

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Tuesday 21st March 2023 at 13:00 via Zoom

Present: Councillors R Ormerod (in the Chair), G Holland and N Brown.

Also present: A Shanley (Clerk), Mr Paul Howard (Durham BID), Mr Kirk Thiis and Mr Antony Waterson (Durham County Council).

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor D Freeman and Mr Graham Sout.

2. To receive any declarations of interest from members

None received.

3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 31st January 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2023 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. To receive any public participation comments on the following agenda items.

None received.

5. Report by retail consultant Graham Sout on work in Durham City

The Clerk advised that Graham had submitted his apologies for today's meeting. The Clerk advised that Graham had recently suffered a bereavement but had circulated a written report of his work over the last few months in the City.

The Committee welcomed this positive report on the City from Graham and formally recorded its condolences and well wishes to Graham.

6. Update on the work of Durham BID

The Chair welcomed Paul Howard (Durham BID Manager) to the meeting and thanked him for joining the Business Committee today.

Paul advised that the footfall figures for the City were looking very promising and this month is 16% higher than comparable figures from 2022.

Paul also advised that the Fire and Ice Festival had been a huge success in riving more footfall into the daytime economy of the City and Paul expressed his hope that this equates to more money being spent in Durham City shops. Paul advised that the BID has sent out a survey to local businesses to see if they'd like to change the format of the Festival slightly and they were awaiting feedback on this. Paul expressed the hope to be able to get one or two more sculptures dotted around the City e.g. in North Road.

Paul advised that Granny Turismo were also in Durham on Saturday gone and he was delighted with the social media coverage for the City.

Paul also advised that the Walking with Dinosaurs event this year would now be taking place in Walkergate and planning was very much underway for this event.

Paul advised that a number of new businesses had also recently opened up on Silver Street and he welcomed this news as this had been a cause for concern for some time now. Paul advised that he felt that this was now one of the nicest part of the City.

Paul expressed the view that money was still being spent in the City in spite of the economic downturn and the cost of living crisis.

The Chair thanked Paul for this positive report.

7. Update on proposals relating to ongoing engagement with local landlords

Members considered the results of the targeted survey for Durham City private sector landlords. The Clerk highlighted that 3 responses had been received to this survey, which was sent out in the post and via email.

The Committee felt that this had been a disappointing response to the survey. Councillor G Holland reminded Members that the Parish Council had tried on several occasions to get a roundtable meeting with landlords and agents in the City and, as far as he recalled, only one (now former) agent had attended these meetings.

Councillor G Holland also highlighted that it was clear from the responses to the survey that the sector simply wanted to be left to operate as they were and were keen to maximise profits as much as possible. Councillor G Holland advised that the sector should be asked to make a contribution towards the wellbeing and management of the City.

The Chair advised that he is meeting with the Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee and would be discussing the Voluntary Contribution request, as agreed at previous meetings of the Council.

The Committee **agreed** that the Parish Council should not pursue the item of ongoing engagement at this Committee further and progress the Voluntary Contribution request to see if this initiated future ongoing collaborative work with the sector.

8. Engagement with the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Wardens on dealing with business waste

The Chair welcomed Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson to the meeting and thanked them for joining the Business Committee today.

The Clerk highlighted that the issue of back Silver Street and Fowlers Yard had recently been raised at a meeting of the Parish Council's Environment Committee and it was agreed by the Vice-Chair of the Business Committee – also a Member of the Environment Committee – that this could be discussed at a future Business Committee meeting.

The Clerk advised that waste associated with local businesses and student residents of the flats had particularly been highlighted as an issue and a potential solution put forward at the Environment Committee was potential screening off of the bins in Fowler's Yard.

Kirk advised that he and the Clerk had discussed the possibility of screening off the bins at Fowler's Yard with Belinda Snow. A quote for this is coming in at £72,000 and this may cause issues for collection team so DCC were reluctant to pursue this as a solution.

The Chair remarked that he was aware that these issues of waste in this area was a serious concern, particularly with vermin being attracted to the area with waste thrown out. The Chair advised that he felt that all bins should be marked up with the business which 'owns' the bin so that the problem bins can be more easily identifiable.

Kirk and Ant both advised that waste from the student flats in the area was also a serious issue. Councillor G Holland remarked that this is due to a failure of previous planning decisions not to take the issue of waste associated with residential uses more seriously.

Councillor N Brown echoed these remarks and advised that she felt that there had been no strategic, forward-thinking for Fowler's Yard.

The Committee did not support the proposal of bin screening due to the associated costs and issues for the refuse team. The Committee asked Kirk and Ant to carry out some targeted enforcement of the area and to do all they could to get a number of the bins labelled.

Kirk and Ant agreed to look into this today and provide a report back to Council on this.

9. Update on events in the City planning

The Clerk highlighted that the Young Traders competition is a national annual event created by the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) for young people aged 16-30 who have an existing business or who wish to trial an idea for a product/business in front of real customers.

The Clerk also highlighted that Durham Markets Company has regularly held a local heat and are doing so again on May 1st but are absolutely delighted to have been asked by the NMTF executive to host the North East regional finals on Sunday 2nd July.

Traditionally, these regional finals are held at Newcastle or Stockton so it is a real honour for Durham to be asked to host the final and the Clerk advised that the Markets Company wants to put on a market which showcases the best of young talent in the North East at the same time as encouraging additional footfall into the City Centre at a traditionally 'quieter' time, creating a win-win situation.

In addition, Durham will receive some good positive national coverage with the NMTF organisation and publications, which hopefully might result in some enquires to trade in markets across the County.

This initiative is a fantastic way to encourage young people to seriously consider the merits of becoming a small independent business owner, hopefully in Durham, in a supportive environment with little to no overheads.

For the final, the Clerk advised that the Markets Company would like to provide a great fun family atmosphere with family entertainment, live music and arts and craft activities throughout the day which will be free of charge to encourage families to come into the city centre on a Sunday.

The Clerk advised that the Markets Company anticipates the cost of providing the above to be in the region of £1850.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has agreed a total fund of £25,000 in 2023/24 towards hosting events in the City centre and this event was specifically highlighted as one the Business Committee would like to support.

Members unanimously **agreed** to proposed support for this event to Full Council as set out in the report provided with a contribution of £1,850.

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

Signed,

R. Ormerod

**Chair of the Parish Council's Business Committee
(16th May 2023)**