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

Date of summons: 22nd October 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 M Wilkes

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 October 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 COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 2026 (PAGES 4-15)**

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

5. **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

   • Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 14th and 28th September 2026
   Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here: https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/meetings/planning-and-licensing-committee/

   • Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 8th September 2026
   Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here: http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/environment-committee/
   - Proposal to support the work of the Durham City Riverscape Community Group and establish a partnership with Durham University/ Unite Student volunteers **(PAGES 16-17)**

   • Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 9th September 2026
   Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here: https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/meetings/finance-committee/
   - Proposed response to DCC's annual budget (2027/28) and Medium-Term Financial Plan (2027/28-2030/31) consultation **(PAGES 18-21)**

6. **CHAIR'S UPDATE**
   The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 23rd September 2026

7. **COMPLETION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S EXTERNAL AUDIT 2025/26**

8. **NOMINATIONS FOR DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL NETWORKS PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (PAGES 22-23)**

9. **REPORT FROM COUNCILLOR E SCOTT ON HER WORK AS ARMED FORCES CHAMPION FOR THE CITY OF DURHAM**

10. **REPORT ON PROPOSED CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL OBJECTIVES (2027-28) (PAGES 24-25)**

11. SECTION 106 PROJECT – MARKING THE OPENING OF THE NEW ST LEONARD'S SCHOOL AND PROMOTING THE BATTLE OF NEVILLE'S CROSS (PAGES 26-29)

12. PROPOSAL TO PRODUCE A NEW WALKING TRAIL MAP PROMOTING THE HISTORY OF THE DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY (PAGES 30-32)

13. DURHAM UNIVERSITY CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO PARKING ARRANGEMENTS AT MAIDEN CASTLE (PAGES 33-34)

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Wednesday 23rd September 2026 at 7:00pm in the Main Hall of Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Road, Durham DH1 3QF.

Present: Councillors S Walker (in the **Chair**), V Ashfield, T Cleaver, R Cornwell, D Freeman, G Holland, E Hopgood, C Lattin, P Layton, F Robinson and M Wilkes.
Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and 3 members of the public.

1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and **accepted** from Councillors E Scott, L Brown and R Handy.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

The Chair declared an interest in the representation received from local resident Ms Alice Severs under item 4 on the Agenda and took no part in the discussion on this item.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22ND JULY 2026

The draft minutes of the Council meeting held on 22nd July 2026 were submitted for consideration. Members **unanimously agreed** that the minutes represented a true and accurate record of proceedings and approved them for signature by the Chair.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms Alice Severs, a local resident, addressed Members regarding the lack of seating along the riverbanks between Elvet Bridge and Prebends Bridge. She explained that she had become aware of this while walking with a visitor earlier in the year and highlighted the importance of resting places for people with limited mobility, particularly visitors to the city.

Ms Severs asked whether the Parish Council could assist in progressing the matter with the relevant landowners and thanked the Council for its work. The Clerk advised that he had liaised with colleagues at both the Cathedral and Durham University, both of whom were happy for the Parish Council to install benches on their land.

Members unanimously **agreed** to delegate responsibility for progressing the provision of benches to the Parish Council's Finance Committee. Ms Alice Severs thanked the Parish Council for all its work and support.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor G Holland presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 20th July and 3rd August 2026. There were no queries from Members.

Report on Durham County Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement

Councillor R Cornwell presented the report on Durham County Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement, published in July 2026. The report explained that, as at 1st April 2026, the County Council could demonstrate a housing land supply of 3.92 years, falling below the five-year supply required by national planning policy. The implications for residential planning applications within the parish were set out, particularly the increased exposure to speculative proposals on land not allocated for development.

Councillor R Cornwell outlined the change in the basis for calculating the housing requirement following the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the County Durham Plan. The report stated that the assessment now used the Government's Standard Method figure of 2,036 dwellings per annum, rather than the adopted Plan requirement of 1,308 dwellings per annum. With the addition of a five per cent buffer, the five-year requirement amounted to 10,689 dwellings.

The report identified a gross deliverable supply of 8,480 dwellings for the period from 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2031. Following a precautionary deduction of 105 dwellings for potential lapses on unstarted small sites, the net deliverable supply stood at 8,375 dwellings, leaving a shortfall of 2,314 homes. Although historical delivery had generated a cumulative surplus of 1,739 dwellings against previous Plan targets, the County Council had not used that surplus to reduce the new requirement.

Particular attention was drawn to the position at Sniperley Park. The report explained that the allocation had been released from the Green Belt in 2020 to accommodate up to 1,700 homes. While the Bellway parcel was expected to contribute 250 dwellings within the five-year period, the larger parcel controlled by County Durham Land contributed no dwellings to the assessed supply. The report stated that no reserved matters applications had been submitted for that parcel and that its outline permission was due to expire in 2027.

Councillor R Cornwell explained the report's assessment of the planning consequences of the shortfall, including the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the associated "tilted balance". The report emphasised that the County Durham Plan and Durham City Neighbourhood Plan remained part of the statutory development plan, while identifying the increased importance of providing clear evidence of environmental, infrastructure and other planning harms when responding to speculative proposals.

Members **unanimously agreed** to closely monitor incoming residential planning applications, collaborate with Durham County Council to press landowners to progress slow-delivering allocated sites, and robustly scrutinise speculative proposals to ensure that local environmental and infrastructure impacts were fully represented within the applicable planning framework.

Members further **unanimously agreed** to alert the local Member of Parliament to the failure by County Durham Land to progress the Sniperley site and to highlight the contribution that delivery of the allocated housing could have made towards the Government's target of 1.5 million new homes over five years.

Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 14th July 2026. There were no queries from Members.

Reconstruction of Baths Bridge and implications for Elvet Green

Councillor V Ashfield presented the report on the forthcoming reconstruction of Baths Bridge and the implications for Elvet Green and the surrounding riverside area.

Councillor V Ashfield described the importance of the green as a valued place for recreation, riverside walking and wildlife, and outlined residents' concerns about the lack of clarity regarding Durham County Council's intentions for the site. Councillor V Ashfield explained that concerns had arisen over the possible use of the green as a construction compound during the bridge works.

The report referred to the temporary erection and subsequent removal of fencing at the beginning of September without an accompanying explanation. It highlighted the potential consequences of construction use for public access, paths, grass, planting, hedges and established wildlife habitat.

The report acknowledged the importance of replacing Baths Bridge while setting out the case for investigating alternative locations for construction operations. Local associations had suggested the University's nearby informal car park as a possible alternative. The Environment Committee had supported consideration of that option and had written to the University Estates Manager, with senior University representatives also made informally aware of the request.

Councillor V Ashfield also outlined the contribution of the informal community group caring for the area. The report described voluntary work to remove litter and discarded needles, restore paths, establish flower beds, plant fruit bushes, provide bird feeders and improve seating. It highlighted the social value of the work, including opportunities for participation by people experiencing disability, isolation or loneliness.

The report raised concerns about information received by the group concerning possible exclusion from the site. It proposed a constructive approach through which Durham County Council could recognise beneficial community activity, clarify applicable requirements and work with volunteers to ensure that their activities complied with relevant bylaws.

Councillor David Freeman advised that the County Council's construction requirements remained under consideration and might involve temporary closure of the park. He emphasised the need to avoid damage to the green space and confirmed that the County Council had approached Durham University about the use of land beside the former swimming baths. Members recognised that the scale of the construction works, including crane access, could require a substantial area and requested clarity on whether the University site would meet those requirements.

