City of Durham Parish Council

The City of Durham Parish Council. c/o The Enginemen Secretary's Office
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Date of summons: 19th November 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 25th November 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 28TH OCTOBER 2026 (PAGES 4-16)**

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

5. **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

   • **Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 26th October and 9th November 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 13th October 2026**
   Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here: http://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/environment-committee/

   • **Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 15th October 2026**
   Copies of all approved minutes from these meetings can be found here: https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/meetings/finance-committee/
   - Grant application from the Friends of Flass Vale – project to install a stone plaque to mark the site of the old curling pond in Flass Vale Nature Reserve **(PAGES 17-18)**

6. **CHAIR'S UPDATE**
   The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 28th October 2026

7. **TO APPROVE THE PAYSCALE FOR THE CLERK FOLLOWING THE EXTERNAL JOB REVIEW BY NORTH EAST REGIONAL EMPLOYERS ORGANISATION (PAGES 19-20)**

8. **REPORT BY COUNCILLOR V ASHFIELD ON HER ROLE AS CLIMATE LEAD FOR THE CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL (PAGES 21-22)**

9. **PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE CITY SAFETY HUB WITH ITS STOCK OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS (PAGES 23-24)**

10. **PARISH COUNCIL STRATEGY 2027/28 (PAGES 25-32)**

11. **PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2027/28 (PAGES 33-35)**

12. TO AGREE THE PRECEPT REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2027/28 (PAGES 36-37)

13. CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED NEW PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER IN DURHAM CITY (PAGES 38-41)

14. REPORT FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (PAGES 42-43)

- Report from Councillor R Cornwell on the latest meeting of Durham University's Community Engagement Task Force held on 11th November 2026.

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Wednesday 28th October 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, L Brown, T Cleaver, D Freeman, G Holland, E Hopgood, C Lattin, P Layton, F Robinson, E Scott and M Wilkes.

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

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

Apologies were received and **accepted** from Councillors R Cornwell and R Handy.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2026 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor L Brown presented the minutes of the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings held on 14th and 28th September 2026. There were no queries from Members.

Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 8th September 2026. There being no queries from Members on these minutes, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee reports.

Proposal to support the work of the Durham City Riverscape Community Group and establish a partnership with Durham University/ Unite Student volunteers.

Councillor C Lattin presented the report concerning proposals to support the work of Durham City Riverscape Community and develop its partnership with Durham University Student Volunteering and Outreach, Unite Students and other partners.

The report outlined the group's contribution to improving the River Wear and surrounding areas, including the collection of more than 1,000 bags of litter. It proposed using the existing £2,500 River Wear budget to provide specialist equipment for collecting broken glass, support the group's insurance and recognise the contribution of student volunteers.

Councillor C Lattin advised that the Environment Committee considered that further work was required to develop the proposals. The matter was therefore deferred back to the Environment Committee for further consideration.

Members unanimously recognised the exceptional work of the Riverscape group and expressed their appreciation to its volunteers for their continued commitment to improving the river and the wider city environment.

Finance Committee

Councillor S Walker presented the Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 9th September 2026. There being no queries from Members, Councillor S Walker moved on to Committee reports.

Proposed response to DCC's annual budget (2027/28) and Medium-Term Financial Plan (2027/28-2030/31) consultation

Councillor S Walker presented the report on Durham County Council's consultation on its proposed annual budget for 2027/28 and Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2027/28 to 2030/31. Councillor S Walker explained that the consultation provided an opportunity for the Parish Council to comment on the proposals and their implications for local services and residents. The Finance Committee had considered the consultation and recommended a draft response for approval by Full Council before the deadline of Sunday 15th November 2026.

Members unanimously **approved** the response as follows:

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

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting held on 23rd September 2026 as follows:

The Chair welcomed the successful restoration and unveiling of the gravestone of Victorian civic leader John Coward and his wife Elizabeth at St Cuthbert's Church on North Road. She expressed her pleasure that the Parish Council had been able to support the project and thanked the organisers and everyone involved in completing what had been a challenging restoration. Particular thanks were extended to Councillors R Cornwell and G Holland for attending the unveiling on behalf of the Parish Council. The Chair highlighted the importance of preserving Durham's civic heritage for future generations.

The Chair thanked the Environment Committee and Councillor R Cornwell for organising the annual distribution of tens of thousands of spring-flowering bulbs across the parish. She welcomed the involvement of schools, community groups, churches, student societies and volunteers in planting the bulbs and looked forward to the displays they would provide the following spring. Particular appreciation was expressed to St Cuthbert's Hospice for its logistical support on the distribution day. The Chair recognised the initiative as a further example of the Parish Council's commitment to cleaning and greening the city.

Members were also reminded that the Parish Council's fruit tree giveaway was scheduled to take place on Saturday 21st November 2026.

The Chair welcomed the forthcoming opening of Søstrene Grene in Durham and expressed her pleasure that an established international retailer had chosen to invest in the city centre. She reiterated the Parish Council's commitment to supporting the local high street and a thriving city centre, extended a warm welcome to the store's team and wished them every success.

The Chair congratulated the organisers and volunteers responsible for the inaugural Durham Jazz Festival. Members heard that 90 per cent of tickets had been sold, demonstrating strong demand for live music and cultural events in the city. The Chair reflected positively on the Parish Council's significant financial support for the festival and thanked everyone involved in its successful delivery. She expressed her hope that the event would continue to grow in future years.

The Chair reported that the North East Ambulance Service had agreed earlier in the month to become a strategic partner in the Durham City Safety Hub. She explained that the negotiations had been led and delivered by the Parish Council and that the Clerk and Ambulance Service were arranging joint press releases to highlight their work together. The Chair thanked the Ambulance Service for its support, recognised the agreement as a significant achievement and looked forward to the expanded service being delivered through the Hub.

The Chair thanked Councillor E Scott and the Durham City Remembrance Organising Team for their work in planning the forthcoming Remembrance

weekend. She acknowledged the considerable coordination required, including numerous meetings with partner organisations over the preceding two months, and looked forward to the Parish Council once again acting as civic host.

Members were reminded that the Parish Council's Christmas civic event would take place on Tuesday 8th December 2026 at 6:30pm at Redhills Miners Hall. The Chair highlighted the occasion as an opportunity to thank those who had worked with the Parish Council on projects across the city during the year and encouraged Members to attend.

