

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Committee held on Tuesday 19th September 2023 at 13:00pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors R Ormerod (in the Chair), E Ashby, V Ashfield and G Holland.

Also present: A Shanley (Clerk), Mr Paul Howard (Durham BID), Mr Colin Wilkes and Ms Alice Wilkes (Durham Markets Company) and Ms Julie Anson (Durham County Council).

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors N Brown and D Freeman.

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 18th July 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 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. Discussion with Julie Anson, Community Economic Development Manager, on her work to promote new and existing businesses in Durham

The Chair welcomed Julie Anson to the meeting. Julie thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak with them today.

Julie advised that she and her team have a very heavy focus on improving the City centre and, as such, have a package of support measures to help businesses improve and expand in the City. Julie advised that these include grants towards shop frontages and filling empty units.

Julie advised that the County Council could also provide support for businesses who are looking to improve a unit with extensive works.

Julie also advised that the County Council is also providing free-of-charge training for businesses in areas such as customer services, marketing, etc.

Julie highlighted that the Council is also providing a “meanwhile uses” grants scheme for anyone wanting to fill an empty unit in the City centre.

Julie thanked the Parish Council for their support in producing an excellent leaflet to help advertise these schemes.

6. Report by retail consultant Graham Soult on work in Durham City

The Clerk advised that Graham had submitted his apologies for today's meeting 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.

The Clerk also highlighted that he and the Chair would be discussing Graham's contract with Graham, with particular regards to the request that advice on going green to businesses be considered as an ancillary part of Graham's services to the Council.

The Committee particularly expressed concerns at the closure of a number of banks in the City.

7. Update on the work of Durham BID

The Chair welcomed Durham BID Manager Paul Howard to the meeting and thanked him attending. Paul thanked the Committee for allowing him to update on the work of the BID.

Paul advised that the BID is working alongside a number of the banks to get an understanding of their future in the City.

Paul advised that the BID has recently changed the way it works slightly and has now established a number of sub-Committees linked to the BID board. Paul thanked the Clerk for joining the Marketing and Events sub-group of the BID and also highlighted that the BID is also establishing a nighttime economy sub-group too which will look at Purple Flag and Best Bar None schemes.

Paul advised that the Independents campaign has been really successful and that the BID will once again be launching such a campaign over the Christmas period.

Paul also advised that the BID would be launching a gift card scheme for the City in 2024, a commitment made in the BID plan when the ballot was renewed. Paul advised that this would also include a Great Night Out gift card to support the night time economy of the City.

Paul advised that he expected Rudy's Pizza to be moving into the City centre on Saddler Street (the premises originally earmarked as 'The Muddler').

Paul also advised that the BID board would be looking to formalise its arrangements for considering new requests for financial support towards events which take place in the City.

Paul expressed concerns at the reduction in footfall in the City. Paul advised that there are currently 650,000 fewer visits to the City than during the same period in 2019. Paul advised that this is also noticeable from feedback from businesses who are telling the BID that they are finding trading in the City difficult at present.

Paul also advised that Durham City's Restaurant Week would be launching at the end of September and that there were now over 30 premises participating in the campaign. Paul advised that there had been a big social media campaign to boost this initiative.

Councillor E Ashby highlighted the excellent way in which Restaurant Week is being promoted online via social media but expressed concerns about the advertising leading to an increased risk of exacerbating the obesity crisis. In connection with this, Councillor E Ashby expressed her concerns if similar advertising is being proposed to promote the night time economy as she felt that the Parish Council could not be involved in any way in promoting increased alcohol sales.

The Clerk asked if support for the Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) hub would be part of the sub-group's Agenda. Paul advised that this would be and that he was keen to support this hub.

8. Proposal to launch a campaign promoting independent businesses in the city centre

The Chair reminded Members that one of the Parish Council's key aims is to support local independent businesses in Durham City.

As part of this priority, the Chair proposed the production of a leaflet, to be distributed around the City of Durham parish area (as well as the unparished part of Gilesgate) to try and encourage more usage of the great variety of local independents Durham City has to offer.

The focus of this leaflet is around supporting retail businesses as opposed to other uses such as food and drink/ hospitality businesses and to try and alter consumer habits away from online shopping/ retail and more towards using existing premises within the City.

The Clerk highlighted that the messaging of this campaign comes directly from the Totally Locally campaign which has also provided stats specific to Durham. The intention of the messaging is to be as direct as possible in a positive way but the general message of 'use them or lose them' is clear from the leaflet. Members expressed concerns at the design of page 1 of the leaflet and asked that the Clerk looks to soften some of the imagery of this page of the leaflet. The Clerk **agreed** to do so, with Members agreeing that the wording of this side of the leaflet was largely exactly what the leaflet should say.

Page 2 of the leaflet seeks to inform the public of a number of funding and training opportunities which are presently available through the County Council's economic development and regeneration teams, in a bid to improve existing services and premises as well as attract more uses for the City. The Clerk highlighted that its content has been provided by Durham County Council and Members approved this at the meeting. Members agreed with the content of this page.

The total cost for the production of 10,000 of these leaflets is £485 and the delivery costs are £38/1,000 leaflets. The cost for the delivery has been reduced by £60/1000 leaflets as the Clerk has timed its production and distribution at the same time as the delivery of the "*What to do if you have a local issue in Durham...*" leaflet.

The total cost for this project being £865. Members unanimously agreed to recommend the production and distribution of this leaflet to Full Council.