Councillor David Freeman further reported that the former toilet block was under offer, with legal negotiations continuing and the prospective purchaser's identity not yet available for disclosure. He advised that £200,000 had been secured for

the future development of the council-owned park through S106 funding. Members supported the prospect of a successful café in this location and recognised that the bridge works could delay progress.

Members **agreed** (8 votes in favour and 2 votes against) that the Parish Council should contact Durham County Council to commend its work to replace Baths Bridge and to request that damage to this important wildlife and recreation area be avoided wherever possible.

Members further **agreed** (8 votes in favour and 2 votes against) to encourage Durham County Council to work constructively with the community group, support the positive work being undertaken and help its members understand and comply with applicable bylaws.

Proposed archaeological study of Neville's Cross Battlefield

Councillor C Lattin presented the proposal to support a desk-based archaeological study of the Battle of Neville's Cross and its wider historical landscape. The report followed a meeting held on 2nd September between the Parish Council, project lead Jon Johnson and Durham County Council, at which the importance of establishing a sound evidence base for future heritage protection and planning policy had been recognised.

The report explained that the battle, fought on 16th October 1346, was an event of national historical significance. Although the core site was designated as a Registered Battlefield, the wider landscape associated with the engagement included possible approach routes, encampments, preliminary encounters, retreat routes and areas of pursuit beyond the existing registered boundary.

Councillor C Lattin outlined the concern that reliance on the present boundary alone could leave important archaeological evidence inadequately identified when future development proposals were considered. The report referred to continuing research into the location and extent of the fighting and explained how the proposed study would support the Parish Council's submission to the County Durham Plan scoping exercise seeking greater protection for the wider battlefield landscape.

The proposed work would bring together primary accounts, secondary literature, historic mapping, LiDAR information, terrain analysis and existing archaeological finds records. The assessment would provide a baseline for understanding the historic landscape and identifying appropriate priorities for subsequent investigation.

The report described the wider partnership involving archaeological, heritage, academic and community organisations. It also identified opportunities to engage local schools and residents in understanding the history of the landscape. The estimated total cost of the desk-based study was £3,500, with a proposed Parish Council contribution of £2,000 and the balance to be obtained from external sources.

The assessment was intended to provide a foundation for future funding applications and further phases of work, potentially including non-invasive investigation, interpretation boards and walking trails.

Members **unanimously agreed** to allocate £2,000 towards the desk-based study of the Battle of Neville's Cross and its wider historical landscape, as set out in the report.

Finance Committee

Councillor S Walker presented the Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 17th June 2026. There were no queries from Members.

Business Committee

Councillor E Hopgood presented the Business Committee minutes from the meeting held on 21st July 2026. There were no queries from Members.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair congratulated the organisers and volunteers of the inaugural Durham Folk Festival on a successful weekend of music and traditional entertainment. The Chair reported that 1,700 weekend tickets had been sold and highlighted the contribution of the event to visitor numbers and activity within the city. The Business Committee's financial support had helped make the festival possible, and the Chair thanked Joanie Crump and everyone involved in its organisation and delivery.

The Chair congratulated Benedict Douglas and the team responsible for the City of Durham Show, which had attracted more than 1,500 people to the Town Hall to celebrate local community life, crafts and heritage. The Chair welcomed the successful revival of this traditional event, which the Parish Council had supported, and thanked the organisers and volunteers for their work. The Chair also welcomed the recovery of trophies from previous shows and thanked Tony Bramwell for cleaning and polishing them for presentation at the event.

The Chair thanked the Environment Committee for its work over the summer to improve the back lanes in the Viaduct area. The removal of accumulated waste and overgrown vegetation had made a visible improvement to an area affected by longstanding neglect. The Chair acknowledged the Committee's initiative in addressing these conditions and its continuing commitment to maintaining a clean and attractive local environment.

The Chair reported on concerns raised at a recent DURF meeting regarding the future of the number 42 bus service connecting Durham Railway Station and Mount Oswald. The £1.66 million in Section 106 funding associated with the Mount Oswald development was nearing exhaustion. However, Durham County Council had confirmed that, given the service's strong passenger usage, it would investigate options to secure its longer-term future once the developer contributions ended. The Chair thanked the County Council's public transport team for its proactive approach and emphasised the importance of the service to local residents.

The Chair drew attention to the Durham Dogs and Cats Home Fun Dog Show, scheduled to take place at The Sands on Sunday 27th September 2026. The event had received Parish Council support through the Business Events Grants scheme. The Chair thanked the Wardens and Freemen of the City for granting permission to use their land and extended best wishes to Dave Clarke, the organisers and volunteers for a successful event. Councillors C Lattin and L Brown were also thanked for agreeing to act as judges.

The Chair thanked everyone who had participated in the Parish Council's ongoing public consultation. Interim results showed an overall performance rating of eight out of ten, with more than 90 per cent of respondents providing a positive rating. The Chair welcomed the support expressed for the Council's priorities, particularly its work to clean and green the city, protect the Green Belt and support the local high street. The consultation remained open until 30th September 2026, and the Chair encouraged further responses before the closing date.

The Chair reminded Members that the Council's Strategy Away Day would take place on Wednesday 14th October 2026, from 10:00am to 4:00pm, in the Williams Library at St Chad's College. Professor Sarah Banks, who had been recommended by a number of Members, would facilitate the session. The Clerk would circulate further details, and a light lunch would be provided. The Chair thanked St Chad's College for hosting the event, which would provide an opportunity to develop the Council's priorities for the year ahead.

The Chair congratulated the Clerk, Adam Shanley, on receiving the High Sheriff's Community Award. The Chair recognised the award as an acknowledgement of his dedication, public service and commitment to Durham, and expressed appreciation for his work on behalf of the Parish Council and the wider community.

7. ADOPTION OF NEW HR POLICIES FOLLOWING THE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT

The Chair presented the report recommending the adoption of a Bereavement Policy, Paternity Leave and Pay Policy and Whistleblowing Policy. The report explained that the Personnel Committee had considered the model policies published by the National Association of Local Councils and recommended their adoption as part of the Parish Council's employment framework.

The Chair outlined the purpose of the proposed Bereavement Policy in providing a clear framework for supporting employees affected by bereavement. The report described provisions relating to parental bereavement and bereaved partners, together with associated leave entitlements and employment protections.

The report also outlined the proposed Paternity Leave and Pay Policy, including provisions concerning eligibility, notice requirements, flexible leave arrangements, pay and attendance at antenatal appointments. The purpose of the policy was to provide clarity for both the Council and its employees in administering the relevant entitlements.

The proposed Whistleblowing Policy established a framework for raising concerns about wrongdoing and described protections against victimisation or detriment in

connection with protected disclosures. The report highlighted the importance of clear reporting arrangements and appropriate handling of concerns.

The Chair explained that the policies would be included in the Council's annual policy review programme each May, beginning in May 2027.

Members **unanimously agreed** to approve and adopt the Bereavement Policy, Paternity Leave and Pay Policy and Whistleblowing Policy, as recommended by the Personnel Committee and set out in the report.

Members further **unanimously agreed** that the policies should enter the Council's regular annual review cycle each May, commencing in May 2027.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY AWARD 2026/27

At this point, the Clerk left the meeting for this item of business.

The Chair presented the report on the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay award for 2026/27. The report advised that a 3.3 per cent increase in pay rates and applicable allowances had been agreed for the period from 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027 and that employers had been encouraged to implement the award promptly.

The report confirmed that the Clerk's salary was currently assessed at spinal column point 46, within the LC4 below substantive range. The accompanying scale showed an increase at that point from £58,523 to £60,454 per annum.

The report confirmed that sufficient funding had been included within the approved 2026/27 budget to accommodate the increase.

