

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 13th February 2024 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.

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 9th JANUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2024 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

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 to support the Police in tackling the use of drugs in the City.

Members were particularly disappointed to note that the new bus station is being seen as a hotspot for anti-social behaviour and that drugs were found on a number of people within the bus station. The Clerk advised that he would pass on these reports to the relevant Cabinet Member at DCC.

6. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

6a. To decide:

- i) To consider the proposed draft plans for the works to Durham Market Place.**

Members considered the revised plans for the Market Place as presented by Durham County Council.

The Clerk highlighted that the Durham Markets Company had some concerns over a number of the bollards not being retractable, however Members felt that

the two retractable bollards at the bottom of the Market Place next to St. Nic's Church served this purpose and felt, on balance, that not allowing vehicles to enter this important historic Market Place in the City was a higher priority. The Clerk advised that he would write to the lead officer and ask for confirmation of the next steps to progress this proposal.

ii) To consider supporting efforts to improve the drainage of the football field and adjacent adult fitness area at Merryoaks.

Councillor Susan Walker highlighted a problem with the drainage to the football field and adjoining adult fitness area at Merryoaks.

Councillor Walker advised that the field and adult fitness areas are well-used by the local Merryoaks and Neville's Cross communities though it is clear that there is a significant flooding issue occurring within these areas which impacts on their use and enjoyment.

Councillor Walker highlighted that the land in question is owned by Durham County Council and that, although there is a substantial amount of Section 106 funding (£141,015.20) available within the Neville's Cross Ward from the development of the Police HQ at Aykley Heads (**application ref:** 8/CMA/4/73), this is designated to Sports England who are not minded to use these funds for drainage solutions on existing provision but rather designated towards enhanced provision of sports facilities within the Ward.

Councillor Liz Brown advised that the latest proposal for the use of this funding towards enhanced provision involves a scheme with Durham School in our parish.

Members **agreed** that this funding could be essential in ensuring that this free and open (albeit existing) provision of open green space for sports and recreation activities is safeguarded into the future and asked for this to go on to the Full Council Agenda in February.

Councillor Susan Walker highlighted that she would be seeking moral support at least to try and progress a resolution to this issue.

iii) To consider the establishing of a schools Youth Environment Committee

Councillor Victoria Ashfield highlighted that the Environment Committee had almost established a Youth Environment Committee prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and asked Members if there is any appetite in trying to recommence this initiative with local schools.

Although Members expressed no desire to establish a formal Youth Environment Committee, Members unanimously agreed with Councillor Ashfield's suggestion that the Council's work on engagement and involvement of young people in the work of the Parish Council could be shared with the OASES project being proposed by Councillor Friederichsen.

iv) To progress a Clean Air project with OASES

Councillor Friederichsen advised that he has worked proactively with OASES and in particular Joanne Appleby (CEO of OASES) in order to develop a project to enable Durham city schools to engage with Clean Air Day on June 20th 2024.

Councillor Friederichsen advised that the project will make schools aware of the importance of clean air. It will elaborate upon the benefits to both human health and climate and will also investigate the barriers to action.

Councillor Friederichsen advised that the project would involve the children designing a survey to establish current knowledge and awareness of the issue and what/ why current travel choices are made within their whole school community. This project will establish the need for a larger project that facilitates more direct action.

Councillor Friederichsen advised that this would be a feasible and exciting project for the Committee to deliver on its 2024 priority of clean air and presented the draft costings provided by OASES to work with 3 Durham City Primary schools to deliver a project that will achieve the outcomes of:

- Developing awareness and understanding of air pollution in Durham City and the importance of clean air
- Identifying barriers to improving air quality in Durham City
- Garnering momentum towards action.

Councillor Friederichsen advised that this project fits perfectly with the wider Climate Friendly Schools work OASES already do with schools in our Parish, and as part of work with Elvet Clean Air, the head of St Oswald's school last year expressed her strong interest in action for clean air.

Councillor Friederichsen advised that he believes that the required funding should be considered seed funding to learn and establish the priority focus and appetite for a bigger action-oriented project.

Members noted that a budget for this had been agreed at January's Full Council meeting and unanimously **agreed** to give this project every support as part of the Committee's 2024/25 priorities on Clean Air in Durham City.

6b. To complete:

i) Progressing the proposal to create a Community Emergency Plan

The Chair presented the Committee with a final draft of the Community Emergency Plan leaflet produced by the team and thanked the Clerk for designing this so professionally for this initiative.

The Chair reported that she had been successful in securing £1,000 grant funding from the Civil Contingencies Unit at DCC for this leaflet and thanked all those involved in this work.

The Chair advised that these would be distributed in the coming days and that she would keep the Committee updated on how this initiative progresses and how many volunteers sign up to support this initiative.

ii) To consider the latest updates on planning for the unveiling of the Blue Plaque for Bow Cottage event.

The Clerk confirmed that the unveiling event for the blue plaque at Bow Cottage would be taking place on 16th February 2024 and that a formal invitation had been sent out to all Members and select partner organisations.

The Clerk also reported that the Council had been successful in securing a number of VIP guests to support with the unveiling of the blue plaque.

Members thanked the Clerk for his excellent work on this project and advised that they looked forward to attending this event and seeing the new plaque in situ.

iii) To consider the latest updates on community tree planting at Laburnum Avenue/ Lawson Terrace.

Members **agreed** that the tree planting at Laburnum Avenue and Lawson Terrace should take place on Saturday 17th February at 11am. The Clerk confirmed that he had ordered the trees as requested and it was noted that a number of these trees would also be earmarked for other areas too as previously advertised, namely Hallgarth and Sheraton Park.

iv) To consider the impact of the recycling/ green herbs leaflet.

Members felt that the recycling leaflets had been very well-received and agreed to distribute these further to the Neville's Cross part of the parish area as well as some further leaflets to Gilesgate bank and the Elvet area. The Chair thanked everyone for their hard work and support on this.

v) Update on the project to provide slow cookers to students.

Councillor Victoria Ashfield advised that she had not been able to progress a grant application for slow cookers as she would have liked to have done so, however agreed to work with the Clerk on a potential project which may be directly funded by the Parish Council and which could involve one or two of the PBSAs in the parish area.

7. AOB (please note for information only and not for formal decisions).

The Clerk reminded Members that David Miller's excellent reports into the condition of the Public Rights of Way network in the City would be on the Full Council Agenda for February. Members agreed that this report should be given every possible support.

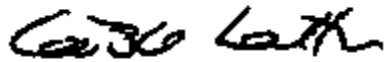
8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

12th March 2024

9th April 2024
14th May 2024

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. J. Lath'.

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(12th March 2024)**