Finally, the Chair congratulated Andrea Cairns and former Durham City Police Inspector Dave Clarke on being shortlisted for the County Durham Together Awards in the Unsung Hero and Public Service Award categories respectively. The Chair acknowledged their valued relationship with the Parish Council and wished them both success at the awards in December.

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

The Clerk reminded Members that each year the Parish Council undergoes two sets of audits - one internal audit and one external audit. These audits are a legal requirement which assess the Parish Council's policies, standing orders, financial regulations, VAT returns, cashbook, bank statements, minutes, website and more to ensure good governance and compliance.

Earlier this year, the Internal Auditor carried out a review of the Parish Council's workings and provided a positive report, as provided to Members. Mazars LLP have now completed their external audit for the year ended 31st March 2026 and have certified the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The Clerk advised that auditor's report identified two minor issues arising from the review of the Parish Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26.

The first concerned the period provided for the exercise of public rights in 2026. The Council had provided 31 calendar days rather than the 30 working days required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The auditor advised that the Council should ensure compliance in 2026/27 and respond "No" to the relevant assertion in its Annual Governance Statement. This reflected the retrospective nature of the assertion, which concerned compliance during the financial year under review rather than compliance in respect of that year.

The second concerned the classification of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant within the Accounting Statements. The grant had incorrectly been included in Box 2, "Precept or Rates and Levies", rather than Box 3, "Total Other Receipts". The AGAR had been returned to the Council for correction and subsequently amended and resubmitted with the grant correctly classified. The auditor advised that the Council should ensure that future Annual Governance and Accountability Returns were accurate and complete.

Members thanked the Clerk for his work on this audit and unanimously agreed to note the conclusion of the external audit for 2025/26 and to instruct the Clerk to take all appropriate action, as set out in the report provided.

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

The Clerk presented the report on arrangements for parish and town council representation on Durham County Council's new Local Networks, which were being established to replace the former Area Action Partnerships.

Members were advised that each Local Network would comprise a Forum, a Stakeholder Panel and an Elected Member Board consisting of County Councillors.

The Clerk explained that the County Durham Association of Local Councils would coordinate nominations and any subsequent elections for parish and town council representatives. Two places were available on the Durham City and surrounding areas Local Network Stakeholder Panel, and the Parish Council could submit one nomination.

Members were advised that representatives would contribute to the development of Local Network Action Plans and recommendations on local priorities and funding proposals. Representatives would be expected to attend up to four meetings each year and represent the interests of the wider Local Network area. County Councillors were ineligible to stand for the Stakeholder Panel, and substitutes would not be permitted.

The Clerk advised that nominations, accompanied by a nominee statement of up to 200 words, were required by 9:00am on Tuesday 17th November 2026. Should a contested election be necessary, CDALC would coordinate the voting process, with each council entitled to one vote.

Members unanimously **agreed** to nominate Councillor C Lattin as the Parish Council's representative for consideration through the nomination and election process. The Clerk would submit the nomination, with Councillor C Lattin completing the required supporting statement.

Members further unanimously **agreed** that, should the process proceed to an election, Members would vote by email to determine the Council's preferred candidate, enabling the Clerk to submit the Parish Council's vote within the prescribed deadline.

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

Councillor E Scott reported on her work as the Parish Council's Armed Forces Champion, highlighting her involvement with the Durham City Remembrance Organising Group in preparing for the forthcoming Remembrance Sunday commemorations on 8th November 2026.

Councillor E Scott advised that the Parish Council would once again organise and host the Durham City Remembrance Parade on behalf of the community. This year's parade was expected to include more representatives of the Armed Services than any previous year, providing an important opportunity for residents and

visitors to honour those who had lost their lives in conflict and recognise the service of the Armed Forces, past and present.

Councillor E Scott highlighted her role as part of the Organising Group and highlighted how delighted she was to work all year round with colleagues to organise such a fantastic event for the people of Durham.

Members heard that the Service of Remembrance at Durham Cathedral would begin at 10:15am, followed by the silence at 11:00am and wreath laying at 11:10am. The parade would leave the Cathedral at 11:30am, pass through the Market Place and conclude at approximately noon. His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for County Durham, Brigadier Michael Butterwick (Retd) CBE DL, would take the salute in the Market Place.

Councillor E Scott highlighted the anticipated participation of The Rifles, successors to the Durham Light Infantry, alongside cavalry and Royal Air Force representatives. The parade would also include representatives of the police, fire and rescue service, NHS, HM Prison Service and other civilian services, together with standard bearers from across the United Kingdom.

Members were advised that representatives of all five Foot Guards regiments would attend through the Guards Training Company of the Infantry Training Centre, alongside a detachment from the 1st Battalion Scots Guards. Three bands would accompany the parade, including Esh & Bearpark Brass Band.

Councillor E Scott also drew attention to the Remembrance music event, "Under Earth, Under Arms, We Remember", scheduled to take place at Redhills Durham Miners Hall from 3:00pm to 4:30pm. Featuring Durham Miners Association Brass Band and Lirica, the concert would commemorate the courage, resilience and sacrifice of mining communities during times of conflict.

Councillor E Scott emphasised the importance of the commemorations as an occasion for civic unity, gratitude and remembrance, and encouraged residents and visitors to support the event by lining the parade route. Members were advised that road closures would be in place from 8:30am until 1:30pm to facilitate the arrangements. Councillor E Scott highlighted that this element had necessitated additional work this year due to the national terror threat level being heightened and the Police requiring additional HVMs. Councillor E Scott thanked DCC for their continued support for this event and for funding this year's road closure.

Members thanked Councillor E Scott for her ongoing work as Armed Forces Champion for the City of Durham and for her hugely positive report.

10. REPORT ON PROPOSED CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL OBJECTIVES 2027–28

The Clerk presented the report setting out the proposed Parish Council objectives for 2027/28. He explained that these had been developed following the Council's annual strategy-setting Away Day held on 14th October 2026, taking account of resident consultation feedback and the Council's previous and ongoing work.

The Clerk advised that the objectives would provide the strategic framework for developing Committee work programmes and budget proposals for the forthcoming financial year. Approval of the objectives would not determine expenditure allocations or the precept, which would be considered through the subsequent budget-setting process.

For the Planning and Licensing Committee, the agreed objectives were representing the parish on planning and licensing matters, protecting the Durham Green Belt and reviewing the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan.