Members **unanimously agreed** to approve the 3.3% increase in the Clerk's pay and the applicable allowances for the period from 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027. Members further **unanimously agreed** that the award should be backdated to 1st April 2026 and that the resulting arrears should be included in the next pay run and that, in future, all Government increases to pay, should be approved automatically without the need to come to a Full Council meeting.

9. COMPLETION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S EXTERNAL AUDIT 2025/26

The Council had not received a completed external audit report from the external auditors by the date of the meeting. Members **unanimously agreed** to defer consideration of this item until the October 2026 Full Council meeting. No completed audit report was considered under this item.

10. REPORT ON PLANNING FOR THE REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2026 EVENT

The Clerk presented the report on preparations for the Remembrance Sunday event and outlined the Parish Council's civic responsibility for organising the event in Durham City. The report identified the parade as a key element of the Council's events programme and referred to the overall events budget of £45,000 approved for the 2026/27 financial year.

The Clerk outlined the proposed road closure and traffic management arrangements, including liaison with Durham County Council over the closure order, signage and temporary diversion of affected bus services via Leazes Road. The report identified proposed closure points at Framwellgate Bridge, North Bailey, Claypath at Providence Row, the A690 one-way slip road beside the library and the two-way slip road above Prince Bishops roundabout, with closures proposed between 8:30am and 1:00pm.

The report explained that arrangements were being made for the temporary occupation of Palace Green and the Market Place. Liaison with the Mayor's office would cover the ceremonial dais in the Market Place and the associated civic arrangements.

The Clerk outlined the safety preparations, including the Parish Council's event risk assessment, public liability insurance and a separate police security assessment. Any hostile vehicle mitigation arrangements would be informed by that assessment, with Durham County Council having agreed to fund the necessary installation.

The report also addressed crowd management, medical provision and police support. Arrangements were being progressed for crowd management services, and Nerams Ltd had been contracted to provide medical cover. The Town Hall would again serve as a meeting point for missing persons if required.

Local traders would be informed of the arrangements through a planned letter drop on 2nd November, supported by publicity on the Parish Council's website and Facebook page. The report explained that the Cathedral would manage its own service, admission and seating arrangements, with the Clerk coordinating the attendance of Parish Councillors.

The Chair would lay a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council, and Councillors would participate in the official procession from the Cathedral to the Market Place. Members wishing to attend would need to inform the Clerk so that the necessary robes could be arranged.

The report recognised the continuing support of parade volunteers Arthur Lockyear, Dave Cuthbertson, John Henry and Dave Clarke, including fundraising and work to secure bands and catering. It also referred to the Parish Council's support for the Festival of Remembrance on Saturday 8th November and confirmed that preparations would proceed through the usual Safety Advisory Group process.

Members **unanimously agreed** to note the report and the preparations being made for the Remembrance Sunday event. Members further **unanimously agreed** to delegate all organisational and budgetary responsibility for the event to the Clerk and thanked the Clerk for his exceptional work on this event.

11. REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- Report by Councillor R Cornwell on the Durham Student Housing Review meeting

Councillor R Cornwell reported on the Annual Durham Student Housing Review held at Durham University's Teaching and Learning Centre earlier in the day (23rd September 2026). Councillor R Cornwell advised that he had provided a presentation on fire safety in student accommodation at this meeting.

Councillor Cornwell reported that his presentation had highlighted the increased fire risks associated with houses in multiple occupation. Drawing on guidance published by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, he had explained that shared escape routes, heavily used kitchens and tenants' limited experience of fire hazards could increase the risks to occupants. Particular concern arose where kitchens opened directly onto escape routes or where open-plan staircases allowed smoke and fire to compromise escape from upper floors.

Councillor Cornwell had emphasised the importance of protected escape routes, appropriate fire doors to kitchens and suitable escape windows where these were an acceptable means of escape. He had drawn attention to the memorandum of understanding between the Fire and Rescue Service, Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council, which provided for information sharing, early identification of concerns, consistent fire precaution standards and coordinated use of regulatory powers. His presentation had questioned whether those arrangements were operating effectively in all relevant cases.

Councillor Cornwell advised that he had presented a property layout showing an open kitchen, an open-plan staircase and no protected escape route. He had explained that the Parish Council had raised fire safety concerns through the planning consultation process, but that the planning response had treated these matters as falling within other regulatory regimes, including building control, which the planning system should not duplicate.

Councillor Cornwell further reported that the Parish Council's letter to the Chief Fire Officer had identified recurring concerns, including bedrooms opening directly from kitchens, missing fire doors or escape windows, open-plan stairs and habitable rooms without an acceptable escape route. The accompanying appendices had identified 21 properties giving rise to serious concern. The Parish Council's position was that the recurrence of such features across different properties and years suggested a possible systemic weakness requiring urgent investigation. A joint approach to Durham County Council with the Fire and Rescue Service was being sought.

Turning to the remainder of the meeting, Councillor Cornwell reported that Gareth Devine, Director of Residential Capability Development, had then presented an update on student numbers, accommodation demand and the University's forecasting arrangements.

The student numbers presentation recorded 21,697 registered students in 2025/26, compared with 20,887 in 2024/25. Of these, 18,798 were presumed resident in the DH1 area, representing 86.6 per cent of the total student population. The upper estimate of available student bedspaces in DH1 was 18,921,

comprising 7,789 University-owned or managed bedspaces, 2,205 other purpose-built student accommodation bedspaces and 8,927 private rented sector bedspaces. Depending on the demand methodology used, the estimated headroom was between 123 and 597 bedspaces.

Councillor Cornwell reported that the University had identified increased undergraduate intakes and changes in students' housing preferences as factors affecting demand. Although no significant student difficulty had been identified in the 2025/26 analysis, there was evidence of students moving accommodation during the year and a higher proportion of the student population living within DH1. Forecasting for 2026/27 anticipated a third successive large undergraduate intake, with particular pressures potentially affecting late entrants, affordability, accessibility and accommodation beyond DH1.

Measures outlined by the University included partnership working with Durham County Council, use of a city capacity model, improvements to the Housing Hub and housing support calls. The Annual Market Report, then in its fourth year, combined accommodation capacity information with analysis of student behaviour. Relevant data were available to communities and developers on request.

Looking towards 2030, approved developments could increase accommodation capacity in Durham by approximately eight per cent, or around 1,500 bedspaces, with most of that growth in private purpose-built student accommodation. The Hild Bede and Leazes Road proposals remained on pause. The University anticipated a modest increase in demand within DH1, but warned that even a relatively small contraction in the HMO market could substantially reduce the benefit of additional purpose-built accommodation. A return to the supply and demand conditions experienced in 2024/25 was not anticipated before 2030 at the earliest.

Councillor Cornwell reported that Hannah Shepherd's housing market presentation had considered the transition associated with the Renters' Rights Act. Students would need to understand the different arrangements applying to University accommodation, purpose-built student accommodation, HMOs and smaller private lets. Changes in tenancy arrangements, advertising, reservations and landlords' practices were expected to create differing experiences across those sectors.

Councillor Cornwell advised that the University's planned communications included housing fairs, college talks, the Rate Your Landlord campaign, information on supply and demand, winter advice and contract-signing guidance. Scenario planning ranged from limited changes in existing behaviour to a more substantial shift towards housing activity spread throughout the year. The timing and extent of those changes remained uncertain.

Councillor Cornwell reported that Callum Hendry, President of Durham Students' Union, had outlined the Union's housing advice and campaigning work. Two housing fairs were planned for the coming year, with the first scheduled for 29 October 2026. These would provide opportunities for students to meet accommodation providers and obtain information about contract checking, advice services and Rate Your Landlord.

