised its strong alignment with the Council's priorities,

including the promotion of environmental awareness, civic pride and support for young people within the parish area. Members further noted the wider benefits of the project in showcasing the region's creativity and expertise on a national and international stage.

It was therefore recommended that the Council approve the allocation of £3,000 from the Environment Committee's planting budget underspend for the current financial year to support the students' participation. Members were advised that this contribution could be met from existing budget provision and would not require additional funding.

Members unanimously **approved** the allocation of £3,000 from the Environment Committee's planting budget underspend to support Houghall floristry students in delivering their installation at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2026.

#### • **Business Committee**

Councillor E Scott presented the Business Committee minutes from the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2026. There were no queries from Members on these minutes but Councillor E Scott took the opportunity to highlight the contributions of Graham Soult over several years and thanked him for his work with the Parish Council.

As Members were aware, Graham's work contract ends with the Parish Council at the end of the financial year and the Clerk has arranged for a Durham Markets voucher to be sent to Graham as a thank you for all he has done for the Council.

#### • **Finance Committee**

Councillor S Walker presented the Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026. There were no queries from Members on these minutes.

### **7. CHAIR'S UPDATES**

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 25th February 2026, as follows:

The Chair placed on record her sincere thanks to the many volunteers who had supported planting activity in the previous autumn, noting the positive impact seen in areas including the A167, Elvet, Gilesgate Bank and Neville's Cross, and expressing the Council's intention to repeat this work later in the year.

The Chair informed Members that the Parish Council would be hosting an event to mark the opening of the new footpath and gate at Observatory Hill, undertaken in partnership with the Observatory Hill Research Group and Ustinov College. It was noted that this location represents one of the most important viewpoints of the World Heritage Site and that the Mayor, Gary Hutchinson, would be in attendance to formally cut the red ribbon.

The Chair took the opportunity to congratulate the Mayor on a successful recent fundraising event in aid of St Cuthbert's Hospice, noting his distinctive and highly engaged approach to civic duties.

The Chair also expressed sincere thanks to Jez Light of Durham County Council for his many years of work supporting major cultural events in the City, including Durham Pride, the Durham Brass Festival and the Christmas Markets, and noted that his departure would be a significant loss to the authority and the wider cultural sector.

Members were updated on preparations for the unveiling of a blue plaque in honour of the late Mo Mowlam, with confirmation that the event would take place on 15 June. It was noted that distinguished guests including Jean Mowlam, Adam Ingram and Hilary Armstrong would be in attendance. Members were also advised that Richard Coles was unable to attend due to prior commitments but had conveyed his best wishes and thanks for the invitation.

The Chair recorded her thanks to Councillors Liz Brown, Roger Cornwell and Grenville Holland for their attendance and contribution at the recent public hearing relating to the Hallgarth Care Home appeal, noting that the hearing had been particularly lively and that the outcome was awaited.

Members were reminded that the Parish Council would be seeking to co-opt a new Member at the next meeting and that the vacancy had been duly advertised. The Chair also reminded Members that the next meeting of the Planning and Licensing Committee would take place on Thursday 2 April, noting specifically that this was not Good Friday, and that the Committee would consider its response to the latest application relating to the Prince Bishops Place redevelopment.

In addition, the Chair reported that Durham University had informally approached the Parish Council to discuss next steps in relation to the Hild/Bede redevelopment, following confirmation that the University and its preferred development partner had parted company.

An update was also provided on parking arrangements at the University Hospital of North Durham, with Members noting that the Trust's Chief Executive, Steve Russell, had written to confirm that a temporary agreement had been reached with Durham County Council to allow use of its car park, thereby releasing approximately 150 spaces at the hospital. The Chair advised that the Clerk had responded to seek further assurances regarding the delivery of the proposed new car park as part of the A&E development, and to request that further measures be considered to promote use of the Park and Ride service.

Finally, the Chair reminded Members of the forthcoming Durham City Riverscape community litter pick, scheduled to take place at 10.00am on Saturday 4 April, and encouraged participation where possible.