For the Environment Committee, the agreed objectives were greening the parish area, maintaining a clean parish area all year-round, tackling late-night noise concerns, promoting public safety, promoting the heritage of the parish area, enhancing the River Wear, providing enhanced enforcement on environmental issues and supporting local action to limit the climate emergency, and supporting residents to access support in an emergency.

For the Business Committee, the agreed objectives were increasing footfall to the city through year-round events and supporting businesses to drive additional footfall to the city.

For the Finance Committee, the agreed objectives were improving community centres and facilities, having additional resources to support fundraising efforts, and supporting voluntary and community organisations through the provision of grants.

For Full Council, the agreed objectives were employing staff to deliver the Parish Council's priorities, providing training to staff and Councillors, providing good administration to the Parish Council, and maintaining a safe, happy and healthy workforce and Council membership.

Councillor M Wilkes highlighted that listening to and responding to residents' concerns should also be included as a key objective for the Parish Council.

Members unanimously **agreed** to approve the objectives set out in the report, with the addition of listening to and responding to residents' concerns as a key Full Council objective.

The Clerk advised that each Committee would develop practical actions and budget proposals around the agreed objectives during November, taking account of existing commitments and the resources required for delivery. These proposals would be considered by the Finance Committee before being presented to Full Council.

Members were reminded that all Councillors were invited to attend the Finance Committee meeting on Wednesday 18th November 2026 at 11:00am.

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

Councillor E Scott presented the report seeking the Parish Council's support for a public art and heritage project at two locations in Neville's Cross and agreement to assume ongoing maintenance responsibility for the completed installations.

Councillor E Scott explained that the project would mark the opening of the new St Leonard's Catholic School building, celebrate the school's history and restore public interpretation of the Battle of Neville's Cross following the removal of the footbridge over the A167. The proposals comprised a pupil-designed mosaic of Springwell Hall, two information boards and two specially designed benches.

Members were advised that the St Leonard's installation would explain the history of Springwell Hall, originally built in 1859 as Mount Beulah for coal owner Joseph Love and subsequently acquired by the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle in 1935. The building became the home of St Leonard's Catholic Central School in August 1936. The opening of the new school building in April 2026 provided an opportunity to recognise its latest development alongside the ninetieth anniversary of its establishment at Springwell Hall. Final wording and images would be checked with the school before manufacture, with any necessary reproduction permissions secured.

Councillor E Scott explained that the battlefield interpretation board and associated bench would be installed at the former footbridge approach on the side of the road opposite Durham Johnston School. The interpretation would be adapted to its new ground-level setting, including an appropriately oriented map explaining the relationship between the installation and the battlefield. Durham Johnston School had agreed the information board content, which had also been reviewed and approved by local historian David Butler.

The combined estimated capital cost was £18,665.14, including contingencies, comprising £15,104.57 for the St Leonard's scheme and £3,560.57 for the Neville's Cross scheme. The proposed funding package consisted of £12,835 in Section 106 public arts funding and £5,830.14 from Councillor E Scott's Neighbourhood Budget. Members were advised that formal confirmation of the Neighbourhood Budget allocation would be required before expenditure was committed. No additional Parish Council capital contribution was sought.

Members were advised that the proposed maintenance responsibility covered the mosaic and frame, two information boards and their supports, and two benches and fixings. Councillor E Scott had agreed to support future maintenance for as long as she remained the Local Ward Member. The Parish Council's responsibility would continue beyond that period unless alternative arrangements were subsequently agreed.

Although most items were reported to carry a ten-year warranty, Members were advised that this would not replace the need for routine maintenance or provision for accidental damage, vandalism and eventual replacement.

Members unanimously **agreed** to support the project as set out in the report and to assume ongoing maintenance responsibility for the completed assets, in conjunction with Councillor E Scott as the Local Ward Member.

12. PROPOSAL TO PRODUCE A NEW WALKING TRAIL MAP PROMOTING THE HISTORY OF THE DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY

The Clerk presented the report proposing the production of an illustrated Durham Light Infantry Heritage Leaflet, bringing together significant DLI-related memorials, buildings, commemorative features and historical points of interest within Durham City.

The Clerk explained that the publication would help residents and visitors understand the Regiment's enduring connection with the city and its communities. The leaflet would provide concise historical information, supported by photographs and illustrations, explaining the significance of individual locations within the wider history of the Durham Light Infantry.

Members were advised that the proposed trail would include memorials and commemorative features at Bede College, the Market Place, Palace Green and Durham Cathedral, together with the former DLI Museum at Aykley Heads, The Story at Mount Oswald, the DLI headquarters at Old Elvet and other locations associated with the Regiment. The support of Mr Peter Nelson, Chair of the DLI Friends, would be sought in developing the content, with historical information and images checked before publication.

Councillor L Brown highlighted that the DLI Cottages at Back Western Hill should also be included in the proposed map.

The Clerk proposed using the same supplier, format and production arrangements as the Parish Council's Heritage Blue Plaques Trail leaflet. The total cost of designing and producing 5,000 copies would be £1,956, for which sufficient funding was available within the Environment Committee's heritage budget.

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 organisations concerned.

Members unanimously **approved** the production of the Durham Light Infantry Heritage Leaflet, covering the significant DLI-related memorials, buildings, commemorative features and historical points of interest within Durham City.

Members further unanimously **approved** the production costs of £1,956, using the same supplier, print quantity, format and production arrangements as the Heritage Blue Plaques Trail leaflet, and agreed to delegate responsibility for developing the content, coordinating design and production, and arranging distribution to the Parish Council's Environment Committee.

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

The Clerk presented the report on Durham University's consultation concerning a proposed car park management pilot at Maiden Castle. He explained that the University had identified problems with vehicles obstructing emergency access

routes and pedestrian walkways, parking on restricted areas and being left for extended periods.

Members were advised that the proposals included appointing a private parking management provider, retaining permit arrangements for University staff and introducing approved permits for student parking. Other legitimate site users would be required to register their vehicle details at Reception. Public access would continue, although charges might be introduced for people using the car park for activities such as dog walking or accessing nearby recreational routes. Proposed tariffs and detailed operating arrangements had not yet been specified.

The Clerk highlighted the car park's role in enabling access to the Houghall Walk and surrounding woodland and riverside paths. During discussion, some Members considered it reasonable for members of the public to be asked to pay for parking when using the site as a base for dog walking or enjoying the nearby woodland and riverside walks.

Members felt that the proposal was a reasonable one and **agreed** to note the consultation without making any further comment.