The Students' Union's earlier campaign had sought to improve students' understanding of their rights and confidence in navigating legislative changes. Resources had included notice templates, a renters' rights guide and online advice, supported by social media activity. The forthcoming campaign would address signing and reserving accommodation, the risk of properties being unavailable, booking arrangements and holding deposits. Further issues identified included renting outside Durham, transport costs, reducing pressure to commit early and supporting international and disabled students.

Councillor Cornwell also reported that Louise Burnip, the University's Student Money Adviser, had explained the financial pressures affecting students. These included insufficient or delayed funding, limited family support, the timing of maintenance loan payments, living costs, difficulties obtaining part-time employment and interruptions to study or work through ill health. Indicators of financial difficulty could include missed rent and utility payments, reduced engagement, food insecurity, requests for payment plans and consideration of withdrawal from study.

The Student Money Adviser's support included budgeting, checking affordability before a tenancy was signed, managing utility bills and identifying additional financial assistance. The presentation also highlighted fraud targeting students, including employment and accommodation scams and impersonation of overseas authorities. Awareness work was undertaken with the North East Regional Organised Crime Unit, and affected students were advised to contact the police, their bank and the University's fraud support service.

Councillor Cornwell concluded that the University's priorities for 2026/27 included further development of the Student Lettings Code of Practice, improvements to the off-campus housing experience, continued research and monitoring, engagement with developers and participation in University strategy and Local Plan consultations.

End of report

- **Report by Councillor S Walker on the latest meeting of the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC).**

Councillor S Walker provided the following report from the CDALC (Larger Councils Forum meeting) held on 16th July 2026:

Local Councils Charter and local representation
CDALC is developing a new Local Councils Charter with Durham County Council. The Forum supported taking the draft forward and stressed the importance of meaningful representation for parish and town councils within emerging County Durham governance arrangements.

DBS checks for Councillors

The Forum considered motions from Great Aycliffe and Shincliffe concerning DBS checks for councillors. Concerns were raised about unnecessary checks where councillors are not involved in regulated activity, together with cost and the potential impact on people standing for election. The Shincliffe motion, opposing

mandatory DBS checks unless legally required or linked to regulated activity, was carried at both the Smaller and Larger Councils Forums and will be taken forward to the CDALC Executive, with a request for consideration at the AGM.

Planning – National Scheme of Delegation

The Forum discussed the implications of the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and the new National Scheme of Delegation. There was considerable concern that the changes will reduce opportunities for parish and town councils and County Councillors to request that planning applications are considered by committee. The Parish Council should continue to monitor the impact on local democratic involvement in planning.

County Durham Plan

The Scoping Consultation for the new County Durham Plan was discussed. The consultation deadline has now passed, and the matter has already been considered by the Planning Committee. The Parish Council should remain engaged with subsequent stages of the Plan, which is currently expected to be adopted in early 2029.

NALC update

NALC is consulting on revised Model Standing Orders. The Star Council Awards 2026/27 are open for nominations until 25 September, and councils were encouraged to consider nominations. Councils were also encouraged to adopt or reaffirm the Civility and Respect Pledge.

Payroll
The Forum discussed the withdrawal of Durham County Council's payroll service for parish councils. CDALC is collecting information about alternative arrangements used by member councils and intends to share this with councils.

CDALC finances

CDALC remains in a positive financial position, with reserves of £66,831 at the end of 2025/26 and a small surplus. The 2026/27 budget anticipates a broadly balanced position.

End of report

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
Wednesday 28th October 2026

ITEM 5: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE DURHAM CITY RIVERSCAPE COMMUNITY GROUP AND ESTABLISH A PARTNERSHIP WITH DURHAM UNIVERSITY VOLUNTEERS

As Members are aware, the Parish Council has worked on improvements to the River Wear as a central objective of the Council's work since 2021; recognising the River Wear as central to Durham's environment and the experience of residents and visitors. The Parish Council's two principal strategic partners in this work are the Wear Rivers Trust (WRT) and Durham City Riverscape Community.

Last year, the Parish Council provided significant funding to WRT for work during the current year on its invasive non-native species (INNS) project. This supports the Council's continuing commitment to the river's ecological health. WRT's wider INNS programme addresses threats to native wildlife and river habitats through monitoring, prevention and sustained management.

Through its joint work with the Parish Council, Durham City Riverscape Community has collected over 1,000 bags of litter from within and around the River Wear. This substantial voluntary effort has been warmly welcomed by local residents. The group received the Parish Council's Partnership of the Year award earlier this year, recognising the value of its contribution and the strength of the partnership.

The Parish Council already supports Riverscape by funding comprehensive insurance cover for the group's work. The Environment Committee is now looking to extend that support through the provision of a specialist portable outdoor vacuum, or hoover, to help address the significant problem of broken glass around the city.

For health and safety reasons, the group has been unable to tackle broken glass as extensively as it would like. Glass cannot be stored safely in the blue bags used for litter collection and broken glass has proven either unsafe or impractical to collect. Suitable equipment could enable volunteers to address more of this problem, provided that it is designed for collecting broken glass and supported by appropriate handling and disposal arrangements.

Riverscape is looking to expand its operations further with support from Durham University Student Volunteering and Outreach (DUSVO), Unite Students and other partners. DUSVO is the home of student-led volunteering at Durham University and supports both regular projects and one-off volunteering sessions. This provides an opportunity to develop a sustained programme of student participation alongside existing community volunteers. It is also worth noting that many of the existing Riverscape volunteers are Durham University students.

Riverscape has recently expanded its area to cover areas such as Fowler's Yard. An additional particular focus would be the back lanes in the Viaduct area, which are especially prone to littering. Coordinated sessions could extend the group's reach, improve these neighbourhood spaces and strengthen links between students and the wider community.

It is proposed that part of the funding be contributed to DUSVO to provide a modest token of thanks for volunteers taking part in agreed activities. For example, this could fund a monthly pizza order for a participating society or volunteer group following clean-up sessions, or a similar form of recognition. The arrangement, frequency and spending limit would be agreed with DUSVO within the approved budget.

Approval is therefore sought for the use of the already approved £2,500 budget for the River Wear this year covering the specialist outdoor vacuum (£750), support for Riverscape's insurance (£250) and the contribution towards student volunteer recognition (£1,500). It is also worth noting and thanking businesses such as the Radisson Blu hotel who have previously provided teas/ coffees/ biscuits for volunteers attending the monthly litter picks.

Anyone wishing to volunteer for the Riverscape group should be aware that the group meets every first Saturday of every month at 10:00am at the viewing platform opposite the Cathedral.

If this funding allocation is approved, it is proposed that the Parish Council's Environment Committee should manage its coordination on behalf of the Parish Council.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to consider the above report and agree to the allocation of funding to support the work of the Durham City Riverscape Community group accordingly.

ITEM 5: PROPOSED RESPONSE TO DCC'S ANNUAL BUDGET (2027/28) AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (2027/28-2030/31) CONSULTATION

Durham County Council is presently consulting on its proposed budget for 2027/28 and Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2027/28 to 2030/31. The consultation invites residents, businesses, partners and community organisations to comment on the proposals and inform the County Council's financial planning.

The consultation provides an opportunity for this Council to consider the proposals and their implications for the local community, and to submit a formal response. The deadline for feedback is Sunday 15 November 2026.

The Finance Committee has met to consider the consultation and has agreed to recommend the following response to Full Council:

Response

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this budget consultation.