## **8. ASSERTION 10 – DIGITAL AND DATA COMPLIANCE FOR THE 2025/26 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR)**

The Clerk presented a report to Members regarding Assertion 10 – Digital and Data Compliance for the 2025/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return

(AGAR). Members were advised that Assertion 10 represents a new requirement within the Annual Governance Statement and brings together digital infrastructure, accessibility, and data protection into a single assurance, requiring the Council not only to comply with relevant legislation and best practice but also to demonstrate that such compliance is active, embedded and subject to ongoing review.

The Clerk outlined that Assertion 10 requires the Council to confirm that appropriate arrangements are in place for the secure and lawful handling of information. This includes the use of a .gov.uk domain for the Council's website and email communications, compliance with recognised website accessibility standards, and adherence to the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. Members were advised that, whilst these requirements are not new in themselves, the assertion formalises the need for consistent application, documentation and supporting evidence.

Members were informed that a comprehensive review of the Council's current arrangements had been undertaken. The Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council already utilises a .gov.uk domain and official email addresses for all Members and officers to ensure that Council business is conducted through secure and accountable channels.

Moreover, the Council's website meets WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards, supported by appropriate tools to identify and address accessibility issues, alongside the publication of an accessibility statement and clear reporting mechanisms for users.

The Clerk further advised that a detailed data audit and mapping exercise had been completed to identify the personal data held by the Council, the purposes for which it is processed, how it is stored, and who has access to it. Members noted that this work confirmed that the Council processes only limited amounts of personal data and that appropriate controls, processes, and procedures are in place, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined to ensure compliance.

In relation to data governance, Members were advised that, following advice received from Breakthrough Communications, it had been clarified that the Parish Council, as a corporate body, is the Data Controller for the purposes of data protection legislation. This clarification ensures that accountability for compliance rests with the Council collectively, supported by appropriate operational arrangements.

The Clerk reported that a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures had been developed and presented for consideration, including a Data Security Breach Policy, Subject Access Request procedure, Consent Form, Records Retention Policy, Information Technology Policy and a Use Your Own Device Policy. Members were advised that these documents collectively establish a robust and practical framework governing the management of information, including incident response, individual rights, lawful processing, data retention, appropriate use of technology and associated risks.

The Clerk particularly stressed that Assertion 10 represents an ongoing governance requirement rather than a one-off exercise, and that the policies and

procedures introduced should be regarded as living documents, subject to regular review and refinement in response to legislative, regulatory and operational changes.

Members **noted** the completion of the data audit and the implementation of appropriate controls and processes, **agreed** that the Council is in a position to confirm compliance with the requirements of Assertion 10, and formally **adopted** the suite of policies presented, thereby embedding these arrangements within the Council's governance framework in support of the 2025/26 AGAR submission.

## **9. REPORT BY THE COMMUNITY CENTRE WORKING GROUP ON PROPOSED FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR 2026/27**

Councillor E Scott presented a report to Members on behalf of the Community Centre Support Working Group regarding the proposed allocation of funding for 2026/27.

Members were reminded that the Community Centre Support Scheme had been established to strengthen community infrastructure within the parish and that, following an Expressions of Interest process, three organisations had initially been invited to submit full applications. Councillor E Scott reported that St Giles Church had since withdrawn from the process due to capacity constraints, with the option to re-engage in future funding rounds.

Members were advised that two full applications had been received and were now under consideration. Councillor Scott outlined that the application from Alington House Community Association focused on improving the long-term energy efficiency and sustainability of the building through a "fabric-first" approach.

Proposed works included the installation of a zoned smart heating system, replacement of inefficient single-glazed windows, roof repairs and additional insulation. It was noted that the total project cost was estimated at £55,903, with a request of £30,000 from the Parish Council, and that the works were intended to secure the long-term viability of what was described as the only remaining community centre located within the heart of Durham City.

Members were further advised of the application submitted by Waddington Street United Reformed Church, which had been revised from its original proposal. The current application sought support for internal improvements to enhance accessibility and usability, specifically the replacement of worn carpets and the upgrading of the building's audio system.

The total cost of these works was estimated at £7,066.88, and it was noted that the project was deliverable within a short timeframe. Whilst the revised proposal did not directly address energy efficiency, Members were advised that the organisation continued to explore solar panel installation separately.