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 25th November 2026

ITEM 5: GRANT APPLICATION FROM THE FRIENDS OF FLASS VALE – PROJECT TO INSTALL A STONE PLAQUE TO MARK THE SITE OF THE OLD CURLING POND IN FLASS VALE NATURE RESERVE

Full Council is asked to approve a one-off grant of £1,800 to Friends of Flass Vale from the 2026–27 small grants budget. The grant would contribute towards installing a stone plaque at the site of the former curling pond in Flass Vale Nature Reserve. The estimated project cost is £1,800 and this includes the stone plinth the plaque would sit on as well as the transportation and installation costs.

Following the June 2026 allocations, £2,000 remained in the small grants budget. The Council agreed to keep the funding window open for further applications. The Council's adopted Grants Policy allows the Council to agree a further funding window in the same financial year where funds remain after the April to June allocations, with the ordinary requirements of the policy continuing to apply. This is the first application received in that further window. As it arrived after the publication of the last Finance Committee agenda, the Committee agreed to refer it to Full Council so that a decision could be made sooner.

Friends of Flass Vale was formed in 2001 and is open to the public. It is a purely voluntary-led organisation dedicate to the care for the nature reserve and to preserve its natural character. The group is an important partner of the Parish Council in safeguarding Flass Vale - an important green space in the city. Its conservation work demonstrates a record of benefit to the parish and provides relevant experience in caring for the site where the plaque would be installed. The Friends group would take full responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the plaque.

The plaque would mark the location of a former recreational feature and help residents and visitors understand how the Vale was used in the past. The proposal supports the policy's aims of enhancing the local environment and supporting the work of local voluntary groups. The Friends of Flass Vale also identifies a link with the Council's tourism priority, as the plaque would add to what visitors can learn about the site. The FOFV confirms that all of the grant would be spent within the parish and that the group intends to acknowledge financial contributors in local press publicity. The plaque itself can be found here:



The group reports that it has approached no other funding bodies for the project albeit their original approach to the Parish Council was to seek advice on any available grants from partners. The supporting current account records show a closing balance of £3,753.92. Members will need to consider that the FOFV use their funds purely on the upkeep and management of the Flass Vale and regularly fundraise for this sort of activity.

The Council's Grants Policy directs the Council to consider need, merit and benefit to the parish. The proposed contribution is for a specific installation, with the group responsible for its upkeep. The plaque would provide a public benefit at a site the group already helps to care for. It is recommended that Full Council approve the £1,800 grant. If approved, payment would be made to Friends of Flass Vale and restricted to the approved plaque project.

There will likely be an official unveiling event in the near future to which all Members will be invited.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to approve the grant request of £1,800 from the Friends of Flass Vale, as set out in the above report.

ITEM 7: TO APPROVE THE PAYSCALE FOR THE CLERK FOLLOWING THE EXTERNAL JOB REVIEW BY NORTH EAST REGIONAL EMPLOYERS ORGANISATION

Full Council is asked to confirm the Clerk's placement at Spinal Column Point (SCP) 46 and expressly approve the classification of the post within the LC4 pay scale range. The post was previously classified within LC3.

The North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO) assessed the Clerk's role against eight factors and awarded 33 points, the threshold for LC4. The highest scores reflected the breadth of the role across financial leadership as Responsible Financial Officer, governance and advice to Members, community engagement and partnerships, delivery of strategic projects, and the specialist knowledge and judgement these duties require.

The evaluation identified a shift from supporting the Council's strategy to leading its delivery, including coordinating neighbourhood planning, civic events and partnership projects. It also highlighted the Clerk's role in advising Members on budgets, reserves and financial risk.

NEREO recommended placement in the below-substantive range of LC4, taking account of the score at the entry threshold and the Council's limited staffing and property responsibilities. SCP 46 is the first point in that range. The 2026/27 pay agreement lists a full-time annual rate of £60,454 for SCP 46 from 1 April 2026.

Although Members unanimously approved the Government pay award of 3.3% for the Clerk in September 2026, with the report noting the Clerk's current salary scale being at SCP 46, Committee Members subsequently felt that the move from LC3 into LC4 had not been explicitly discussed in the September report. The matter is therefore brought back to Full Council for formal endorsement of the Council's previous decision relating to the LC4 classification and confirmation of the existing placement at SCP 46.

The Personnel Committee met on 17th November 2026 and fully endorsed NEREO's report as well as their recommendation that SCP 46 is the correct scale for the Clerk's role, based on his level of responsibility. The Committee commended Lindsey from NEREO for her work on the review. The Clerk was also given the opportunity to provide feedback and expressed his gratitude to the Committee and for the outcome of this external assessment.

CDALC has also reviewed the NEREO external job review and indicated that they feel that SCP 46 is appropriate for the Clerk's role.

The Parish Council has further contracted NEREO to provide ongoing advice and support on HR matters at a total annual cost of approximately £300. NEREO's services were recommended by DCC HR and CDALC to the Parish Council. It is hoped that their services will be particularly beneficial during the staff annual appraisal.

DECISIONS REQUIRED	1) For Members to retrospectively endorse the reclassification of the Clerk's post from LC3 to LC4 with effect from the date the Clerk moved to SCP 46. 2) For Members to note the contracting of NEREO's services for future HR support and advice.

ITEM 8: REPORT BY COUNCILLOR V ASHFIELD ON HER ROLE AS CLIMATE LEAD FOR THE CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

(May - November 2026)

I have attended online and in-person training about the Climate Emergency including the screening of 2 climate-related films: The Power Station and The National Emergency Briefing. One inspired the Sunflower bonanza we had at the Durham Show and the other inspires panic and an urgent need to respond.

I attend regular weekly and monthly meetings of Climate Action Durham, which is a non-political Community Interest Company associated with Friends of the Earth. The weekly meeting is a learning opportunity – either talks or conversations led by local experts. I have helped to organise the annual Durham COP and other public events in the city. I have recently joined the NALC Climate Emergency Network which provides up to date information and training for issues and developing solutions.

On a national level I have lobbied Government not to diminish their plans for sustainable developments and to maintain their resistance to the increase in use of fossil fuels in particular the exploration of the Rosebank Oil field.

With other campaigners I lobbied the County Council in Durham not to abandon the commitment to a Climate Emergency and (through the Parish council) to review the programme to sponsor a new Energy Recovery Facility on Teesside. In the latter two instances I liaised with university groups.

