

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Wednesday 17th January 2024 at 11:00am in Meeting Room 1.01. Clayport Library. Durham. DH1 1WA.

Present: Councillors A Doig, V Ashfield, J Ashby and L Brown.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley and Councillor C Lattin.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors D Freeman, R Hanson and H Weston.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12th JUNE 2023

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

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

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

The Clerk provided the following report to the Committee 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 now stand at approximately £46,600 – 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 most of the expenditure (£7,585.06) took place in this current financial year. This was added to the events budget for this financial year.

At our last Finance Committee meeting, Members approved the reallocation of £5,400 towards small grants owing to a high demand from applicants and the desire to ensure that as many organisations were supported as possible. The remaining underspend from 22-23 (circa. £1,600) fell back into general reserves.

In January 2023, 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.

Our total income to date is £254,074. That figure includes:

- £242,166.56 from the precept.
- £5,027.01 from contributions and ticket sales for the Coronation events.
- £5,863.00 from the landlord contribution scheme.
- £1,017.35 from the City of Durham Trust towards the heritage trail leaflets.

The Parish Council's expenditure to date (excluding VAT) totals £195,253 and our present cash-in the bank figure sits at £142,822.36 – this figure includes £46,600 in general reserves.

Contingencies and unforeseen expenditure

We have £9,297 remaining in our contingencies fund.

There are a number of unforeseen items of expenditure we need to consider:

- We have previously agreed to move £4,000 from contingencies to the Terracycle scheme but there is only a requirement for £3,304.
- Cost of the by-election for the Durham South Ward will be £4,180.85
- My salary changes from £44,539 to £52,752 (plus back payments - effective from November 2023) will mean an additional £8,500.00 (approximately) with on-costs included, over and above what was budgeted for.
- Blue plaque for Fenwick and the event following this will be £878.

In total, this equates to approximately £16,862.85 – a shortfall of £7,565.85.

I would suggest the following:

- £4,180.85 be taken from general reserves but replaced in 2024-25.
- £2,400 be taken from the licensing reports budget.
- The unspent £1,000 be taken from the best business frontage awards budgets.

With the remaining items of expenditure, the vast majority of our projects identified in this year's budget will be fully spent up, save for some noticeable large exceptions:

- The enhanced policing SLA is projected to have £35,000 spent by the end of the financial year leaving circa. £15,000. At present, the Environment Committee is hoping to off-set this against a cut in the budget for 2024-25 for the same expenditure line.
- The remaining expenditure for the Durham in Bloom planting will likely now occur in financial year 2024-25 and improvements to the Market Place are something we have committed to so this should carry forward.
- To date, only £1,500 for additional Wardens on Move Out Day has been spent but we are expecting a further bill of £2,000 from DCC leaving us with £2,363.
- Although the events budget looks as though it is almost at full spend, grants received for the Coronation event as well as underspends in certain events leaves approximately £2,149 in this fund.

The Committee unanimously **agreed** the proposed virements as set out in the Clerk's report and thanked him for his work on this budget.

6. TO AGREE A RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-25

The Clerk reminded Members of the need for the Parish Council to agree its budget at the Full Council meeting in January. The Clerk also set out that Full Council at a special meeting in December had agreed that the report and recommendation from the Finance

Committee should include a series of options for the budget for Members to consider and approve.

Members unanimously agreed to present the following budget options to Full Council in January 2024:

Planning and Licensing Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Representing the parish on planning and licensing matters	
Professional support in responding to planning applications and licensing hearings	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Improving the licensed economy	
Enhanced drug searching scheme with Durham Police	£600.00
PRIORITY 3: Review of the Licensing Framework Policy	
Professional support for licensing policy review	£5,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

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 – (£15,000 carried forward from 2023/24)
Safety of Women at Night Hub	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Noise abatement	
Building on the Shhh...11pm to 7am campaign	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Clean Air, Clean and Green City	
Planting budget	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Engaging the youth in the work of the Parish Council	
Project working with young people to promote awareness of clean air (OASES project)	£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: Emergency planning	
Supporting our community in preparing for emergency events	£2,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Business Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Supporting Independent businesses	
Professional support for independent businesses in Durham	£10,800.00

PRIORITY 2: Increasing footfall through events	
Hosting events in Durham City (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, D-Day Anniversary).	£25,000.00 £30,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Filling empty units with new retailers	
Welcome to Durham Fund (match funded through UKSPF)	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Improving public toilets	
Improving public toilets, for example, the toilets at Owengate	£10,000.00 £1,500.00 (leaflets)
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Full Council

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Administration of Parish Council	
(Office rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website and other expenditure)	£17,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Training of staff and Councillors	
Training budget	£3,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Upgrading the Parish Council website	
Website upgrade	£8,000.00 £3,000.00
PRIORITY 4: supporting local community and voluntary organisations	
Grants budget	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 5: Staffing costs	
Clerk salary (including salary, pension, NI on costs)	£75,000.00
Part-time administrative support for the Parish Council's functions	£15,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

General reserves	£45,000.00
Contingencies	£15,000.00
Election reserve	£5,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Committee	Cost (£)
Planning and Licensing Committee	
Environment Committee	
Business Committee	
Full Council	
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024/25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	

Key on project budgets

Definite
 Maybe
 Cancelled/changed

7. TO AGREE A RECOMMENDED PRECEPT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-25

Members **agreed** to present the following precept options for financial year 2024/25 to Full Council in January:

Option 1 (projects in green only)

- Total funds required = £256,600.00

- Total increase required = £14,661.88
- % increase in precept (from £52.17 Band D) = 5.88%
- New Band D charge = £57.66

Option 2 (projects in green and yellow)

- Total funds required = £287,400.00
- Total increase required = £45,461.88
- % increase in precept (from £52.17 Band D) = 17.18%
- New Band D charge = £64.58

Option 3 (freeze the precept)

- Members will be required to remove projects listed above in order to achieve a total working budget (including contingencies) of £241,938.12.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 17th April 2024 at 11am

Wednesday 19th June 2024 at 11am

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

Signed,



**Chair of the Parish Council Finance Committee
(18th June 2024)**