

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Monday 12th June 2023 at 11:00am via Zoom.

Present: Councillors A Doig, V Ashfield, D Freeman, R Hanson and L Brown.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor A Doig was elected as Chair of the Finance Committee. Proposed by Councillor L Brown and seconded by Councillor V Ashfield.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor D Freeman was elected as Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee. Proposed by Councillor V Ashfield and seconded by Councillor R Hanson.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor H Weston.

4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor A Doig declared an interest in the grant application from Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the vote on this application.

Councillor L Brown declared an interest in the grant application from Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the vote on this application.

Councillor V Ashfield declared an interest in the grant application from St. Nicholas Church and took no part in the vote on this application.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12th JANUARY 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

7. UPDATE ON INTERNAL AUDIT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2022-23

The Clerk reported that the Internal Audit for financial year 2022-23 had now successfully passed completion without any issues raised. Members took the opportunity to thank the Parish Clerk for his work on this and also thanked Gordon Fletcher once more for his work and support with this audit.

8. REPORT ON THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COUNCIL FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

The Clerk provided the following report to Members on the current financial position of the Council for financial year 2023/24:

After a total expenditure of £190,934 during the financial year 2022-23, the Parish Council ended the financial year with £76,508 remaining in its account. This includes the Parish Council's reserves which remain at £45,000 – an appropriate level of reserves based on national guidance.

Our end of year cash-in the bank figure was £16,508 above what we had forecast but Committee needs to bear in mind that this includes receipt of a national lottery grant for Coronation events of £9,439 received in 2022-23 but for which the majority of expenditure will take place in this current financial year.

Circa £7,000 can either be reallocated or fall back into reserves therefore.

The remainder of the underspend came primarily from the Parish Council's Environment Committee. At the beginning of the financial year, the Committee agreed a budget of £42,500 towards projects and £30,883 has been spent in the previous financial year.

Inevitably this means that there were a number of overspends in certain budgets – namely staffing costs were higher than predicted owing to a larger than expected salary increase for all Green Book employees at a national level and the administration of the Council costs were also higher than predicted. This is not surprising giving rising costs our auditor assures us.

The balance sheet appears to indicate that there was also an overspend on events in the city but Members will need to bear in mind that we received a grant totalling £8,000 from our 4 County Councillors towards the Jubilee events last year.

In January 2022, Full Council agreed an ambitious programme of work for this financial year, with expenditure thereof totalling £242,166 with a contingency fund – in addition to reserves - of £15,000 for unforeseen expenditure during the year. As we've seen in all years of the Parish Councils existence, this is an important provision for the Parish Council.

The Parish Council's expenditure to date totals £33,942.50. We have a number of large bills set to come out – including the invoices for the enhanced policing service agreed in January this year.

In all but a few projects identified in this year's budget, I can see us spending all of the allocated funding.

Members **agreed** that, of the underspend from financial year 2022-23, £5,400 should be allocated towards grant funding and that the remainder should fall back into general reserves,

9. CONSIDERATION OF THE ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING TO LOCAL COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN THE PARISH FOR 2023/24

Members considered the grant applications received in this financial year's funding window and agreed the allocation of grant funding as follows:

Applicant	Project	Amount requested (£)	Amount agreed (£)
Alington House	We run 3 sessions of fitness sessions for the over 50's which has proved to be beneficial both mentally and physically. This also offers the chance to combat loneliness and isolation. To	2,500	2,500