The work of the Environment committee is very responsive to suggestions which come from the outside bodies I liaise with. Locally I work with the University Volunteering Society and the University Gardening Club to engage students in environmental activities: the annual planting of bulbs and planting of trees across the PC area.

I liaise with Climate Action Durham on behalf of the Parish Council to align some of the activities which the PC Environment Committee prioritises. This included the planning of The National Clean Air Day (celebrated in Durham on 18th June) and I visited all the primary schools in the PC area in order to engage the pupils in designing posters to illustrate the importance of clean air in the lives of children. I also arranged for children to be fully briefed and to speak to a "round table" of city and regional leaders and relevant officers at the same event. It also included the response the PC made to DCC regarding the use (or otherwise) of Elvet Green while they carry out repairs to Baths Bridge and I am grateful that this objection has been energetically adopted by the DC councillors for Elvet and Gilesgate on behalf of residents.

I worked with local schools and partners at Houghall College in order to develop a "Sunflowers for Solar" event over the summer. Although the Houghall flower growing was unsuccessful I found an alternative supplier of sunflowers to make the Sunflowers for Solar event at the revived City of Durham Show particularly successful. Every child who visited the Show went home with a sunflower and a

packet of seeds. My vision was achieved when I saw dozens of children in the Market Place and beyond carrying their majestic sunflower! (Photos below).

This event and the previous donation of sunflower seeds across the city not only brightened the city in gardens, allotments and all over town but also raised £2,000 for "Big Solar". Big Solar is a not-for-profit co-operative, which provides solar panels for community and commercial buildings. They did consider the viability of providing panels for Alington House and Waddington Street Centre in Durham but from a remote assessment decided that the spaces could not take their minimum number of panels.

On behalf of the Environment Committee, I liaise monthly with Elvet Residents' Association, in particular with regard to their Clean Air and their "One Way" initiatives and they are grateful that they have received the unanimous support of the Environment Committee in their latest initiative. St Nicholas Community Association has also been grateful for links I've provided with the PC for them to receive help for its Gardening initiative in the rear space of Claypath Deli.









ITEM 9: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE CITY SAFETY HUB WITH ITS STOCK OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS

Members are asked to approve expenditure of £1,000 from its contingencies fund to purchase essential supplies for the City Safety Hub at St Nic's. The Hub has advised that stocks of several items are running low and has requested donations to help replenish them. The proposed purchase would respond directly to that request by providing goods for use during the Hub's Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evening sessions.

The Parish Council has been a significant supporter of the Hub and its work to improve safety in Durham City at night. In its draft budget, the Parish Council has again agreed to provide £10,000 towards the continuation of the city's Hub. The Parish Council has highlighted the importance of the service to residents and visitors using the city centre at night. More recently, the Parish Council secured the provision of paramedics to complement the Hub's existing services. The proposed purchase would build on that support by helping the Hub maintain the everyday supplies it uses when people seek assistance.

In its request, the Hub thanked the Parish Council for its continued support and explained that donations of any size would be welcome. Its stock request covers refreshments, items for people who are cold or unwell, equipment for charging mobile phones, and products intended to help prevent drink spiking. The Hub has identified the following items for replenishment.

- Disposable cups for hot drinks
- Hot chocolate powder
- Bovril ready-made cups
- Foil blankets
- Sick bags, preferably with a rigid circular support at the top
- Power banks for charging mobile phones, as the Hub currently has only charging cables available
- NightCap drink-spiking prevention scrunchies
- NightCap drink-spiking prevention stickers for glasses
- Snacks such as Pot Noodles, biscuits and crisps
- Bottled or canned water

It is proposed that the Parish Council purchase the goods directly and provide them to the Hub. Before orders are placed, the quantities and mix of goods should be agreed with the Hub, taking account of its remaining stock, the items it uses most frequently and any donations it has received since making its request. This would allow the expenditure to be directed towards the items the Hub needs most urgently and give the Council flexibility to adjust quantities in light of prices and availability. Delivery arrangements should also be agreed with the Hub so that supplies can be received and made available for its evening sessions.

The total proposed expenditure is £1,000, to be charged to the Parish Council's contingencies fund. The allocation would cover a one-off purchase in response to the stock shortage identified by the Hub. The cost of the goods and any delivery charges should be met within the approved amount, with invoices retained as part of the Council's expenditure records.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to approve an allocation of £1,000 from its contingencies fund for the purchase of essential items from the inventory above for the City Safety Hub at St Nic's, with the final quantities and mix of goods agreed with the Hub before purchase.

ITEM 10: PARISH COUNCIL STRATEGY 2027/ 2028

The aim of the Parish Council's strategy is to give local residents, Councillors and Officers a clear understanding of what the council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver its aims and objectives. The strategy sets out what the areas of development or change the Council intends to focus on over the next year outlining those areas of service that are identified as priority aims and objectives.

The City of Durham Parish Council has five overarching priorities for our area:

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

Looking Forwards

The 'Looking Forwards' document has also been included as part of this work. 'Looking Forwards' is a companion document to the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan and has been developed by the City of Durham Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Working Party. It is built on the aspirations and views as expressed by local people for their City during the five years of preparation of the Plan. It looks forward to greater involvement of the community in making Durham a more creative and sustainable City.

A full copy of the *Looking Forwards* document can be found here: https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2021/09/Looking-Forwards-document.pdf

Committee priorities

The priorities for each Committee (excluding Finance and Personnel Committees) in 2027/28 are set out below:

Planning and Licensing Committee

Council priorities 2027/28	**Planning priorities 2027/28**	**Looking Forwards initiative(s)**
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Representing the Parish as a consultee on planning matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City

		Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Consulting the Parish on planning matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Ensuring schemes deliver the required levels of affordable housing and adapted housing for the disabled and elderly.	Theme 4. A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Protect existing Rights of Way and promoting the creation and adoption of new Public Rights of Way and ensuring that they are accessible to all. Ensuring that all accommodation, including that for students, is safe and of a suitable standard.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
	Protecting our green infrastructure and assets within our parish boundary and ensuring that they are used to the best possible public benefit.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Upholding the development plans for the area i.e. Neighbourhood Plan and County Durham Plan.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

	Representing our residents during the review of the County Durham Plan	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	To maintain and develop an evidence-base to update the Neighbourhood Plan and comment on planning applications.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live
	Protecting our World Heritage Site, Conservation Areas and designated and non-designated heritage assets.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Delivering a Conservation Area Management Plan	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Protecting against overdevelopment	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 4: A City With Attractive And Affordable Places To Live