Councillor Scott also updated Members on proposals relating to the Durham City Theatre. It was noted that, given the scale of investment required to secure the theatre's long-term future, direct funding through the Community Centre Support

Scheme was not considered appropriate. Instead, Members were advised that the Council had sought to appoint a specialist fundraising and bid-writing contractor to pursue external funding opportunities. Two bids had been received following a public advertisement of the opportunity: one in the sum of £5,000 and a second in the sum of £15,960. Members noted that both proposals demonstrated relevant experience in securing funding for cultural and community projects, with differing approaches, scope and cost.

Councillor E Scott advised that the Working Group had considered the applications and proposals and recommended as follows:

- 1) That the allocation of £33,703 be allocated to the Alington House scheme (full cost of the 4 x replacement windows plus costs of the planning application).
- 2) That the application by Waddington Street URC not be accepted at this funding round given the change in scope from the EoI stage.
- 3) That the remaining funding of £6,297 be re-allocated to the small grants scheme and that Waddington Street URC and other organisations be encouraged to apply through this open funding scheme.
- 4) That the Council approves the appointment of Contractor A to progress the City Theatre bid.

Members unanimously **agreed** all of the recommendations, as set out above, from the Community Centre Working Group.

## **10. REPORT FOLLOWING THE PARISH CLERK'S ANNUAL APPRAISAL**

The Clerk left the meeting for item 10 of the Agenda. The Chair reported that the Personnel Committee had undertaken the Clerk's annual appraisal and regarded his performance as outstanding, particularly highlighting his work with partners and his recent Public Service Award.

The Chair advised that the Clerk has been tasked with producing an annual calendar of City events for the website. The Chair also reported that the Personnel Committee has instructed that all new projects - outside the Council's agreed budget and strategy – must be reported and approved by Full Council before progressing through Committee stage.

Councillor G Holland also reported that he would like the Council to undertake a pay review of the Clerk's salary in light of his outstanding performance.

The Clerk rejoined the meeting at the end of this discussion.

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## **11. CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2026 NOMINATIONS**

Members **agreed** to award the Good Citizen of the Year 2026 Award to: Julie Marshall, Stuart Lloyd and Win Coleman.

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

Signed,

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council  
(22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026)**

## **ITEM 6: COUNTY DURHAM PLAN HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION INTERIM POLICY**

Durham County Council is currently consulting on a new interim planning policy governing Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in parts of County Durham outside the existing Durham City Article 4 areas.

The Council has stated that the purpose of the interim policy is to address emerging concerns regarding the increasing number of HMOs across the county and to establish planning guidance before a broader review of the County Durham Plan (CDP) is completed.

A full copy of the report presented to Cabinet can be found here: [CDP HMO Interim Policy Report.pdf](#)

As Members are aware, an HMO is defined as a property occupied by three or more people from two or more separate households who share facilities such as bathrooms or kitchens. HMOs provide an important form of relatively affordable accommodation but can create planning challenges where they become highly concentrated in particular neighbourhoods.

The interim policy therefore aims to ensure that HMOs contribute to mixed and balanced communities while protecting residential amenity and maintaining a high standard of living conditions for occupants.

Local authorities can remove permitted development rights by introducing an Article 4 Direction where evidence shows that uncontrolled conversions may harm local communities. In Durham City, such directions already apply in areas including:

- Framwellgate Moor
- Newton Hall
- Pity Me
- Mount Oswald
- Carville
- Belmont

These controls were introduced primarily because of high concentrations of student HMOs, which were considered detrimental to balanced neighbourhoods.

However, this interim policy is proposed to apply to all parts of the County outside the existing Article 4 area. This will impact part of the City of Durham parish area however because Aykley Woods (the site of the old Police HQ) is outside the Article 4 area.

The current County Durham Plan Policy 16 places limits on student HMOs within Durham City, stating that they should not exceed 10% of residential properties within a 100-metre radius. This policy remains in force within the existing Article 4 areas.

Evidence gathered by Durham County Council indicates that HMO numbers have begun increasing outside the existing controlled areas, particularly in parts of the county not previously subject to Article 4 restrictions.