This consultation is by far the most difficult we have considered since our inception as an organisation. The City of Durham Parish Council would like to place on record – in the strongest possible terms – that it considers Durham County Council's decision to limit its council tax increase to 1.99% in 2026/27 seriously financially irresponsible in the face of substantial continuing budget pressures and rising service costs.

Foregoing recurring revenue without a credible, sustainable alternative has seriously weakened the Council's ability to protect essential services and reduced the revenue base on which future increases would be calculated. This decision did not resolve the underlying financial challenges; it deferred difficult choices and increased the risks our county now faces - namely that residents face both deeper service reductions and the maximum council tax increase. This Administration has chosen short-term relief at the expense of longer-term service resilience and, in doing so, has now put many officers' jobs within the authority and residents' services at serious risk.

Durham County Council must view Parish and Town Councils as important strategic partners when looking to retain those services which our residents most value in their community. In a similar vein, the Parish Council is concerned that substantial savings targets have already been identified through this consultation before residents and partner organisations have sufficient information to assess how they would be achieved.

From the documentation included in this consultation, DCC has identifies £8.734million of savings for 2027/28 and a total savings target of £24.074 million across the plan's annual columns. Of the latter figure, £12.348 million relates to the transformation proposals in Appendix 9.

The Parish Council requests clarity about which savings are recurring, which involve changes in funding source or accounting treatment, which depend on

additional income, and which require reductions in staffing or service provision. The figures should be supported by delivery timetables and implementation costs.

The Parish Council again reiterates its particular concerns about the impact of these savings on our much-valued Neighbourhood Warden service. Appendix 4 identifies a further £90,000 saving from a review of service provision by Neighbourhood Wardens, alongside £176,123 from a review involving the rationalisation of Community Protection posts. These proposals should be assessed together and against any changes already implemented. The Parish Council requests details of the resulting staffing establishment, geographical coverage, operating hours and enforcement capacity, together with evidence that the service can continue to meet demand.

As you are aware. Durham City experiences particular pressures associated with its concentration of students, houses in multiple occupation, visitors and a busy city centre. Effective neighbourhood enforcement helps address waste problems, environmental nuisance and anti-social behaviour, while providing reassurance to residents. Reductions that weaken early intervention may lead to recurring complaints, more expensive enforcement and additional pressure on other agencies. Savings should therefore be assessed against the costs of unresolved problems as well as the immediate reduction in the service budget.

The Parish Council again requests a clear assurance that its enhanced Neighbourhood Warden provision, funded through a contractual Service Level Agreement with DCC, will be protected. Parish Council-funded provision must remain an enhancement to an adequate County Council service, rather than becoming a substitute for reductions in the underlying provision.

The public realm proposals also require assessment in combination. Appendix 4 identifies £210,000 savings from changes to Clean and Green services, including summer bedding and grass cutting, while Appendix 5 proposes £250,000 from a grounds maintenance service standards review. It is unclear how these changes interact or what residents will experience once both have been implemented. We request published service standards covering maintenance frequencies, affected locations, safety requirements and arrangements for responding where reduced maintenance causes problems.

The Parish Council accepts that some changes to planting and mowing can reduce costs while improving biodiversity. Such changes require deliberate management, appropriate site selection and clear communication. Visibility at junctions, accessible routes, recreation areas and heavily used public spaces must continue to receive suitable maintenance.

The £300,000 winter maintenance review in Appendix 5 also causes us significant concerns about safety and accessibility. The description does not identify whether savings would come from reduced provision or otherwise. Before implementation, the County Council should publish the proposed arrangements and explain their implications for pedestrians, public transport, steep routes, access to schools and health services, and residents with limited mobility. Any assessment should consider the potential costs of falls, collisions and disrupted journeys.

The £20,000 Park and Ride proposal set out in Appendix 5 is particularly relevant to Durham City. The Parish Council would like further details of any proposed changes to fares, service frequency, operating hours or facilities, and an assessment of their likely impact on usage. Park and Ride contributes to managing traffic, supporting access to the city centre and improving air quality in the City. A modest saving could be undermined if changes discourage use and generate wider costs through congestion or reduced accessibility.

The £70,000 review of public toilets and related operating arrangements is another concern. Accessible toilets enable older people, disabled residents, people with health conditions and families with young children to use public spaces with confidence. They also support Durham City's visitor economy. The consultation should identify the specific facilities within scope and set out any proposed changes to availability. Reliance on alternative provision should only be considered where its accessibility, opening hours and long-term availability have been established.

The Parish Council welcomes the explicit identification of building rationalisation and strategic property management reviews in Appendix 5. These address an area raised in our previous consultation responses. However, savings entries alone do not constitute the comprehensive estates strategy we requested. The County Council should publish an evidence-based plan identifying which assets it intends to retain, improve, repurpose or dispose of, and the financial and service reasons for those decisions. The £1.036 million building rationalisation target should be supported by a timetable and an assessment of the effects on service access.

The Parish Council would again reiterate its view that energy efficiency should also be integral to the Council's estates programme. We have previously highlighted the financial benefits of the County Council's investment in low-carbon infrastructure, renewable generation and LED street lighting. These latest proposals should be accompanied by a costed programme for reducing energy demand and running costs across retained buildings. Decisions should take account of whole-life costs, maintenance, carbon emissions and exposure to energy price volatility. Short-term savings should not prevent investments with a credible financial return.

Quite significantly, Appendix 9 of the consultation material raises serious questions about future service provision. The £1.2 million library transformation target and £2 million leisure transformation target are significant, but the descriptions do not allow consultees to judge the effects on specific locations or accessibility. The Parish Council requests a separate, detailed consultation on the options before changes are approved, with particular attention to Clayport Library and Freeman's Quay leisure centre.

Libraries provide access to books, information, digital facilities, learning and community support. Leisure services contribute to health, wellbeing and affordable opportunities for physical activity. The assessments should therefore consider the consequences for children, older residents, disabled people and low-income households, including travel costs and the availability of realistic alternatives. Savings should be evaluated against the wider costs of exclusion, reduced participation and our residents' wellbeing.

The proposed household waste recycling centre review should demonstrate that residents will retain reasonable access to facilities. Changes that make legitimate disposal more difficult may increase fly-tipping, undermine recycling or shift costs to enforcement and cleansing services. These effects should be considered alongside the existing Community Protection and neighbourhood savings, rather than assessed as separate budget lines.

The £6.548 million "Emerging Service Reviews" target within Neighbourhoods and Environment is particularly difficult to assess because it is expressed in broad terms about technology, alternative delivery models and service standards. Given the scale of the target, the County Council should identify the services likely to be affected, the options under consideration and the evidence supporting the assumed savings. A commitment to later consultation is welcome but should preserve a meaningful opportunity to influence the options and savings expectations.

Although the Parish Council recognises that statutory services must be a top priority, reviews of food festivals, event grants and cultural provision should also consider their contribution to local businesses, community participation and the visitor economy. The Parish Council accepts that delivery arrangements and cost recovery should be examined but asks for proportionate assessments of wider economic benefits and opportunities for partnership or sponsorship.

Across all of the proposals included in this consultation, the central issue is their cumulative impact. Residents may experience changes to transport, neighbourhood enforcement, public toilets, grounds maintenance, welfare advice, libraries and leisure at the same time. Assessing each saving in isolation may understate the consequences for particular communities and groups. The Parish Council therefore requests a published cumulative impact assessment, supported by proportionate equality assessments and consideration of effects on health, accessibility, environmental quality and the local economy.

End of response

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to consider the above report and approve the Parish Council's response to this consultation.