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

Council priorities 2027/28	**Licensing priorities 2027/28**	**Looking Forwards initiative(s)**
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Representing the Parish on licensing matters	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Ensuring that all new licensing applications and existing premises promote the four licensing objectives. Lobbying central Government on ensuring that health impacts become the fifth licensing objectives.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Empowering our residents to make informed	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

	representations on licensing matters.	Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
	Supporting a cumulative impact policy for the parish Supporting a late night-levy on licensed premises in the parish.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
	Making licensing as open as possible by supporting DCC's new online licensing portal	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City
	Making the City more accessible to all by representing the needs of all users in relation to pavement and outdoor seating applications.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Ensuring that the objectives of licensing and planning are aligned.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Promoting the early evening economy to families and tourists	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 2: A Beautiful And Historic City

		Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	To encourage all new taxi licenses granted by DCC to be for low emissions/ electrical vehicles only.	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future

Environment Committee

Council priorities 2027/28	**Environment priorities 2027/28**	**Looking Forwards initiative(s)**
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Engaging with and responding to residents of all ages and backgrounds in environment-related work. Mobilise Volunteer groups.	Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life.
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Promote cleaner air, a cleaner river, green spaces, and streets for living across the city. Reduction in light pollution. Reduction in night time noise. Sustainable travel. Supporting the implementation of a Community Emergency Plan	Theme 1: A City With A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Work with all relevant committees to ensure the climate and ecological emergencies are considered in all planning matters. Sustainable housing	Theme 4: A City with attractive and affordable places to live
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Improve and protect the appearance of the city and its heritage.	Theme 2: A Beautiful and Historic City Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy

5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Be proactive and collaborate with all partners (including Parish Council committees, Durham County Council, residents, developers, landlords, and other businesses) to coordinate our impact on the climate and ecological emergencies and increase community resilience. Encourage sustainable Travel Increased awareness and action on climate change. Tackle the ecological emergency	Theme 1: A City with A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

Business Committee

Council priorities 2027/28	**Business priorities 2027/28**	**Looking Forwards initiative(s)**
1. Being an ambitious voice for the city	Engaging with local businesses, including improving the visitor economy	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
2. Enhancing physical and mental wellbeing of our residents and addressing inequalities in our parish	Promoting responsible and environmentally sound businesses	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
3. Upholding the neighbourhood plan and representing the parish on planning matters.	Supporting new businesses and attempting to fill empty units across the City and promoting the overnight stay economy/ businesses across the city	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
4. Creating a positive environment for businesses and encouraging tourism to improve prosperity of parish	Marketing Durham as a place to visit, particularly the overnight stay sector	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy Theme 5: A City with a modern and sustainable transport infrastructure

	Promoting footfall in the city centre and encouraging a variety of businesses to ensure wide range of choice for visitors.	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
	To promote financially accessible events where possible, including free elements.	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy
5. Taking action to combat the climate and ecological emergencies.	Reducing food miles by encouraging the use of local suppliers and emerging green technologies and services	Theme 3: A City with a diverse and resilient economy Theme 6: A City with an enriched community life

DECISION REQUIRED	Members are asked to approve the Parish Council Strategy for 2027/28 as set out above.

ITEM 11: CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED COMMITTEE BUDGETS FOR 2027/28

As Members are aware, there is a need for the Parish Council to have agreed its budget and to submit its precept request for the forthcoming Financial Year by the end of January 2027.

In order to support this work, all of the Parish Council's Committees have now met and have submitted the following budget proposals for their work from April 2027.

DRAFT CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET 2027-28

(EXPENDITURE ONLY)

Planning and Licensing Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Representing our parish on planning and licensing matters	
Professional planning support	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Protecting the Durham Green Belt	
Combatting any development of the Green Belt through the Examination in Public	£23,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Reviewing the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan	
Durham City Neighbourhood Plan review	£2,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2027-28 AGAINST PRIORITIES	**£27,000.00**

Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Greening our parish area	
Planting budget	£20,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Maintaining a clean parish area all year-round	
Partnership Awards	£250.00
Cleaning up street lampposts/ signs/ backlanes	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Tackling late night noise concerns	
What to do if you have a local issue in Durham leaflet….	£2,000.00
Expanding the *Shhh…11pm to 7am* campaign	£500.00
PRIORITY 4: Promoting public safety	
City Safety Hub	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 5: Promoting the heritage of our parish area	
Heritage project	£1,000.00
PRIORITY 6: Enhancing the River Wear	
Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust and DCRC	£500.00
PRIORITY 7: Providing enhanced enforcement on environmental issues	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA	£13,000.00
PRIORITY 8: Supporting our residents to access support in an emergency	
Community Emergency Plan	£500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2027-28 AGAINST PRIORITIES	**£49,750.00**

Business Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Increasing footfall to our city through year-round events	
Supporting events in Durham City (Durham Pride, Durham Fringe, Durham Jazz, Durham Folk Festivals, Chinese New Year, Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, miscellaneous).	£50,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Supporting businesses to drive additional footfall to our city	
Business events grants	£20,000.00
Christmas Frontage Awards	£1,500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2027-28 AGAINST PRIORITIES	**£71,500.00**

Finance Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Improving community facilities	
Community centres/ facilities fund	£40,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2027-28 AGAINST PRIORITIES	**£40,000.00**

Full Council

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Employing staff to deliver on the Parish Council's priorities	
Clerk salary (including salary, pension, NI on costs)	£90,000.00
Additional assistance/ contracted bid writing	£1,250.00
PRIORITY 2: Providing good administration to the Parish Council	
(Office rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website and other expenditure)	£25,000.00
PRIORITY 3: supporting local community and voluntary organisations	
Small grants budget	£15,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2027-28 AGAINST PRIORITIES	**£131,250.00**

Contingencies	£15,000.00
Election reserve	£5,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2027-28 AGAINST PRIORITIES	**£20,000.00**

Committees	Cost (£)
Planning and Licensing Committee	£27,000.00
Environment Committee	£49,750.00
Business Committee	£71,500.00
Finance Committee	£40,000.00

Full Council	£131,250.00
Contingencies and election reserves (to be added)	£20,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2027/28 AGAINST PRIORITIES	**£339,500.00**

DECISION REQUIRED	Councillors are asked to consider the above information and approve a budget for financial year 2027/28

ITEM 12: TO AGREE THE PRECEPT REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2027/28

Budget

Details of the proposed expenditure by Committees are set out in the report provided for item 11 of this Agenda.