To address this trend, the Council has approved a new Article 4 Direction covering the remainder of the county, which will remove permitted development rights for HMO conversions from 17 August 2026. This means that, from that date, most conversions from family homes to small HMOs across the wider county will require planning permission.

However, planning applications must be determined against clear policy guidance. As the County Durham Plan is currently under review, the council has proposed introducing an interim HMO policy to bridge the gap until the new plan is adopted.

The interim policy is designed specifically for areas outside the Durham City Article 4 zones. Within the city's existing Article 4 areas, Policy 16 of the County Durham Plan will continue to apply, and the interim policy will not replace it.

A central element of the proposed policy is the introduction of clear thresholds designed to prevent over-concentration of HMOs in any given area.

Two key restrictions are proposed:

- First, an HMO should not be approved if three or more of the ten nearest neighbouring properties are already HMOs.
- Second, planning permission should normally be refused where a new HMO would result in "sandwiching", meaning a residential property would be located between two HMOs or between an HMO and a non-residential use.

These measures aim to ensure that HMOs remain dispersed within communities rather than clustering together.

In addition to location thresholds, the interim policy introduces several operational and management requirements for planning applications.

Applicants must submit a management plan demonstrating how the property will be managed and how potential impacts on neighbouring residents will be addressed.

The policy also includes requirements intended to ensure a high standard of accommodation, including adequate internal space, appropriate facilities, and measures to minimise disturbance to neighbouring properties.

This consultation is open until 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026 and Full Council invited the Planning and Licensing Committee to draft a response to this important consultation and to have this presented and hopefully approved at this Full Council meeting in April. The Committee has carefully considered the content of this consultation and the below response is proposed:

## **DRAFT Response to Interim HMO policy consultation**

1. The City of Durham Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on this proposal. Since we were established in April 2018 we have seen over 100 full planning applications in our Parish for the conversion of homes, shops and offices into HMOs, both use class C4 and *sui generis*. This gives us an insight into the issues that arise and to the tactics deployed by developers to get planning permission.
2. Although the majority of our Parish is included in the existing Article 4 areas, the new Aykley Woods development on the site of the former Police HQ was not designated and so will be covered by the proposed new Policy.
3. Our response falls into three areas: the criteria whereby an application for an HMO should be granted or refused; the standards to be applied to any new HMOs; and the interaction between the proposed new Policy and the existing County Durham Plan and SPDs.

### **The criteria**

4. We consider that identifying existing HMOs only through mandatory and selective licensing data means that many HMOs will be missed.
5. Crucially, properties that have obtained planning permission for conversion to an HMO but have not been registered must be counted. If this is not done, a landlord could buy a number of properties and get planning permission for them to be converted to HMOs, but only register them once all of the permissions had been granted. Clause 16.3(b) of the County Durham Plan addresses this issue. It says that applications for student HMOs will not be permitted if

*there are existing unimplemented permissions for Houses in Multiple Occupation within 100 metres of the application site, which in combination with the existing number of Class N Student exempt units would exceed 10% of the total properties within the 100 metres area;*

6. This clause has been used successfully in the City to block further HMOs when a landlord has left a property empty to reduce the number of HMOs counted. It should provide a model for the new interim Policy.
7. Much of the County is not subject to selective licensing so, while applications for HMOs will no doubt still come forward, the assessment will be compromised by a lack of information. We consider that the Interim Policy should be open to further sources of information as and when they become readily available.
8. Specifically, it is also probable that the register of landlords being drawn up under the Renters Rights Act will indicate whether a property is an HMO. The Government's Roadmap<sup>1</sup> says it will include "The property details including the full address, type of property (flat/ house), number of bedrooms, number of

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/renters-rights-act-2025-implementation-roadmap/implementing-the-renters-rights-act-2025-our-roadmap-for-reforming-the-private-rented-sector>

households/ residents and confirming whether the property is occupied and furnished, etc.” The Interim Policy should be open to using this register as it will then extend coverage to the entire County. As the data will have been collected anyway it should not impose a large administrative burden. It will be a public register of property, not people, so data protection issues would not arise.

