

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 14th November at 13:00pm via Zoom

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

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Councillor E Ashby

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10th OCTOBER 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Councillor E Ashby advised that she was attending the meeting to contribute towards discussions on items 7 and 8 on the Agenda.

5. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

Members warmly welcomed the latest positive report from both Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson on their work in the parish area. Members particularly welcomed the additional work carried out by Kirk and Antony during recent storms; particularly the clearing of drains at lower Claypath. Members advised that they were aware that this work was very much appreciated by local residents in this area.

6. TO REVIEW THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S STRATEGIC AIMS FOR 2024/25

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has agreed to formulate its strategy for 2024/25 ahead of the budget setting process in January 2024. As part of this, all Parish Council Committees have been asked to agree their priorities for the forthcoming financial year so that this can feed into the Parish Council's budget agreement.

Members unanimously **agreed** the following priorities for 2024/25 for the Environment Committee:

Council priorities 2024/25	Environment priorities 2024/25	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 Work with young people and respond to their concerns	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 creation 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	Theme 1: A City with A Sustainable Future Theme 5: A City With A Modern And Sustainable Transport Infrastructure

	community resilience. Encourage sustainable Travel Increased awareness and action on climate change. Tackle the ecological emergency	
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7. TO CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S BUDGET FOR 2024/25

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council is required to agree its budget and precept request for the forthcoming financial year in January 2024.

In order to assist the Council in agreeing both the budget and precept for 2024/25, the Clerk advised that each Committee of the Council is being asked to propose a budget against their individual identified priorities for next year.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has recently renewed its Service Level Agreement for an enhanced neighbourhood warden service in the parish with Durham County Council for a further 3 years.

Councillor E Ashby advised that she felt that the budgets associated with Priority 1 of the budget, i.e. the SLA with the Police and the Safety Hub should be linked with the work of the Licensing Committee rather than the Environment Committee.

Councillor E Ashby also highlighted that she hoped that the funding for the Safety Hub could be increased back to £10,000 as opposed to £8,000.

Councillor E Ashby also highlighted that she recently visited Boots and there was no signage or indication that the Terracycle project is a joint initiative which is heavily supported by the Parish Council. Members expressed frustration that the many stickers provided to Boots during this project had not been installed on the boxes as requested on a number of occasions.

Councillor R Friederichsen advised that he would like to see a project to improve air quality in the City included in the budget.

Members **agreed** the following draft budget for 2024/25. The Clerk reminded Members that the Finance Committee would be meeting in early January to discuss this, with a proposed budget going to the Full Council meeting in January:

Environment Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Additional policing and safety for the parish area	
Enhanced SLA with Durham Police for late night policing	£30,000.00
Safety of Women at Night Hub	£8,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Noise abatement	
Building on the <i>Shhh...11pm to 7am</i> campaign	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Clean Air, Clean and Green City	
Durham in Bloom	£10,000.00
A project to promote clean air across the City	£2,500.00
PRIORITY 4: Engaging the youth in the work of the Parish Council	
Project working with young people (OASES / Elvet and Bailey)	£2,500.00
PRIORITY 5: Improving the appearance of our City	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA	£10,000.00
Christmas frontages awards	£1,500.00
PRIORITY 6: Recycling	
Terracycle scheme	£3,000.00
Green business award	£1,000.00
PRIORITY 7: Enhancing the River Wear	
Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 8: Improving access to public toilets	
Production of a map and extra signage on available public toilets	£1,500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£77,000.00

8. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

8a. To decide:

I) To consider the proposed draft plans for the works to Durham Market Place

The Clerk advised that the officers leading on this project at DCC had been unable to draft the plans for these works in time for this meeting and it was therefore **agreed** to defer this item until the October Environment Committee meeting.

II) To agree the winner of the Parish Council's Green Business Award 2023

Members considered all of the applications for this year's inaugural Green Business Award for the City. Members expressed their delight at the great number of initiatives being carried out by businesses day-to-day, in order to tackle the Climate Change crisis.

Although Members highlighted some very excellent business practices from a number of the businesses in the City, Members unanimously agreed that the winner of the Award this year should be Tortilla on Silver Street.

Members were particularly impressed that 100% of their energy is provided by renewables, that 88% of their disposable product packaging is made from recyclable, compostable or biodegradable materials and that Tortilla is also part of the food saving scheme "Too Good To Go"; a nationwide app that allows people

to purchase leftovers more cheaply, saving both money and businesses wastage and much of their food is sourced locally to cut down on travel miles.