Information on Council Tax base

Council Tax base is calculated by taking the number of houses in the City of Durham Parish Council area, allocating a weight to them based on their council tax banding and adding up the total of the weighted households. For example, higher council tax band properties carry a higher weighting and lower council tax base properties carry a lower council tax weighting. The Council Tax Base can therefore fluctuate from year to year based on the number of properties in each area. For example, council tax base will increase if any new houses have been built and the occupants have started to pay council tax but may decrease if for example any houses have been demolished in an area or have changed their use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C4 or sui generis (non-tax paying Use Classes).

The indicative 2027/28 Tax Base for the City of Durham parish area is 4,622.4. The 2026/27 City of Durham Parish Council Tax Base was calculated at 4,688.8. Our Tax Base has therefore decreased by 66.4.

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant

As Members are aware, the LCTRS grant historically paid to Parish/ Town Councils across County Durham has now been withdrawn by Durham County Council.

Precept request

The precept request must be submitted to Durham County Council by the end of January 2027.

The Parish Council's precept charge for Band D currently sits at £65.61. Although the City of Durham Parish Council area has a high population, its tax income is lower than areas of similar size due to the significant number of properties exempt from Council tax because of their use as student accommodation.

The Band D charge in the City of Durham parish area remains one of the lowest in County Durham.

In 2026/27, our precept totalled £307,632.17.

The Parish Council's Finance Committee has carefully reviewed all Committee budget proposals and wishes to recommend them as drafted to Full Council. In view of this, and provided Members approve the budget as presented, the Band D charge would increase by £7.84 (11.95%) to £73.45 and would generate a total precept of £339,515.28.

DECISION REQUIRED	Councillors are asked to consider the above information and approve an appropriate precept level for Financial Year 2027/28

ITEM 13: CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED NEW PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER IN DURHAM CITY

Members are asked to agree the Parish Council's response to Durham County Council's consultation on Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Durham City. The consultation reviews four existing controls, seeks views on six additional measures and proposes bringing the measures into one Order if the additional restrictions are found necessary and approved.

On 14 October 2026, Durham County Council's Cabinet agreed to seek evidence and public views on potential PSPOs for Durham City, Stanley, Consett, Bishop Auckland, Peterlee, Seaham and Chester-le-Street. The report was brought forward by the Corporate Leadership Team and names Mark Jackson, Director of Neighbourhoods and Environment, and Councillor Kyle Genner, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods, Environment and Police Relations. The published city consultation opened on 27 October 2026. The exercise seeks to establish where restrictions are needed, gauge support and identify other conduct that may warrant inclusion. Cabinet also agreed to seek views and evidence on a potential countywide face-covering measure.

The Cabinet report describes concerns across the locations about youth-related nuisance, substance misuse, property damage and intimidation, as well as fears about safety on public transport, including among women and girls. Durham Constabulary supplied evidence relating to several locations, with Stanley cited as a prominent example of bus-station-related concerns. Seaham and Chester-le-Street were included as town centres with transport links and reported concerns. Several locations have been considered through problem-oriented policing plans. For Durham City specifically, police priorities published on 1 October 2026 include nuisance begging and youth-related anti-social behaviour at the bus station and on North Road. Police also report reductions in youth-related incidents following partnership work. Members may wish to seek current Durham City evidence showing what problems persist and what each restriction would add.

The live survey invites views on each of the four existing controls and each of the six additions. Respondents can comment on every measure or select the measures they wish to address. The consultation refers to June 2025 for the two current orders and says both are due for renewal or expiry by July 2028. The four existing controls are as follows.

Drinking alcohol in public spaces. The alcohol order was first introduced in 2014. It applies in a defined area and allows an authorised person to require drinking to stop and alcohol, or something reasonably believed to be alcohol, to be surrendered where the statutory conditions apply.

Begging in public spaces. This is covered by the second order, approved by Cabinet in September 2024, together with the following two controls.

Urinating or defecating in a public place other than by using a lavatory.

Using intoxicating substances in public spaces.

The Parish Council expressed support for the Durham City PSPO proposal in 2024. The present consultation gives Members an opportunity to review each existing

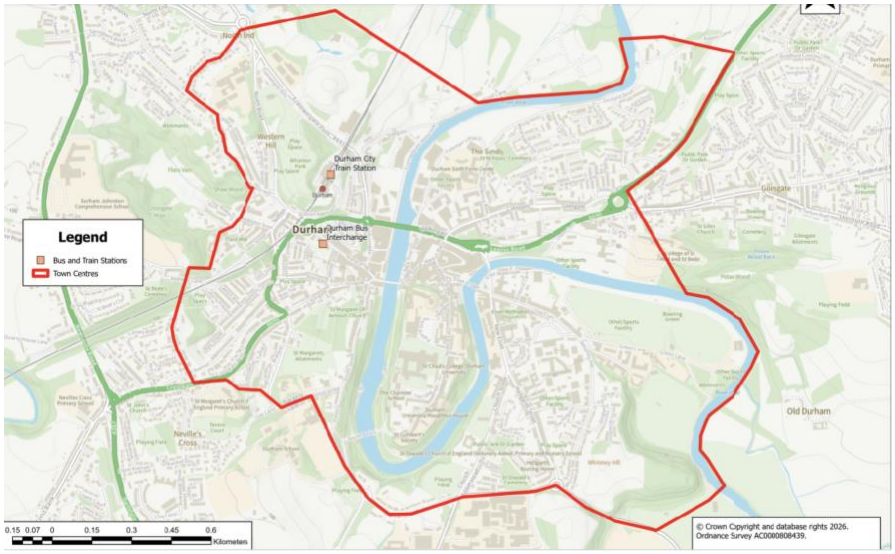
control and consider the evidence for the wider package. The wording of the current orders is available from the County Council. The six additional measures published for Durham City are as follows. The final wording would determine precisely what conduct is covered, when a restriction applies and what exceptions are available.

- Anti-social use of electric bikes, e-scooters, skateboards or other vehicles within the restricted area.
- Use of abusive, threatening or offensive language.
- Conduct that causes alarm, harassment or distress to others.
- Refusal to leave a bus station or public area when directed by an authorised officer, police officer or bus operator.
- Gathering or loitering in ways that cause problems for others, and obstruction of public areas.
- Littering or graffiti.

