

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 14th May 2024 at 13:00pm via Zoom

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

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Ms Dasha Murphy (Durham University).

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

None received.

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 HELD ON 9th APRIL 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th April 2024 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 DURHAM UNIVERSITY'S NEW COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER DASHA MURPHY

The Chair warmly welcomed Durham University's new Community Liaison Manager Dasha Murphy and congratulated her on her successful appointment.

Dasha advised that she had previously worked as a Team Leader at Huntsman prior to this role and also advised that she is originally from Russia and moved to North East England in 2010.

Dasha advised that she has been working closely with Hannah Shepherd and is already aware that this is a veery big role with lots of stakeholder engagement needed. Dasha advised that she was delighted to meet with the Parish Council and understand what the main issues are in the City.

The Chair highlighted that many residents and the Parish Council recognise the tremendous role of the University and the benefits of students to the parish.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that the biggest issue from parishioners relate to both transient noise and bins. Councillor V Ashfield advised that she felt that these issues were being tackled successfully by the Parish Council.

Dasha advised that the student wardens are also carrying out work to help educate students on the issue of bins and she would be delighted to work with the Parish Council more closely on this.

Councillor R Friederichsen advised that he was concerned about air pollution in the city centre and asked Dasha to do all she could to promote students using active and sustainable travel modes and to not bring a car to Durham.

Dasha advised that she was aware that this was a massive issue in Durham and that she is meeting with the Elvet Clean Air Group soon to see what further action can be taken on this matter.

Councillor V Ashfield also raised the issue of student housing and the concern that she has that students were pressurised some years ago to sign up with certain landlords when in fact there is an excess of bedspaces in Durham City. Councillor V Ashfield expressed the hope that more properties could be converted back to family homes, particularly if the student housing market is tending towards PBSAs now.

Councillor S Walker expressed her thanks to Durham University students who are regularly volunteering in the Merryoaks Community Hall and also highlighted one example of a young student who had already carried out over 100 hours of volunteering for the Hall.

Dasha expressed her thanks to Members for these issues and advised that she would be working very closely with Parish Councillors in future on these topics and she looked forward to doing so.

6. TO CONSIDER THE LATEST NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN REPORT

The Committee warmly welcomed the excellent report from Neighbourhood Wardens Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson and thanked them both for their excellent work in the City.

The Committee particularly noted the ongoing issues of graffiti around the parish area and the desire of Kirk and Ant to receive some training to eradicate this. The Committee agreed to request this from DCC management on Kirk and Ant's behalf or else to commit to fund this if required.

7. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

7a. To decide

I) To consider the proposal for a new blue plaque for 33 Claypath

Members considered the proposal for a new blue plaque for 33 Claypath as the former Women's Hostel linked to St. Mary's College and which helped to provide residential accommodation for women to access higher education.

The Chair highlighted that Durham University's St. Mary's College is celebrating its 125th Anniversary this coming Academic Year 2024/25 and this would be an important aspect of events taking place over this Academic Year to celebrate this milestone in the College's history.

Members unanimously agreed to fund this new blue plaque and to recommend this for approval at Full Council. Members also agreed, in light of the number of plaques delivered by the Parish Council to date, that this would be the final plaque for this financial year.

II) To progress the landlord voluntary contribution scheme for 2024-25

Members unanimously **agreed** to launch the voluntary contribution scheme again this year and Councillors Ashfield and Lattin agreed to support the Clerk in this work.

III) To consider a proposal to improve the Milburngate coach drop-off point and improving the riverside walk.

The Clerk advised Members that the Council held a special meeting of the Business Committee alongside local resident Colin Jubb on 2nd May to look at the issue of Framwellgate waterside coach drop-off and this followed a site visit which the Clerk advised he had undertaken with Councillor Ashby earlier that week.

At that meeting, the Clerk advised that it was agreed that a fully-costed landscape plan should be sought, in order to assist the Parish Council in a) designing an appropriate scheme and b) access wider funding such as BNG funding within the parish. The Clerk advised that Stuart Priestley discussed this with him and advised that, whilst the answer was not an all out 'no' in terms of accessing this funding, DCC would need to see a fully worked-up plan first. The Clerk advised that he had contacted a number of companies to provide a cost for this work.