9. Properties can also be identified as HMOs if they have a Class N exemption from Council Tax due to them being occupied solely by students. This measure should also be used. We note that the Council’s map of student exempt properties shows a percentage of 14.29% for Shiell Heights DH1 5TN, in the Aykley Woods development. This is in our Parish but is not currently covered by an Article 4 Direction.
10. We welcome the proposals in part (b) of the proposed policy to prevent sandwiching. We are aware that a number of local planning authorities have adopted policy approaches to prevent the “sandwiching” of residential properties between Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), and that such approaches have been successfully tested at appeal. In particular, Oxford City Council (Policy H6 of the Oxford Local Plan), Bath and North East Somerset Council (Policy H2 and its adopted HMO Supplementary Planning Document), and Birmingham City Council (Policy DM11 and associated SPD) all incorporate measures to control concentrations of HMOs, including explicit or implicit sandwiching provisions alongside threshold-based assessments.
11. The effectiveness of these approaches are demonstrated through appeal decisions in Oxford, including APP/G3110/W/22/3307194, APP/G3110/W/22/3311053, APP/G3110/W/22/3296432 and APP/G3110/W/21/3280343, where Inspectors upheld refusals of HMO proposals on the basis of overconcentration and associated harm to residential amenity, and accepted the use of a broad evidence base (including licensing data) in identifying HMOs. These examples show that policies which address both concentration and sandwiching effects provide a sound and defensible basis for decision-making, and we therefore consider that the inclusion of such provisions within the Interim Policy is justified and necessary.
12. The proposals in part (a) of the proposed policy are also welcome. Again, there have been cases in our Parish where a cluster of HMOs close to a family home has caused hardship, but the HMO percentage within 100 metres has not crossed the threshold set out in Policy 16.3 of the County Durham Plan, and the planning application for a further HMO has therefore been allowed.
13. However, we consider that there is a broader “tipping point” that is passed when the percentage of HMOs within 100 metres of an application site exceeds 10%, or would exceed it if permission were given. This percentage originates in the report *Balanced Communities and Studentification Problems and*

*Solutions*<sup>2</sup> (National HMO Lobby, 2008). Its use was endorsed in the Inspector's report into the County Durham Plan at paragraphs 255 and 256. He described it as "a proportionate approach which can be consistently and efficiently applied in response to how any area changes over time".

14. This is reflected in paragraphs 5.157 and 5.158 of the supporting text for the County Durham Plan. The result was clause 16.3(a) of the County Durham Plan.
15. On the basis of this evidence, we consider that an application for an HMO should also be refused if (to borrow wording from the County Durham Plan) including the proposed development, more than 10% of the total number of residential units within 100 metres of the application site are HMOs.
16. Disappointingly, the additional safeguards are not proposed to apply within the existing Durham City, Framwellgate, Newton Hall and Pity Me, or Mount Oswald, Carrville and Belmont Article 4 areas. This creates a situation where different tests are used to manage HMO concentration in different parts of the County. In practice, similar properties could be treated differently depending solely on whether they fall inside or outside an Article 4 boundary, even within the same Parish or electoral division.
17. This policy effectively recognises that Policy 16 alone is not sufficient to manage clustering and its impacts on residential amenity. That recognition should be applied consistently. There is no clear planning rationale for limiting these additional safeguards to areas outside Durham City, particularly given the well-documented impacts in and around the City. A consistent approach across the County would provide greater clarity for both applicants and residents, and avoid any perception of unequal treatment between communities.
18. There are also concerns regarding the robustness of the Interim Policy at appeal. Applying different concentration tests in different parts of the County risks decisions being seen as inconsistent and therefore unreasonable. Inspectors place significant weight on consistency, particularly where similar forms of development arise in comparable contexts. Within Durham City and its surroundings, decisions would rely solely on Policy 16 as part of the adopted plan, whereas elsewhere these additional, lower-weight tests would apply. This selective approach could be challenged, which would weaken the Council's position at appeal. Extending the Interim Policy to the Article 4 areas around Durham City would support a consistent approach and strengthen decision-making.
19. Policy 16 will continue to apply across the County as part of the development plan, with the Interim Policy acting as an additional material

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<sup>2</sup><https://hmolobby.org.uk/39articles.pdf>

consideration. There is therefore no conflict in applying these additional tests within the Durham City area as complementary safeguards.