Appendix 2 of the Cabinet report gives the earlier Durham City schedule. It includes conduct likely to cause alarm, harassment or distress to passengers or people waiting nearby, failure to leave a bus station when directed, and loitering in that setting other than for legitimate purposes such as waiting for a bus, boarding or accompanying someone to board.

It also lists highway obstruction, littering, graffiti, alcohol or other intoxicants and public urination or defecation outside designated facilities. The live consultation describes the language, conduct and directions to leave in broader terms and expressly refers to anti-social use of vehicles.

The proposed boundary includes Durham City centre and surrounding areas. It reaches Aykley Heads and North End to the north-west, extends east through The Sands and south to Whinney Hill, and runs west towards Neville's Cross and Crossgate. It includes the railway station, bus station and nearby residential, commercial and university areas. The Cabinet report says that a new Durham City order would cover the existing geographical area, as shown below:



The Cabinet paper separately proposes exploring a countywide requirement to remove a face covering when requested by an authorised officer. Its recommendation focuses on deliberate concealment of identity for the purpose of causing alarm, harassment or distress.

The report also discusses concealment while committing, or being believed to be committing, anti-social behaviour. The draft wording would need to settle the threshold and the evidence required. Wearing a face covering would remain generally permitted under the proposal. The Cabinet report identifies possible exemptions for religious, cultural and medical reasons.

Durham County Council brought the face-covering proposal to Cabinet. The Cabinet report records Durham Constabulary's general support for PSPOs in certain locations and identifies it as a consultee on evidence and enforcement capacity. The report leaves open who first requested the specific face-covering measure and whether the force supports it. It also identifies a practical problem with enforcement if an individual refuses to remove a covering and their identity cannot be established. Final authorisations, staffing and enforcement arrangements for the proposed measure are yet to be confirmed.

Under section 59 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Durham County Council must have reasonable grounds to conclude that activity in a public place has had, or is likely to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of people in the locality. The actual or likely effect must be persistent or continuing, or likely to be so, make or be likely to make the activity unreasonable, and justify the restriction. Each restriction must be reasonable for preventing or reducing the detrimental effect or its recurrence.

Orders can last up to three years and may be extended if the relevant statutory test is met. The County Council must consult and publicise the order as required and have particular regard to freedom of expression and assembly. The Cabinet paper says equality screening will be completed before a final decision. The public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 also applies.

Failure without reasonable excuse to comply with a valid requirement or prohibition can be an offence under section 67. Alcohol is subject to a separate regime under sections 62 and 63, including statutory exclusions and enforcement for failure without reasonable excuse to comply with a valid request to stop drinking or surrender alcohol.

Under section 68, a constable or authorised person may issue a fixed penalty notice where they have reason to believe a relevant offence has been committed. The Cabinet paper envisages a role for authorised council officers, neighbourhood wardens and police. Final arrangements should clarify the grounds for a direction to leave, the role of bus operators, who can issue notices and what evidence will be recorded.

If a face-covering requirement were adopted, officers would need to establish that the requirement applied, explain the request, consider any exemption or reasonable excuse and record the response. A refusal could lead to a fixed penalty notice or prosecution where the statutory conditions are met and there is sufficient

evidence. A PSPO requirement and the fixed penalty process confer no freestanding power on council officers to detain someone or remove a covering by force. The County Council should explain how any police referral would work, what safeguards would apply to children and vulnerable adults, and how legitimate use and privacy would be protected.

The Cabinet report identifies enforcement capacity, additional demands on legal and enforcement services, the risk of overly broad restrictions, and the practical implications of enforcing against young people. It recognises the importance of prevention, education and engagement alongside enforcement. Existing options include community protection notices, acceptable behaviour agreements, injunctions and criminal behaviour orders, where applicable.

This consultation closes on Sunday 13 December 2026. Durham County Council expects to publish its decision in early 2027.

DECISION REQUIRED	For Members to agree the Parish Council's position and response to the Durham City consultation and authorise the Parish Clerk to submit it by the deadline.

ITEM 14: Report from Councillor R Cornwell on the latest meeting of Durham University's Community Engagement Task Force held on 11th November 2026.

I attended this meeting on 11 November as a substitute for Victoria Ashfield. This group "aims to promote positive community relations and engagement across Durham City, County Durham and the wider North-East England region." (quoted from its terms of reference). There is wide membership from Durham University, local residents, our Parish Council, the County Council, the Police, the Fire Service, and others.

The Chair, Claire O'Malley, gave some updates. Durham University had recently established a link with Wuhan University in China and has this year welcomed 349 Chinese students. This is the largest group of foreign students, followed by India. In total 102 different nationalities are represented in the student body. Regarding recruitment she said "we are in a good place".

Neil Bhandary then spoke about Durham University's role in regional growth. One in twenty jobs in County Durham are at the University. He quoted figures from Biggar Economics that the University contributes £668m and 10,700 jobs to the regional economy, of which £489m and 8,170 are in County Durham. (Note: these figures have been challenged in the past.) There is a local innovation partnership fund of £23.7m. The University is engaged with the development of Aykley Heads (apparently now abbreviated to AK) and he showed a map of the development area stretching from Milburngate to Aykley Heads.

After some updates from other University departments we moved to contributions from partner organisations, most of whom had nothing to add. At my turn I spoke about the outbreak of anti-social behaviour, vandalism and theft of car aerials in and around Allergate, where we have engaged with the Police (Ashleigh White) and DCC (Ken Judd). I asked about student initiation ceremonies and the response was that there was zero tolerance of these and this had been made clear to the sports clubs, but they were not aware of any this year. I then moved on to cover fire safety in student lets, ending on a positive note to talk about our monthly litter picks and the Riverscape Community. The Clerk has a copy of my speaking notes. We got a positive response to the item on asb and again the University (Hannah Shepherd) supported our approach to fire safety.

Further reports followed. Alastair Wood from DCC Community Protection announced that they were being reorganised into five area-based teams. Hannah Shepherd advised that the University was engaging with the County Council regarding the new County Durham Plan and, in reply to a question from me after the meeting, was enthusiastic about contributing to the update of our Neighbourhood Plan. The Durham Student Pledge has been refreshed (link: https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/colleges/student-pledge/)

After the meeting was over we were treated to lunch and had an opportunity for informal discussion.

Roger Cornwell
19 November 2026