Members **agreed** to award this to the Tortilla staff at the Parish Council's annual Christmas civic event in December.

III) To agree to launch this year's Best Christmas Business Frontage Awards

Members agreed to launch this year's Best Christmas Business Frontage Awards in early December. Members expressed how popular this scheme had been since it started and expressed their hope that this would add some extra sparkle at Christmas this year.

Councillors Lattin and Ashfield **agreed** to judge the windows alongside the Clerk this year and to support with the advertising of this competition.

IV) To discuss the recent meeting regarding the University's Green Move Out operation in Durham City and planning for next Move Out

The Chair advised that she recently attended the meeting with the University's Green Move Out team and advised that she was delighted to hear that the tonnage of recycled collections continues to increase each year and that the team hoped to get this back to pre-pandemic levels.

The Chair advised that the vast majority of the collections took place within colleges which is excellent news but highlighted that collections from private properties was much lower (6,100Kg collected from colleges versus 3,000Kg from streets)

The Chair highlighted that the majority of street collections took place in the Whinney Hill area and that the lowest came from Neville's Cross. The Chair advised that the team is hoping to do some proactive work on this for next year's activities.

The Committee agreed to continue with the landlord contribution scheme and to work constructively with the Move Out team on the next operation.

V) To consider launching a slow cooker project alongside local student

Councillor V Ashfield highlighted her desire to launch a slow cooker project alongside local students but advised that she is engaging with County Councillor Chris Fletcher to fully scope out the requirements of running such a scheme.

VI) To agree a recycling leaflet to go around areas with high student population.

Members **agreed** to produce a new recycling/ green herbs leaflet to be distributed around areas with high student population and **agreed** to delegate responsibility for this to Councillor V Ashfield and the Clerk.

VII) To consider the proposal to contract additional administrative support for the Committee

Members **agreed** to progress the proposal of contracting the services of additional administrative support through engagement with the Council's Personnel Committee and Full Council.

The Clerk advised that an agreed job description has been circulated that he was seeking advice from DCC's HR team on this prior to advertising this.

8b. To complete:

I) To receive an update on the creation of an Emergency Plan for the parish area.

The Chair advised that she is presently visiting all of the local Residents Groups around the parish, in order to progress the proposal of creating an Emergency Plan for the parish area. The Chair also advised that she is soon to attend a meeting with the civil contingencies unit to go through what a hub needs in order to be a hub during an emergency and that she would report back on this.

The Committee thanked the Chair for her ongoing work with this initiative.

II) Update on the work of the Wear Rivers Trust

The Chair advised that she had recently attended a meeting of the Wear Rivers Trust and was highly impressed with the work that they are carrying out to tackle invasive non-native species and plastics in the River Wear.

The Chair echoed the frustration expressed at this meeting regarding DCC's refusal to allow WRT volunteers to work on their land because of health and safety concerns. The Chair advised that this meant that areas with high levels of INNS could not be treated as it should be and that she was aware that WRT are continuing to lobby on this.

III) To agree a date for community tree planting at Laburnum Avenue/ Lawson Terrace

The Clerk advised that he was awaiting confirmation of the trees delivery from the Council's usual local supplier. Members **agreed** to carry out the planting of trees in the new year.

IV) To consider the latest update on the project to make Boyd Street an exemplar for other streets around Durham

The Clerk highlighted that a recent site visit had taken place with officers from DCC, local landlords and Elvet Residents Association regarding the proposal to transform Boyd Street into an exemplar street for other streets with a high student population and what they should look like.

Members highlighted the logistical difficulties with greening this area given the very limited public space available. Members felt that the green roofing for bins was expensive and impractical and that the hanging baskets project could not be delivered. It was therefore **agreed** not to pursue this project.

9. AOB

The Clerk reminded Members that there is a draft proposal that the Council produces a mural at the wall of East Atherton Street, however there were a number of logistical challenges with this wall, namely the issue of rendering, gaining residents' support for the initiative, etc.

Members **agreed** to defer this project given the difficulties with this project but confirmed that they would happily consider another wall elsewhere in the parish area, should there still be a desire to have a mural for the 40th Anniversary of the National Women Against Pit Closures

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

9th January 2024
13th February 2024
12th March 2023

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
(9th January 2024)**