

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the City of Durham Parish Council's Environment Committee meeting held on Tuesday 12th May 2026 at 10:30pm via Zoom

Present: Councillors C. Lattin (in the **Chair**), V. Ashfield, T Cleaver and G.Holland.

Also present: Mr Adam Shanley (Parish Clerk), Councillors D Freeman and M Wilkes, Mr David Miller (member of the public) and Mr Joe Peat and Mr Toby Dunne (Durham County Council).

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor F. Robinson.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited declarations of interest from Members. No declarations of interest were made.

3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2026

Following consideration, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2026 were **approved** as a correct record.

4. Public Participation

There were no formal public participation comments on the agenda items. However, invited guests participated in discussions under the relevant agenda items.

5. To consider the latest Neighbourhood Warden report

The Clerk reported that the latest Neighbourhood Warden report had not yet been received due to annual leave commitments but would be circulated to Members when available. Members were advised of changes within the Neighbourhood Warden service, including the temporary redistribution of the additional hours funded by the Parish Council. The Committee heard that Brad, one of the wardens supported through the Council's funding arrangement, was undertaking training for a team leader role and therefore would not currently be undertaking the additional Parish Council-funded hours. These hours were being covered by other wardens, including Lana McCall and Ant Waterson.

The Clerk updated Members on recent work undertaken by the wardens, including activity to address fly-posting across the city. Members discussed the continuing value of the Parish Council's financial contribution towards additional warden hours and noted the responsiveness of the service in dealing with issues raised by residents and councillors.

A wider discussion took place regarding potential future reductions to Neighbourhood Warden numbers across County Durham. Members expressed concern about the impact of possible staffing reductions and emphasised the importance of monitoring future County Council budget decisions. It was noted that the Parish Council's additional funding continued to provide a tangible benefit by enabling work to be directed towards local priorities identified by the Parish Council and residents. Members agreed that the situation should continue to be monitored closely.

6. Update on the proposal to create a Durham City plaques walking trail map

The Chair introduced the item and thanked David Miller for the significant amount of work undertaken in developing the Parish Council's existing walking trail maps. Members heard that the proposed Blue Plaques Walking Trail was intended to complement the successful Heritage Trail and Seven Hills Trail publications and would showcase the Parish Council's growing collection of blue plaques and heritage interpretation projects.

David Miller provided a detailed overview of the latest proposals. He explained that the revised concept had evolved following discussions at the previous meeting and would focus upon a shorter and more manageable walking route incorporating the majority of the Parish Council's blue plaques within the city centre. More distant sites, including those associated with Mo Mowlam and Daisy Edis, would continue to be included as points of interest but would be shown as outlying locations rather than forming part of the principal walking route.

The Committee discussed the format and design of the publication, with Members expressing support for maintaining consistency with the Parish Council's existing trail maps. David Miller presented draft designs showing a central route map surrounded by historical information relating to each plaque and location. Members considered the route itself and agreed that it would provide an attractive heritage walk linking a number of significant sites across the city.

The Clerk updated Members on the current stock levels of existing trail maps and advised that the Seven Hills Trail remained extremely popular, with over 12,000 copies having been distributed. Members discussed the possibility of reprinting the Seven Hills Trail alongside production of the new Blue Plaques Trail and noted that heritage budgets had been established to support ongoing projects.

The Committee also considered access arrangements to the former Hild Bede site, where one of the plaques is located. The Clerk reported that discussions with the College Principal had identified a practical solution whereby the plaque could be relocated to a more visible and accessible position at the entrance to the site, improving public visibility and making inclusion within the trail map more straightforward.

Members welcomed the proposals and agreed that work should continue on finalising the route, design and production costs, with the aim of producing the publication during the current financial year.

7. Update on the joint 'Sunflowers for Solar Panels' project with Houghall College

The Chair provided an update on the Sunflowers for Solar Panels project and reported that discussions with Houghall College had continued positively. Members heard that the recent site visit and engagement with the College had strengthened relationships and created opportunities for further collaboration.

Discussion took place regarding the availability of sunflower seeds and ongoing community participation in the project. Members remained supportive of the initiative and agreed that it continued to provide an effective means of promoting environmental awareness and community engagement while supporting wider sustainability objectives. The Committee noted the progress made and agreed to continue supporting the project as it developed.

8. Update on planting priorities for 2026/27 – including Gilesgate Roundabout Floral Bed

The Chair invited the Clerk, together with representatives from Durham County Council, to provide an update on planting priorities for the coming year.

The Committee heard that arrangements had now been finalised for the installation of approximately ninety additional hanging baskets across the city centre. The Clerk expressed appreciation to Joe Peat, Toby Duane, Members of the Committee and participating businesses for their assistance in developing the scheme. Members were advised that the baskets would be installed in prominent locations across the city, including shopping streets, public spaces, bridges and visitor gateways, and would remain in place throughout the summer season. Durham County Council confirmed that maintenance and watering arrangements were included within the agreed programme.

A substantial discussion then took place regarding the future of the Gilesgate roundabout carpet bed. Members were advised that Durham County Council had ceased funding the annual floral display as part of budget savings measures and that the bed would remain unplanted unless an alternative arrangement could be identified. The Chair noted the significance of the site as one of the principal gateways into Durham and highlighted the strong public affection for the display.

Members expressed differing views regarding the possibility of the Parish Council assuming responsibility for the site. Some Members felt strongly that the roundabout formed an important visual entrance to the city and should continue to contain an attractive floral display. Suggestions included the possibility of incorporating the Parish Council logo into a future carpet bed design and exploring sponsorship opportunities to offset costs. Other Members urged caution, noting the significant financial commitment involved and questioning whether expenditure of that scale represented the best use of Parish Council resources.

Detailed discussion took place regarding the likely costs of both installation and maintenance. Members requested further information from Durham County Council on the full costs involved, including watering and ongoing maintenance, before any long-term decision could be taken. Consideration was also given to the

possibility of interim planting using existing nursery stock to avoid the appearance of a bare and neglected site during the current year.

Following discussion, Members agreed that further costings should be obtained from Durham County Council, including indicative costs for a future Parish Council-branded carpet bed. The Committee also agreed that officers should explore whether a temporary planting solution could be implemented using available stock in order to improve the appearance of the site while longer-term options were considered.

9. Dates of Future Meetings

The Committee noted that the next meetings of the Environment Committee would take place on 9 June 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom and 14 July 2026 at 10:30am via Zoom.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Lath', is written below the 'Signed,' text.

**Chair of the Parish Council's Environment Committee
(Tuesday 9th June 2026)**