20. There is therefore a clear case for extending the Interim Policy to include the Article 4 areas around Durham City. This would ensure a consistent approach, strengthen the policy at appeal, and provide more effective control of HMO concentrations across the County.

### **Standards to be applied to any new HMOs**

21. We welcome the proposal in part (c) of the draft policy to require a management plan.
22. The tables in paragraph 1.13 of the explanatory text are labelled *Table 1a. Minimum space standards for HMOs*, *Table 2b. Minimum space standards for HMOs* and *Table 3. Other Amenity Requirements*. These should be renumbered as *Table 1a*, *Table 1b* and *Table 2* in order to match the Policy wording.
23. Paragraph 1.13 says that the standards are consistent with licensing requirements and Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). It should also state that it is consistent with Policies 29 (Sustainable Design) and 31 (Amenity and Pollution) of the County Durham Plan. This will make the Interim Policy more robust if challenged.
24. The space standards set out in Table 1 are higher than those appertaining in the existing Article 4 area. This we welcome. However, Policy 16.3 of the County Durham Plan applies county-wide. Applications for student HMOs could come forward in areas such as Aykley Woods in our Parish, and also in surrounding villages such as Langley Moor, Meadowfield, High Shincliffe and Bowburn, once the County-wide Article 4 Direction comes into force on 17 August 2026. The consequence would be that different space standards would apply to HMOs in different parts of the County. This is not acceptable. No justification is offered for having lower standards of accommodation for Durham students, nor can there be one. The space standards in the existing Article 4 area should be raised to match the improved standards proposed for the rest of the County.
25. It might be argued that different standards should apply to student HMOs and those intended for other classes of tenant. This was considered by Inspector J Somers in Appeal Decision APP/G3110/W/18/3219520<sup>3</sup>, a case in Oxford which has a policy similar to Durham's restricting HMOs based on the number in the vicinity. The relevant paragraph in the decision reads:

*10 Moreover, whilst I note comments from the Appellant that Policy HP7 is 'crude' and aimed at student housing and that working professional housing should be treated differently; it would not be possible in planning terms to control the type of tenant given there is no*

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<sup>3</sup><https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewDocument.aspx?fileid=32463131>

*distinction between professional and student accommodation in the planning regulations.*

### **Interactions with other policies**

26. When the Interim Policy comes into force, planning officers will have to navigate its requirements with those of the existing County Durham Plan and the Housing Needs SPD.
27. Since County Durham Plan Policy 16 applies throughout the County, it could in theory be relevant to HMO applications anywhere, and certainly will be in the villages adjacent to Durham City. There might also be student HMOs near the County's FE Colleges: Bishop Auckland, Derwentside, East Durham and New College Durham. The proposals we have made should minimise any conflict between Policy 16 and the Interim Policy.
28. In 2023/24 there were 206 students living in rented accommodation outside the DH1 postcode sector. 122 of these were in DH7 (Langley Moor / Meadowfield / Brandon and surrounding towns/villages), 64 in DH6 (Bowburn / Coxhoe) and 20 in other DH postcodes. We should be able to update these figures after the Easter break.
29. The Interim Policy sets out a minimum floor area for a single bedroom of 9.5m<sup>2</sup>. The Housing Needs SPD has different requirements depending on whether or not there would be a net increase in the number of residential units. If there was an increase then the NDSS would apply (7.5m<sup>2</sup>), otherwise the NDSS would be a guide to best practice. Presumably the Interim Policy would supersede this, which we welcome.
30. The proposed Interim Policy differs from the requirements of the Parking and Accessibility SPD. We suggest that the Policy simply refers to the SPD.

### **End of response**

#### **DECISION REQUIRED**

For Members to approve the City of Durham Parish Council's formal response to this consultation, as set out in the above report.

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

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

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

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

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

The Working Group will be asked to: review each of the listed documents in detail; take advice from the Clerk on any changes in legislation since the last review of these documents in 2025; identify any sections requiring amendment or clarification; and recommend any updates or revisions as necessary to the next Full Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2026 whereupon it is hoped that they will be formally adopted.