ITEM 8: NOMINATIONS FOR DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL NETWORKS PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the arrangements for parish and town council representation on Durham County Council's new Local Networks and to seek a decision on whether the Council wishes to nominate a Member for appointment to the Durham City and surrounding areas Local Network Stakeholder Panel.

As Members will be aware, Durham County Council is establishing Local Networks to replace the former Area Action Partnerships as its formal community engagement structures. Each Local Network will comprise a Local Network Forum, a Stakeholder Panel and an Elected Member Board consisting of County Councillors. The County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) has agreed to coordinate the nomination and election of parish and town council representatives to the Stakeholder Panels.

Stakeholder Panels will bring together representatives from parish and town councils and other partner organisations, including housing providers, health services, the police and the fire service. Their role will include sharing information, helping to shape and oversee the development of Local Network Action Plans, and advising the Elected Member Board through recommendations on local priorities and funding proposals.

The arrangements circulated by CDALC provide for two parish council representatives on the Durham City and surrounding areas Local Network Stakeholder Panel. This reflects the allocation of one parish council seat and the transfer of the town council seat to parish councils because there is no town council within the Local Network area. These seats are available through the nomination and, where necessary, election process. The City of Durham Parish Council may submit one nomination only and is not entitled to appoint a representative directly.

Representatives will be expected to attend up to four meetings each year and contribute to the development and delivery of plans covering the whole Local Network area. They will also be expected to promote the work of the Local Network, demonstrate a commitment to improving the area, understand local community issues, support equality and diversity, and communicate effectively. Any Member nominated should therefore be willing to contribute to the interests of the wider Local Network area as well as bring knowledge of the City of Durham.

A parish or town councillor who is also a County Councillor is not eligible to stand for a Stakeholder Panel, as County Councillors participate through the Elected Member Board. A councillor may serve on only one Local Network Stakeholder Panel at any one time. Representatives may not send a substitute if they are unable to attend a meeting, and Members should take this restriction into account when considering their availability.

Should the Council wish to nominate a Member, the Clerk must confirm the Council's nomination using the prescribed nomination form. The nominated Member must also submit a statement of up to 200 words using the separate

nominee statement form. This statement will be used if an election is required. The deadline for submissions to CDALC is 9.00 am on Tuesday 17 November 2026.

Where nominations do not require a contested election, the relevant candidate will be put forward to Durham County Council. Where an election is necessary, CDALC will coordinate electronic voting, with voting arrangements expected to be circulated during the week commencing 23 November 2026. The deadline for councils to vote will be 31 January 2027. CDALC has advised that each council within a Local Network area will be entitled to one vote in the relevant elections. Any tie will be determined by lot at an in-person process which candidates may attend.

The information supplied describes the positions as two-year appointments and states that the first representatives will begin work in early 2027 and remain in post until the May 2029 elections. Any Member nominated should be prepared to undertake the role for the stated appointment period.

Participation would give the Council an opportunity to contribute to the development of priorities and proposals affecting Durham City and the surrounding area, strengthen links with partner organisations and support the consideration of local community needs. However, appointment would be subject to the selection process, and the successful representative would be expected to contribute to the work of the whole Local Network. The Council may alternatively decide not to submit a nomination while retaining the opportunity to participate in any relevant election.

The information supplied does not specify whether expenses or other costs associated with attendance will be reimbursed. If the Council resolves to nominate a Member, the Clerk should clarify the practical arrangements and any financial implications with CDALC or Durham County Council.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to consider whether the Council wishes to submit a nomination for the Durham City and surrounding areas Local Network Stakeholder Panel. 2) If Members wish to proceed, Members are asked to resolve which eligible Member it wishes to nominate and to authorise the Clerk to submit the nomination by the deadline, with the nominated Member responsible for completing the required statement. 3) Members are also asked to determine how the Council agrees its vote should a contested election follow, including whether this should be brought to a subsequent Council meeting.

ITEM 10: REPORT ON PROPOSED CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL OBJECTIVES 2027-28

Members are asked to approve its objectives set out in section 4 as the framework for developing the Parish Council's budget for 2027/28. The objectives are the first step in aligning the Council's planned expenditure with its priorities for the year ahead.

As Members are aware, the Parish Council met on 14th October 2026 for its usual annual strategy setting Away Day to formulate objectives for the year ahead around which budgetary proposals could be established. The exercise provided an opportunity to consider the Council's ambitions, the needs of the parish and the resources required to support delivery.

The proposed objectives which arose from the Away Day, resident consultation feedback and previous and ongoing work of the Parish Council are now presented for formal consideration by Full Council:

City of Durham Parish Council objectives

Planning and Licensing Committee

- **PRIORITY 1:** Representing our parish on planning and licensing matters
- **PRIORITY 2:** Protecting the Durham Greenbelt
- **PRIORITY 3:** Reviewing the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan

Environment Committee

- **PRIORITY 1:** Greening our parish area
- **PRIORITY 2:** Maintaining a clean parish area all year-round
- **PRIORITY 3:** Tackling late night noise concerns
- **PRIORITY 4:** Promoting public safety
- **PRIORITY 5:** Promoting the heritage of our parish area
- **PRIORITY 6:** Enhancing the River Wear
- **PRIORITY 7:** Providing enhanced enforcement on environmental issues and supporting local action to limit the climate emergency
- **PRIORITY 8:** Supporting our residents to access support in an emergency

Business Committee

- **PRIORITY 1:** Increasing footfall to our City through year-round events
- **PRIORITY 2:** Supporting businesses to drive additional footfall to our city

Finance Committee

- **PRIORITY 1:** Improving our community centres/ facilities
- **PRIORITY 2:** Having additional resource to support fundraising efforts
- **PRIORITY 3:** Supporting voluntary and community organisations through the provision of grants

Full Council

- **PRIORITY 1:** Employing staff to deliver on the Parish Council's priorities.
- **PRIORITY 2:** Providing training to our staff and Councillors
- **PRIORITY 3:** Providing good administration to the Parish Council
- **PRIORITY 4:** Having a safe, happy and healthy workforce/ Council membership.

Once approved by Full Council, the objectives will form the basis on which each Committee considers its respective budget expenditure for 2027/28. Establishing the objectives before detailed budget consideration will allow proposed spending to be assessed against an agreed Council direction.

For each relevant objective, Committees should identify the activity or service proposed, its intended benefit and the resources needed.

This report seeks approval of a strategic framework solely. It does not set expenditure allocations or recommend a specific precept allocation. The objectives document contains no costed budget and the financial implications will therefore need to be established through the subsequent budget process.

As the budget setting process begins in November 2026, Committee proposals should be considered together with existing commitments and the implications for the precept. Each Committee will meet in November and discuss their proposed strategic aims and an allocated budget; with the latter being considered by the Finance Committee before being presented to Full Council. All Members are asked to attend the Finance Committee meeting where this will take place on Wednesday 18th November 2026 at 11:00am.

It is proposed that the approved objectives are used to organise Committee work programmes and support subsequent monitoring of delivery and expenditure. Each Committee should identify practical actions for each of its objectives.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1. For Members to consider the content of the above report and approve the Parish Council's objectives for 2027-28. 2. Once 1) is approved, for Members to work constructively at Committee-level to progress a strategic framework and budget around these objectives.

ITEM 11: SECTION 106 PROJECT – MARKING THE OPENING OF THE NEW ST LEONARD'S SCHOOL AND PROMOTING THE BATTLE OF NEVILLE'S CROSS

The Parish Council is asked to support a public art and heritage project at two locations in Neville's Cross, and to agree to assume maintenance responsibility for the completed assets.