At the meeting, the Clerk advised that it was also identified that whilst the Business Committee may not have a budget for this, this could potentially be drawn from the Environment Committee's budget to improve the River Wear.

The Environment Committee considered this proposal and agreed to support the proposed improvements to this part of the City in principle, however Councillor D Freeman advised that an application for the 2nd phase of Milburngate may be coming forward soon and a number of Members were also concerned that phase 1 of the site is still unfinished and therefore it was not clear if this current coach drop-off site might be needed as either a compound or other space to facilitate the completion of phase 1 or start of phase 2.

In light of this uncertainty, the Committee agreed that it wouldn't be appropriate to dedicate funds to the wider initiative for landscape design at this present time. However, as an immediate albeit temporary uplift and improvement of the area, it was agreed that the Environment Committee funds the installation of 3 x 3-tier flower planters.

The Clerk advised that he would communicate this to the Business Committee and seek costs for the new planters.

IV) Update on Green Move Out for this academic year in the City

The Chair advised that she had attended recent meetings of the Green Move Out working group from Durham University and was very impressed with the planning and operation so far. The Chair advised that this is certainly an initiative the Parish Council should support and confirmed that she and Councillor Ashfield would be working with Durham University on this.

7b. To complete:

I) Progressing the Community Emergency Plan initiative for the City of Durham parish area

The Chair provided a report to Members as a follow-up from the meeting of 10th April. The Chair advised that the turnout of members of the public had been poor but that she would be meeting with residents to progress these plans. The Chair particularly highlighted the efforts of Martin Hiles in Crossgate and advised that she would be discussing this with him in due course.

II) Funding for the planters in the Viaduct Area of the City

Councillors Ashfield and Walker confirmed that they would be looking to get new plants installed into the planters alongside volunteer student residents as soon as possible.

III) To consider the latest updates on the blue plaque for Prof. Dame Rosemary Cramp

The Clerk advised that planning for the blue plaque unveiling is going very well indeed although the Clerk did advise that the Council's Design and Conservation team had expressed some concerns over the wording of the plaque and felt that the plaque should be for Professor Dame Cramp herself as opposed to 12 Church Street as this seems to be more in line with English Heritage guidance. The Clerk advised that he would be liaising with the planning department on this and would try and get this sorted out.

The Clerk also took the opportunity to thank Durham University for all of their tremendous support with this event and he hoped this would be a great success for the Council in June.

IV) Battle of Neville's Cross signage and walking leaflet

The Clerk advised that he, David Mason and David Butler had now completed editing work on the Battle of Neville's Cross walking leaflet and he had ordered 10,000 copies of these. The Clerk reminded Members that this would be funded entirely through S106 funds from the Neville's Cross division.

The Clerk also confirmed that the new signage is imminent for the two bridges in Neville's Cross as part of this walk.

The Committee took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for his excellent work on this initiative.

V) Progressing the plans for the new layout of Durham Market Place.

The Clerk advised that he was still awaiting confirmation of the next steps with this project from DCC and would report back ASAP.

8. AOB

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she had chaired a recent meeting of the Walking Festival Working Group. Councillor V Ashfield advised that the meeting was well attended from the National Trust, Visit County Durham and DCC.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she wasn't sure if the Walking Festival would necessarily add great value to the City as Visit County Durham already sponsors approximately 195 different walks throughout the year. However, Councillor V Ashfield advised that she would continue to attend meetings and keep the Committee updated.

The Chair also provided an update on the empty pill packet recycling scheme at Whitfields. The Chair advised that the Terracycle boxes from the City of Durham Parish Council have been delivered and there has been a lot of appreciative messages on Facebook for this initiative.

The Chair also advised that Belmont Parish Council has also agreed to fund £1,000 worth of Terracycle boxes too. The Committee thanked the Chair for her work on this initiative.

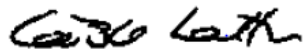
9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 11th June 2024 at 1pm

Tuesday 9th July 2024 at 1pm
Tuesday 10th September 2024 at 1pm

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 'Cathy Lath'.

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(11th June 2024)**