	continue this very important project we need funding to pay our qualified fitness tutor.		
Climate Action Durham	We want to continue to meet monthly in the City of Durham to raise awareness of the urgent situation of the climate damage which has been and is being done by humanity on our environment and to explore the way by which we can individually and collectively contribute to limiting this damage.	1,500	500
Discovering Durham CIC	Discovering Durham's "Show Us Your Shelf" campaign is an innovative initiative aimed at encouraging people to support local businesses and embrace locally sourced products. The campaign invites participants to dedicate a shelf in their kitchen specifically for locally sourced items and then share a picture of their shelf, known as a "shelfie," on social media platforms. The primary goal of the campaign is to inspire individuals to incorporate more locally produced goods into their daily lives and to raise awareness about the importance of supporting local businesses. By dedicating a shelf to these products, participants showcase their commitment to the local economy and sustainable consumption. The act of sharing a shelfie not only serves as a personal expression of support but also has a broader impact. It acts as a catalyst for encouraging others to follow suit and create their own dedicated shelves. Through this collective sharing of how participants utilize the locally sourced products, the campaign aims to foster a sense of community and inspire a ripple effect of support for local businesses. By leveraging the power of social media and the visual appeal of shelfies, Discovering Durham hopes to create a widespread movement that highlights the benefits of buying locally sourced products. Ultimately, the "Show Us Your Shelf" campaign aims to strengthen the local economy, promote sustainable practices, and foster a sense of pride and connection within the community.	1,500	1,500
DMC 4 Durham CIC	Covid-19 followed by the cost-of-living crisis has had a long and lasting impact on small local independent businesses and families in Durham City. Businesses are seeing a vast reduction in footfall and people 'spending local' as families are increasingly watching their finances. We could like to create some free-standing community art installations on Market Hall stall roofs in collaboration with local artists/sculptors and primary schools in the area which will hopefully encourage families to visit and see how much Durham City centre has to offer. In	850	850

	addition to this, we would like to apply for funding for a hand truck/ sack barrow in order to support the operations of the market and to make this easier for staff on market days.		
Durham Fringe	All of our volunteers are local people who give up their time to support this community arts festival. In recognition of the hard work that is given freely and to give a sense of belonging to the group, Fringe gives each volunteer a T-shirt for when they are on duty but it is theirs to keep. At each of our venues we provide snacks and a non-alcoholic drink which is offered free of charge to volunteers. In addition, all volunteers are given free access to as many Fringe performances as they wish to see. Therefore, we are applying to the Parish Council for a contribution towards the costs of T-shirts and to cover the costs of refreshments and travel expenses when requested. Our aim is to enable local people to participate in a voluntary group and support residents who volunteer their free time	1,000	1,000
Lowes Barn Community Project CIO	Within the new Merryoaks Community Hall, we have the facilities for meetings, conferences and public lectures which require the use of modern audio-visual equipment. This is something we currently do not have and is a gap in the offering that we provide for the local community. We plan to buy two or three screens that will enable a presentation to be made and shared throughout the Hall making the experience more inclusive for all participants irrespective of their ability or location within the Hall. A grant from the Parish Council will enable us to offer a more complete package to groups meeting in the Hall to the benefit of the inhabitants of Durham City	5,000	5,000
Merryoaks WI	To purchase a receiver and possible second hand held microphone to compliment the equipment we already have to allow more flexibility and inclusion. To purchase a full Zoom license to allow us to continue when needed to have speakers from other parts of the country and to enable us to have hybrid meetings when required.	300	300
St. Cuthberts Church	Installation of a Baby Memorial, Installation of new signage, Renewal of footpaths, Professional Fees (architect and archaeologist).	2,000	2,000

St. Cuthberts Hospice	Many of our visitors still prefer to meet and visit guests outdoors to prevent the risk of infection. Our gardens continue to provide much needed sensory stimulation and therapeutic benefit to our patients and their families. It is important that we continue to maintain and rejuvenate the mature gardens we are most fortunate to offer. We are so grateful for the support of the City of Durham Parish Council and would use any subsequent funds to continue to improve accessibility around the Hospice grounds and enhance experience for all who visit our gardens through improvements and essential repairs. Your donation will be used to pay for new and replacement tools, equipment, plants and furniture. As a result of these funds and improvements, we will be able to remain a welcoming, peaceful and accessible environment for our patients, families and visitors, through innovation and repair. Over a 12-month period we expect that over 1,000 patients and their families will be able to enjoy the therapeutic value of nature within our grounds.	4,250	1,750
St Margaret Centre	The replenishment of consumable materials used in the craft room, woodworking, shop supplies and horticultural sections of the Centre.	5,000	3,000
St Nicholas Church	To help fulfil our aims of serving the community and acting as an eco-church we need to reclaim the church's graveyard which has been neglected (and desecrated) over the last 10 years. We want to turn it into a heritage rest and recuperation area potentially with mini-allotments for older residents to use and designated picnic and meeting areas and areas for rest and contemplation.	2,000	2,000
	Total	£25,900	£20,400

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

14th September 2023 at 11am

7th December 2023 at 11am

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

**Chair of the Parish Council Finance Committee
(17th January 2024)**