The proposals will mark the opening of the new St Leonard's Catholic School building, explain the school's history and restore public interpretation of the Battle of Neville's Cross following removal of the footbridge over the A167.

The project combines a pupil-designed mosaic of Springwell Hall, two information boards and two specially designed benches. It will improve the public realm near St Leonard's and provide a replacement place to learn about the battlefield opposite Durham Johnston School.

The Parish Council's support and willingness to maintain the installations will help establish a sustainable basis for delivery.

Springwell Hall provides the historical focus of the St Leonard's element. This is a former Victorian mansion dating from 1859, originally built as Mount Beulah for coal owner Joseph Love. Its subsequent use as a school connects Durham's industrial history with the development of Catholic education in the city. The proposed mosaic will make that connection visible in a publicly accessible setting. The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle purchased Springwell Hall in 1935. On 26 August 1936 it became the home of St Leonard's Catholic Central School. The institution later became St Leonard's Modern School and, in September 1970, St Leonard's School and Sixth Form. These changes trace its development over successive generations.

The new school building welcomed pupils after the Easter break in April 2026, as confirmed by the school's. This provides a timely opportunity to explain the school's origins alongside its latest phase of development, in the year marking 90 years since its establishment at Springwell Hall.

The public installation will allow residents, former pupils and visitors to understand the significance of a building located within the school grounds. It will also recognise the contribution of current pupils, whose mosaic design links the school's history with the community.

The installation is proposed for the public realm space immediately West of 1. St Cuthbert's Place, at the crossing from North Road. The purpose is to create an attractive place to pause and learn about St Leonard's while improving the appearance and use of this space.

The central artwork will be a mosaic depicting Springwell Hall, based on the design produced by school pupils. Local mosaic artist Susan Warlock will support its production and the Parish Council has worked with Susan on two previous projects. A purpose-made frame and installation are included in the costings.

An accompanying information board will explain the history of the school, including Springwell Hall's origins, the establishment of the school in 1936, its later development and the opening of the new building. Final wording and images will be checked with St Leonard's before manufacture, with any necessary reproduction permissions secured.

A specially designed bench will provide seating associated with the school's history. Together, the artwork, board and seating will provide a public record of the school's heritage beyond the school boundary.

The former interpretation board on the footbridge over the A167 was removed with the bridge. This has left a gap in the provision of accessible information about the Battle of Neville's Cross. This project will replace that interpretation and provide a specially designed bench relating to the battlefield.

The new board and bench will stand where the base of the footbridge was formerly located, on the side of the road opposite Durham Johnston School.

The replacement board needs to be re-drafted for its new setting. The former elevated view across the field is no longer available from ground level, so simply reproducing the previous text would not adequately explain the landscape to present-day visitors. The revised interpretation will use a clear location map, appropriately oriented to the reader, to explain the relationship between the installation and the battlefield.

Durham Johnston School has agreed the information board content and has also requested a specially designed bench about the Neville's Cross battlefield. Local historian David Butler has been consulted on the board's content and has approved this. These contributions provide an important basis for the historical interpretation. The final artwork will preserve the agreed historical content while adapting the presentation to the ground-level location.

The proposed bench will give the interpretation a recognisable setting and provide an opportunity for people to sit and read the board. This element will restore a local educational resource and make information available to residents and visitors who do not have access to the former footbridge viewpoint.

Both benches will be black-finished metal, each measuring 86.5 cm high by 125 cm wide by 48.5 cm deep and weighing 22.5 kg, with additional foot fixings.
Detailed layouts will retain clear pedestrian routes, protect crossing visibility and allow comfortable access to the boards and seating. The mosaic, frame, boards and benches will be securely installed with durable finishes appropriate for an exposed public setting.

The following estimates reproduce the costs in the supplied project paper. The contingencies are calculated at 20 per cent of each scheme's base cost.

Cost item	St. Leonard's (£)	Neville's Cross (£)
Bespoke metal bench	640.00	640.00
Bench installation	1,175.11	1,175.11
Potted fern installation	500.00	—
Mosaic creation	5,870.00	—
Information board creation	570.00	570.00
Information board installation	582.03	582.03
Mosaic frame	1,950.00	—
Mosaic installation	1,300.00	—
Base cost	12,587.14	2,967.14
20 per cent contingency	2,517.43	593.43
Scheme total	**15,104.57**	**3,560.57**

The combined estimated capital cost is £18,665.14. The intended funding package is set out below.

Funding source	Amount £
Section 106 public arts funding	12,835.00
Councillor Scott's Neighbourhood Budget	5,830.14
Total funding required	18,665.14

The remaining funding will come from Councillor Scott's Neighbourhood Budget. The £5,830.14 shown is the balance calculated from the supplied estimates; formal confirmation of the allocation should be obtained before expenditure is committed.

No additional Parish Council capital contribution is sought on the basis of this funding package. The decision to assume maintenance responsibility nevertheless carries an ongoing financial commitment.

The Parish Council is asked to assume maintenance responsibility for the completed installations. This will provide a clear point of responsibility for their continued appearance and safety. The proposed scope includes the mosaic and frame, two information boards with their supports and two benches and fixings.

Councillor Elizabeth Scott has agreed to support the Council with any future maintenance for as long as she remains the Local Ward Member. The Council's maintenance responsibility would continue beyond that period unless a different arrangement were subsequently agreed.

Most of the items are reported to have a 10-year warranty. This warranty would cover specified defects but should not be treated as a substitute for routine care or provision for accidental damage, vandalism and eventual replacement.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree to support the project as set out in the above report and also to agree to assume the ongoing maintenance responsibility – in conjunction with Councilor E Scott as Local Ward Members – for these assets.

ITEM 12: PROPOSAL TO CREATE A DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY HERITAGE LEAFLET

Background

The Durham Light Infantry (DLI) holds a significant place in the history and identity of Durham City and the wider County Durham community.

Originally formed as the 68th Regiment of Foot in 1758, the Regiment served across the world during more than two centuries of military service before its final parade and the laying-up of its colours in 1968. Its history encompasses the experiences of generations of local people, their families and communities, as well as the Regiment's contribution to conflicts and military campaigns across the world.

The Regiment's history remains visible in Durham City through a number of memorials, monuments, historic buildings, commemorative objects and places of remembrance. Despite the importance of these features, there is currently an opportunity to bring them together within a single publication which explains their significance and promotes greater public awareness of the Regiment's history and its enduring connection with Durham City.

Proposal

It is proposed that the Parish Council commission the design, production and printing of a dedicated Durham Light Infantry Heritage Leaflet. The publication would identify and describe significant DLI-related memorials, buildings, commemorative features and historical points of interest within Durham City.

The leaflet would provide concise historical information about each feature, explaining its significance and placing it within the wider story of the Regiment. Photographs and illustrations would be incorporated to help readers recognise the individual sites and appreciate their historical and commemorative value.

The Parish Council would engage the support of Mr Peter Nelson, Chair of the DLI Friends, in order to assist with the content of this walking trail.

The proposed leaflet would cover the following features and locations:

1. Durham Light Infantry Bede College Memorial
2. Durham Light Infantry Memorial Statue, Market Place
3. Durham Light Infantry Victoria Cross Memorial Stone, Palace Green
4. Durham Light Infantry South African War Memorial, Palace Green
5. Durham Cathedral DLI Chapel
6. Durham Light Infantry Colours, Durham Cathedral
7. Battlefield Cross and Books of Remembrance, Durham Cathedral
8. Durham Light Infantry Memorial Garden, The College
9. Palace Green Library and the former DLI Collection Gallery
10. Blue plaque dedicated to Helena Rosa Duncombe Shafto OBE, South Bailey
11. Former Durham Light Infantry Museum, Aykley Heads
12. The Story, Mount Oswald
13. County War Memorial, Durham Cathedral grounds

14. Durham Light Infantry Headquarters, Old Elvet off Baths Lane
15. Durham Light Infantry Memorial Seat, Durham Racecourse

The Durham Light Infantry is an important part of the City's civic and cultural identity. Its history is closely associated with generations of local families and communities, and its memorials provide enduring reminders of military service, courage, sacrifice and remembrance.

