

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 12th September 2023 at 13:00pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors C Lattin (Chair), V Ashfield, L Brown, R Friederichsen and S Walker.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Jasmine Hixson and Nicola Duckworth (North End Allotment Association).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor D Freeman.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11th JULY 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate recording of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Committee warmly welcomed the latest excellent report from the Neighbourhood Wardens funded by the Parish Council. The Committee particularly welcomed the work the Wardens had done during the Move Out period in Durham and agreed to thank them for their support with this operation. In addition, the Committee noted with concern that the Neighbourhood Wardens were first on the scene at a major incident in the City centre and **agreed** to seek clarification on safety arrangements for the Wardens.

6. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

6a. To decide:

- I) To approve the content of the Parish Council's Allotment Policy and tenancy agreements in respect of the North End Allotment site on Larches Road**

The Clerk reminded Members that the City of Durham Parish Council agreed to take over the ownership of the North End Allotment site at Larches Road in early 2019 from Durham County Council.

In late August, the Clerk advised that the Parish Council's solicitor informed the Council that Land Registry has now formally completed the transfer of the site to the City of Durham Parish Council and the Council is now the owners of this site.

Although this has taken a significant amount of time to finalise, the Clerk reported that there has been a significant amount of work and engagement carried out prior to this transfer with the North End Allotment Association to ensure that the Council has a policy and tenancy agreement all parties are content with.

The Clerk reminded Committee Members that these need to be formally agreed by the Parish Council and all new tenancy agreements must be signed.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had originally agreed to mirror DCC's policy on allotments which was adopted by Cabinet earlier this year. However, this policy includes allowing livestock and beekeeping on their sites as well as other issues - something the Allotment Association is unhappy with for this particular site given its location within a Local Nature Reserve.

The Clerk advised that the site is extremely well-maintained and remains a hugely positive feature in the community of North End.

Councillors R Friederichsen and S Walker asked if consideration may be given to allow for beekeeping on the site. Jasmine and Nicola advised that the Association had discussed this at some length and, largely due to the insurance implications and feedback from existing tenants, had decided against allowing beekeeping on the site. That being so, Nicola highlighted that tenants do grow pollinator-friendly plants, the Association has a sedum-roofed shelter thanks to the Parish Council and generally the Association does encourage support for pollinators. Councillor R Friederichsen and S Walker were happy to remove this from the policy following this feedback.

In addition, Councillor R Friederichsen asked if the Association might consider banning the use of chemical pesticides on the site. Jasmine and Nicola advised that they were unable to speak on behalf of the Association on this issue but advised that they would take this back to the Executive ahead of the Full Council meeting in September.

The Committee **agreed** the content of the policy and tenancy agreement as drafted and **agreed** to recommend these to Full Council for approval, subject to the feedback from the Allotment Association Executive on the issue of pesticides.

The Chair thanked Jasmine and Nicola for their time and for attending this meeting. At this point, Jasmine and Nicola left the meeting.

II) To consider a proposal to improve the wall at East Atherton Street as part of a Women's History project

The Clerk reported that the Durham Women's Banner Group is organising a special 40th Anniversary of the Miners' Strike 'Women Against Pit Closures' event in March 2024.

The Clerk advised that this event will commence with a special service in Durham Cathedral and will then be followed by a procession with banners down to the Town Hall.

The Clerk highlighted that the promotion of women's history in Durham City is a priority for the Parish Council and we have worked positively with the Women's Banner Group on several other initiatives such as: the restoration of the Ruth First mural, the blue plaques for the first 3 female graduates of Durham University as well as the plaque for the renowned photographer Daisy Edis.

Running alongside this project, the Clerk reminded Members that the Committee has been making efforts to improve the wall at East Atherton Street. The wall is of very poor quality and has a detrimental impact upon the street scene in this part of the City. Previous efforts to plant hanging plants above the wall in the rear private garden above have not been progressed due to health and safety issues.

The Clerk advised that he has investigated whether a planning application would be required to paint the wall and has had it confirmed that, so long as it is clearly not an advert, this would be Permitted Development under Schedule 2, Part 2, Class C which relates to the painting of a building and therefore does not require planning permission.

From a conservation point of view, as part of the Conservation Area Management Plan survey work in this area, the Clerk reported that the Conservation Officer has identified this section of poorly render brick wall as being a visually stark/harsh boundary and out of keeping as a connection between the 2 Victorian former mine workers terraces.

The Clerk advised that Conservation has also expressed the view that they would prefer for the mural to have a mining-related theme to its design so that it directly relates to the heritage of this part of the city. Conservation has also confirmed that any works to this wall may give the street an upgraded heritage value in the Management Plan.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has previously funded the work of Lewis Hobson, a local artist from Durham Spray Paints, at St. Oswald's play. Lewis is keen to do more projects to promote women's history in the City and the Women's Banner Group are keen to progress this project further.

Lewis has indicated that the total cost for design, rendering and paint works will be approximately £1,000 in total.

The Committee **agreed** to support this project and felt that the Parish Council should carry out a consultation with the residents of East Atherton Street prior to commencing this work. If accepted, the Clerk advised that he hoped that the mural might be unveiled as part of the event in March 2024.

III) To consider steps to develop the City's '*Shhh...11pm to 7am*' campaign

The Clerk reminded Members of the Parish Council's previous support for the resident-led City's '*Shhh...11pm to 7am*'. The Clerk and Chair of the Committee

particularly thanked Councillor E Ashby for her many years of championing this campaign in the City.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Committee had agreed a total fund of £2,000 towards promoting this campaign this year and advised that the following works were proposed to further enhance the campaign:

- Additional lamppost signs with the "*Shhh...11pm to 7am*" signs be placed around the City's residential areas by the neighbourhood wardens.
- Shhh campaign beer mats be delivered to individual licenced premises once more.
- The (already agreed) "*What to do if you have a local issue in Durham*" leaflet be distributed as soon as possible.
- The Chair's message of welcome video be shared on social media which also asks students residents to be mindful of noise for nearby residents.
- The Shhh A-boards be on each platform of the railway station once more.

Members unanimously **agreed** to these actions and thanked the Clerk for his ongoing efforts with this campaign.

6b. To complete:

I) Update on the launch of the Green Award for local Businesses

The Clerk asked for Members' support to distribute the Green Award for local Businesses. Councillors S Walker, C Lattin, R Friederichsen and V Ashfield agreed to help with the delivery to all businesses in the City and the Clerk confirmed that he would be producing the leaflets to advertise this Award as well as promoting this online.

II) Progressing the proposal to improve the community garden area at the top of Lawson Terrace.

The Committee warmly welcomed the work of DCC in supporting the Council to clear this land. It was **agreed** that a planting schedule should be worked up and the Committee looks to carry out planting of an agreed order of fruit trees in this land with local Councillors and residents. The Clerk confirmed that he would be placing the order for the fruit trees.

III) Update on the delivery of the "*What to do if you have a local issue in Durham*" leaflet.

The Clerk confirmed that this leaflet would be delivered in October, hopefully alongside the Business Committee's Independent business campaign leaflet in order to save on delivery costs.

IV) Update on the proposed improvement works to Durham Market Place.

The Clerk advised that he and Councillors S Walker and V Ashfield had had a very positive meeting with the officers leading on the works to the Market Place and they had agreed that a draft plan for the reworks would be coming to Committee

at its meeting on 10th October 2023. The Committee thanked all those involved in this project and expressed its keenness to push this project forward.

7. AOB

None received.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

10th October 2023
14th November 2023
9th January 2024

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all those present for attending and for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,



**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(10th October 2023)**