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

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| <b>DECISIONS<br/>REQUIRED</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) For Members to approve the formation of this Working Group as set out in the above report.</li><li>2) If 1 is approved, for Members to approve the membership of this Working Group.</li></ol> |
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## **ITEM 9: REPORT ON THE LATEST UPDATES IN RELATION TO THE OVE ARUP MOBILE POLICE MAST**

As Members are aware, the history of the Grade II listed police telecommunications mast at Aykley Heads is rooted in the redevelopment proposals approved in 2012 for the former Durham Constabulary headquarters site. At that time, planning permission and Listed Building Consent were granted to enable the demolition of the existing headquarters buildings and the construction of a new headquarters to the south, alongside a residential development on the original site.

A key component of that consent was the requirement to dismantle, relocate, and re-erect the 49.5 metre mast—an element of Durham’s post-war architectural heritage designed by Ove Arup and Partners—adjacent to the new headquarters. The relocation was presented as integral to the overall scheme, balancing heritage preservation with enabling development and delivering wider public benefits, including housing and improved policing facilities.

Despite this clear requirement, the subsequent implementation of the scheme diverged significantly from the approved position. Although details relating to the method of dismantling and the timetable for relocation were submitted in 2016, these were not formally approved due to insufficient information. Nevertheless, development proceeded, and in February 2017 the mast was dismantled and placed in storage within the site. Critically, the mast was not re-erected in accordance with the planning conditions.

Instead, it has remained in a dismantled state, lying on the ground within the vicinity of the new headquarters, exposed to weathering and deterioration over a prolonged period. Evidence provided by local stakeholders describes the mast components as having been left inadequately protected, leading to corrosion and damage, and characterises the situation as a failure to comply with planning obligations and to safeguard a designated heritage asset.

The failure to re-erect the mast has been the subject of ongoing concern and formal challenge. In 2020, following complaints, the local planning authority identified a breach of planning control and advised Durham Constabulary to regularise the situation by progressing the re-erection of the mast and submitting the necessary applications to discharge relevant conditions.

However, rather than pursuing reinstatement, the Constabulary subsequently advanced proposals to demolish the mast entirely, citing a combination of factors including structural concerns, safety risks, logistical difficulties, and escalating costs associated with repair and re-erection. These applications, submitted in 2022, sought to remove the obligation to reinstate the structure and instead permit its total loss.

These proposals have been met with substantial opposition from statutory consultees, heritage bodies, and the local community. Key objections have centred on the principle that the deterioration of the mast is, at least in part, attributable to the manner in which it was dismantled and subsequently stored, and therefore should not justify its demolition.

Furthermore, it has been widely argued that the commitment to relocate and re-erect the mast formed a fundamental part of the original planning balance that enabled the redevelopment of the site, including the financial uplift associated with additional housing. The failure to honour that commitment has been described as undermining trust in the planning system and raising serious questions regarding compliance with both planning conditions and wider statutory duties in respect of listed buildings.

In its current state, the mast remains dismantled and effectively destroyed in situ, lying adjacent to the present Police Headquarters at Aykley Heads. There is no evidence that a viable or agreed solution for its restoration, relocation, or appropriate reuse is forthcoming. Although various options have been explored—including re-erection, relocation, storage, or partial incorporation as a sculptural feature—none has progressed to implementation.

The continued inaction, combined with the earlier refusal of consent for demolition and the absence of any appeal, has resulted in a prolonged impasse in which the heritage asset remains neither restored nor formally resolved. This situation has been widely characterised as a significant and unresolved planning and heritage issue.

In response to these circumstances, the City of Durham Parish Council’s Planning and Licensing Committee has called for an independent investigation into the handling of the mast, including the apparent failure to comply with planning conditions and the effective destruction of a listed structure. This call reflects broader concerns regarding the treatment of heritage assets by public authorities, particularly in cases where prior commitments formed a material part of the justification for development.

It is anticipated that the mast will be raised as an Agenda item at the next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel scheduled for 8th June 2026. In advance of that meeting, it would be prudent for the Parish Council to consider and agree its formal position and approach to the issue, including the extent to which it wishes to press for further investigation, enforcement action, or alternative remedies in respect of the mast.

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| <b>DECISION<br/>REQUIRED</b> | For Members to note the content of the above update report and consider the Parish Council’s formal position on this matter. |
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