The proposed publication would help ensure that these connections remain visible and accessible to residents, visitors, younger generations and those researching family or military history. It would also help explain why the various memorials and commemorative features are significant, rather than presenting them simply as individual objects encountered within the City.

Bringing this information together would complement the Parish Council's existing work to recognise and promote Durham's heritage. It would support local pride, encourage interest in the City's history and provide a lasting educational resource for use by residents, schools, community groups and many others.

The proposal would also complement the wider work of Durham County Council, Durham University, Durham Cathedral and other organisations involved in preserving the DLI's history and collections. It would not duplicate the role of the existing museums and archives, but instead provide an accessible introduction to the Regiment's physical presence and commemorative legacy within Durham City.

Design and production of the leaflet

It is proposed that the leaflet be produced using the same supplier and production arrangements as the Parish Council's Heritage Blue Plaques Trail leaflet.
The existing design and production framework would provide continuity, maintain quality and reduce the need to commission an entirely new publication format. The content would be developed using historical research, supplied photographs and illustrations, and information from relevant heritage organisations and collection holders.

The publication would be designed as an accessible, illustrated leaflet, with concise descriptions of each feature and sufficient historical context to explain its significance. Appropriate checks would be undertaken to ensure that the information is accurate and that any images used are suitable for publication.

It is proposed that 5,000 copies be printed using the same format, specification and production arrangements as the Heritage Blue Plaques Trail leaflet. The production costs would therefore be the same as those agreed for that publication. Once produced, copies could be distributed through the Town Hall, Palace Green Library, Durham Cathedral, The Story, The Light, Durham Pointers, community centres and other appropriate locations, subject to agreement with the relevant organisations.

The proposal would use the same supplier and production arrangements as the Heritage Blue Plaques Trail leaflet and other walking leaflets produced by the Parish Council and the spec would be as follows:

Design and artwork - To prepare artwork from supplied images, logos, maps and text for the creation of an A2 leaflet folded to 1/3A4 (DL). Folded map style. Allowing for three iterations presented in PDF format for client approval.

Printing - 5000 Printing 5000 leaflets: Flat: 420 x 420mm Full Colour Double Sided. Material: 115g/sm Novatech Gloss. Four Colour Process + Seal. Finishing: Trim and Fold to Finished size 105 x 210mm (Half Long Edge, 2x Half Short Edge)

Total cost: £1,956.00.

Using the established design framework and production process would provide cost efficiency, while enabling the Parish Council to promote another important aspect of Durham's heritage without commissioning a completely new publication format.

There is sufficient funding within the Environment Committee's Heritage funding to be able to cover the production and printing costs for this project.
A dedicated illustrated heritage leaflet would bring these features together in a single, accessible publication, helping residents and visitors understand their significance and encouraging greater appreciation of the City's military history.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1. For Members to approve the production of a Durham Light Infantry Heritage Leaflet, covering significant DLI-related memorials, buildings, commemorative features and historical points of interest within Durham City. 2. For Members to approve the production costs of £1,956, as set out in the above report (using the same supplier, print quantity, format and production arrangements as the Heritage Blue Plaques Trail leaflet). 3. If the above is agreed, for Members to delegate responsibility for developing the content, coordinating the design and production, and arranging distribution of the leaflet to the Parish Council's Environment Committee.

ITEM 13: DURHAM UNIVERSITY CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO PARKING ARRANGEMENTS AT MAIDEN CASTLE

This report invites Members to consider Durham University's consultation on a proposed car park management pilot at its Maiden Castle sport facility and to agree the Council's response.

The proposals seek to address parking safety and management concerns but also raise questions about continued public access to the surrounding countryside and the public benefit provided by the site.

The University advises that the car park is currently available to University staff, students and members of the public without charges or managed parking restrictions. Increasing use and irresponsible parking have, according to the consultation, made the site more difficult to manage safely. Reported problems include vehicles obstructing emergency access routes and pedestrian walkways, parking on double yellow lines and grassed areas, and student vehicles being left for extended periods, sometimes throughout an entire term. The University also identifies concerns about unauthorised overnight parking and site use.

To address these issues, the University proposes to appoint a private parking management provider for a pilot scheme. The University states that its principal motivation is to ensure safe and responsible parking for the benefit of all users. It also anticipates that removing access to free, long-term student parking could reduce the number of cars students bring to Durham. Students would continue to be encouraged to use sustainable travel options.

Under the proposals, University staff holding valid permits would continue to park without charge. Student parking would require an approved permit, with the Head of Sport able to authorise exceptions for certain sports students on a case-by-case basis. Disabled parking provision would remain in place, with the University stating that it would continue to meet its legal obligations. Existing legitimate site users, including fitness suite users, community partners, contractors and café customers, would be required to register their vehicle details using electronic tablets at Reception, with staff assistance available where necessary.

The consultation states that the car park would remain accessible to the public. However, the University may introduce charges for people using it as a base for activities such as dog walking or accessing the river. No charges have yet been specified. The proposals also include a managed notice system for vehicles failing to comply with the parking requirements, described in the consultation as a "Penalty Charge Notice" system. Final implementation dates have not been determined, although the University hopes to progress the proposals in early 2027.

The Clerk has already circulated details of the consultation to Members. A range of views has been expressed, from support for the proposals and their potential to improve safety and parking availability, to concerns that charging some public users could diminish the public benefit of the site. These concerns are particularly relevant given the site's original approval in the Green Belt on the basis of its public benefit.

Of particular importance to the Parish Council is the role of the car park in enabling residents and visitors to enjoy the Houghall Walk and nearby riverbank walks. The Houghall Walk is a significant location of natural beauty and interest to visitors within the parish. Dog walkers and others seeking access to these routes benefit from the availability of parking at Maiden Castle. Although the proposals would retain public access to the car park, introducing charges could affect the practical accessibility and affordability of these recreational opportunities.

Members are therefore invited to consider the balance between the University's stated need to manage the car park safely and the importance of maintaining the site's wider public benefit. Members may wish to consider whether the Council should seek continued free parking for such users, a reasonable free parking period, or other arrangements that preserve access to the Houghall Walk and riverbank routes.

As the charging arrangements and detailed operating requirements have not yet been established, Members may also wish to seek clarification on proposed tariffs, permitted lengths of stay, exemptions, arrangements for recreational visitors and the accessibility of the registration process. Further information on the duration of the pilot, how its success would be assessed, and how community feedback would inform any permanent scheme would assist the Council in understanding its likely effects. Clarification could also be sought on how the proposals would preserve the public benefit associated with the site's original Green Belt approval.

Shincliffe Parish Council is holding a special meeting to consider the consultation, as the site also bounds Shincliffe civil parish. The proposals therefore have relevance to both parishes and there may be value in understanding Shincliffe Parish Council's views when formulating this Council's response.

The consultation closes at 17:00pm on 6 November 2026. Responses may be submitted through the University's online consultation form, via email or post.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to consider the content of this consultation and agree a response on behalf of the City of Durham Parish Council for submission before the consultation deadline.