9. Proposal for an electric cargo delivery bike project in Durham City

Councillor E Ashby advised that she would like to see the Parish Council support a local delivery service, as outlined in the report provided. However, Councillor E Ashby advised that she was very much aware of the significant work which would be involved in establishing such a project. Councillor E Ashby advised that the University could be one route by which this initiative could be supported. Councillor E Ashby advised that she would like to see a Working Group established to look into this in more detail.

Colin Wilkes advised that the Markets Company had tried this during lockdown and had received Parish Council funding to be able to progress this. Colin advised that the company itself required a critical mass of deliveries which the Markets Company was not able to satisfy based on current orders for deliveries.

Colin advised that the company contacted businesses around the City in order to expand the offer, however the response from businesses was relatively negative. Colin advised that the same firm went on to do all of the pharmacy deliveries in Newcastle but again this had now ended post-Covid.

Colin expressed concerns that the typography of Durham, with many hills, would also be seen as an obstacle to any delivery company if this were to be done on bikes.

Colin advised that the main difficulty will be in gaining the mass of orders from the community to make this project viable.

Alice also highlighted that certain stores such as Tesco already offer a free-of-charge delivery service, depending on the size of order.

The Chair advised that he could only see this project working if the University is able to adopt this as a project.

The Committee asked Councillor E Ashby to progress this via the University's CETF Economic sub-group. The Chair thanked Councillor E Ashby for progressing this.

10. Proposal from Durham Pointers to produce a "What next in the City" leaflet for tourists

The Clerk advised that the Durham Pointers were looking for £1,000 of funding towards the production of a "What next in the City" leaflet. The purpose of this leaflet would be to highlight the other activities and attractions in the City, beyond the Cathedral. The aims of this leaflet would be to ensure that visitors stay in the City longer and spend more in the local economy.

The Clerk advised that he had discussed this with Paul at Durham BID and Paul had kindly agreed to provide £500 towards this project with the proposal being that the Parish Council provides the remaining £500. The Clerk advised that the leaflet is intended to be produced for April 2024. Members **agreed** in principle to support this project and await a design of this leaflet for consideration.

11. Proposal to continue with the landlord's voluntary contribution appeal

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council launched a voluntary contribution appeal earlier this year to local landlords and letting agents in Durham City towards keeping the City clean and green.

The Clerk confirmed that to date the Parish Council has received a total of £1,508 from local landlord and agents. This figure was received from 8 individual payments – including one from Loc8me on behalf of several landlords – and a further 3 pledges of financial support have been made. In addition, the Clerk advised that Hannah Shepherd had been successful in securing an additional £2,000 towards the project from Durham University.

A reminder email to all agents was sent out in early June and the Parish Council's request generated a significant media, social media and public reaction.

The Chair reminded Members that both Durham University and the DCC Waste Management team had agreed that they felt there is a gap in the Green Move Out operation insofar as the two Sundays during move out are not currently covered from a waste collection point of view and therefore waste left on a Saturday will remain in place until Monday at the earliest.

Durham County Council had confirmed that they would be able to cover both Sundays at a cost of £2,000 in total for both days and additional Neighbourhood Wardens for the operation would be funded through the £1,508 secured from the appeal. The Clerk advised that this arrangement had taken place and he and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee had received positive feedback from partners relating to the additional support for the Move Out initiative.

The Clerk highlighted that a proposal by the Chair of the Parish Council at the June Full Council meeting to scrap the voluntary contribution appeal in future years was deferred, subject to both the Environment Committee and Business Committee considering whether to continue this scheme into the future.

The Committee **agreed** (3 votes in favour and 1 vote against) that they would wish to continue this scheme in future years and **agreed** to recommend this to Full Council.

12. Events update

The Clerk reminded Members that, in agreeing its budget for financial year 2023/24, Members approved an allocation of £25,000 towards the hosting of events in the City.

Hosting events in the City is identified as one of the key aspects of the Parish Council's work – through the Business Committee – to increase footfall into the City centre.

To date, the Clerk reported that the Parish Council has delivered a series of Coronation events, supported Durham Pride, the National Youth Market competition, the Children's Book Festival 2023 and planning for the Remembrance Day parade is well under way.

The Clerk advised that the Autumn half-term holidays will run between Friday 27th October to Monday 6th November 2023. This has generally been a relatively quiet

period for events in the City. In light of this, the Clerk advised that he has been working with partners the Durham Markets Company to host the following series of events over the week:

Youth Market - October 30th

An outdoor market to promote and celebrate local young entrepreneurs aged 16-30 and provide a supportive space to test ideas as well as the opportunity to sell in front of a buying public with minimal overheads (the gazebos will be provided free of charge). Working in conjunction with the Northern Lass Lounge who will be promoting their Lounge Generation programme to provide support for girls aged 16-17 who would like to run their own business. I will also be advertising this opportunity to Durham University and local colleges.

Free family entertainment such as face painting, arts and crafts and a family treasure trail will be provided during both events to encourage families to visit the city centre for a fun and affordable day out.

Uniformed Services Fun Day - November 1st

An opportunity for blue light services to engage with members of the public in a fun, free family setting.

Alice and Colin asked for a total of £1,300 towards support for entertainment, advertising and other miscellaneous expenses for these events.

The Clerk also highlighted that, in agreeing its events budget for 2023/24, the Parish Council's Business Committee specifically allocated £2,500 towards the Autumn half-term holidays for events so there is more than sufficient funding available for this.

Members unanimously **agreed** to propose acceptance of this proposal to Full Council.

13. Date of next meetings

21st November 2023 at 1pm

16th January 2024 at 1pm

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
(21st November 2023)**