

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Wednesday 15th January 2025 at 09:00am in Meeting Room 1.01, Clayport Library. Durham. DH1 1WA

Present: Councillors A Doig, V Ashfield, J Ashby and S Walker.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor D Freeman. No other apologies were received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14th OCTOBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2024 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 PARISH COUNCIL

The Clerk provided the following report to Members on the current financial position of the Parish Council:

Our total income to date is £285,853. That figure includes:

- *£282,429.66 from the precept.*
- *£6 refund for groceries from ASDA for an event.*
- *£3,418 in grant and donations received – mainly coming from the landlord request.*

I would prefer our grants income were a little higher this late in the financial year but the Parish Council has contracted the services of Claire Murray-Kemp to support us in a significant grant infrastructure project through S106 and other funding sources.

The Parish Council's expenditure to date (including VAT) totals £228,186.45 and spends are all within allocated budget headings or our contingency funds.

I would refer Members to the Detailed Income and Expenditure report I circulated with the Agenda along with the Nominal Ledger. I am happy with where we are at in terms of approximately 70.3% of budgets allocated spent – this is a good sign to our residents that we are pushing ahead and delivering on our priorities.

However, there are a number of budgets that I feel will go either unspent entirely or remain with the existing underspend in front of us. I'll take these in turn:

Underspends

- *£2,935 from the training budget*
- *£1,750 from the licensing economy report*
- *£1,500 from the professional business support*

- £3,450 from the remaining City Theatre project
- £9,057 will be left remaining in the staffing costs budget by the end of the financial year – this is largely on the basis that Claire is only contract for a project up to £5,000 without prior agreement to go over this allocated budget
- £2,175 remaining in budget for website upgrade
- £400 remaining in the professional planning support budget
- £1,363 remaining in the Shhh...campaign budget
- £1,317 remaining in the Terracycle project fund
- £2,680 remaining in the contingencies budget
- £300 remaining in the drug dog searches budget

In total: £26,927.00

Ongoing projects

£5,000 for youth entrepreneurship

£5,000 for River Wear project

£2,000 for community emergency plan

£2,000 for youth services grant

In total: £14,000.00

Ringfenced budgets to carry over

- £8,000 remains ringfenced for the Market Place improvement project
- £3,839 remaining in the Green Move Out/ landlord levy budget
- £5,000 remains to help build up an election reserve

In total: £16,839.00

Overspends

The administration budget will run to £21,700 – a further £2,000.00 meaning an overspend of £4,698.00

The events budget will run to £31,557 – a further £1,000 meaning and overspend of £1,557.00

The young people project with OASES went over by £130

The Frontage Awards will also go over by £300 as an additional monetary winner was added this competition.

Remaining costs this financial year

£25,133.45 in staffing costs

£1,000 in events

£2,000 in administration

£2,000 for youth services

£5,000 for River Wear project

£300 for dog search

£900 for business support

£7654 for policing

£2502 for Wardens

£1,900 for planning support

£660 for emails

In total: £48,989.45

With VAT repaid from 2023/24 and 2024/25 - £16,791, taking into account ringfenced projects of £16,839 and reserves remaining at £45,000 – there will be approximately £28,829 in slack from 2024/25.

£62,265 (current)

£60,000 (reserves account)

£16,791 (VAT rebate)

Minus

£48,989 to go

£45,000 (reserves)

£16,839 (ringfenced projects)

Members thanked the Clerk for his exceptional work on the finances of the Council and **agreed** that any underspends from 2024-25 should be allocated towards the Operation Lentil budget as well as the fundraising priority of the Parish Council.

6. CONSIDERATION OF BUDGETS FOR 2025/26 FROM PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Clerk reminded Members of the need for the Parish Council to agree its budget at the Full Council meeting in January. Members unanimously **agreed** to present the following budget to Full Council in January 2025:

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
Review of County Durham Plan policies	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Improving the licensed economy	
Enhanced drug searching scheme with Durham Police	£600.00
Deployable noise monitoring equipment	£0.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2025-26 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£10,600.00

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	£40,000.00
Safety of Women at Night Hub	£10,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Noise abatement	
Building on the <i>Shhh...11pm to 7am</i> campaign	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Clean Air, Clean and Green City	
Planting budget	£15,000.00
Supporting local climate groups	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Engaging the youth in the work of the Parish Council	
Project working with young people (clean air and climate change)	£2,500.00
PRIORITY 5: Improving the appearance of our City	
Neighbourhood Warden SLA	£12,000.00
PRIORITY 6: Promoting the heritage of our parish area	
Introduction of new blue plaques	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 7: Enhancing the River Wear	
Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust (Education and INNs)	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 8: Emergency planning	
Supporting our community in preparing for emergency events	£2,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2025-26 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£95,500.00

Business Committee

Item of expenditure	Cost (£)
PRIORITY 1: Supporting Independent businesses	
Professional support for independent businesses in Durham	£3,600.00
PRIORITY 2: Increasing footfall through events	

Hosting events in Durham City (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, D-Day Anniversary, miscellaneous).	£30,000.00
Sponsoring community events with local businesses – a specific focus on improving the early evening economy	£5,000.00
PRIORITY 3: Tackling shoplifting and anti-social behaviour	
Funding new radios and other initiatives as part of Shopwatch	£2,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Improving shop frontages in the City	
Christmas Frontage Awards (previously under Environment Committee)	£1,500.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2025-26 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£42,100.00

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)	£19,000.00
PRIORITY 2: Training of staff and Councillors	
Training budget	£3,000.00
PRIORITY 3: supporting local community and voluntary organisations	
Grants budget	£15,000.00
PRIORITY 4: Staffing costs	
Clerk salary (including salary, pension, NI on costs)	£85,000.00
PRIORITY 5: Paying for elections	
Parish contribution towards the cost of all-out elections	£20,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2025-26 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£142,000.00

General reserves	£45,000.00
Contingencies	£15,000.00
Election reserve	£5,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2024-25 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£65,000.00

Committee	Cost (£)
Planning and Licensing Committee	£10,600.00
Environment Committee	£95,500.00
Business Committee	£42,100.00
Full Council	£142,000.00
Contingencies and election reserves (to be added)	£20,000.00
TOTAL PROVISION IN 2025/26 AGAINST PRIORITIES	£310,200.00

7. TO AGREE THE PRECEPT REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26

Following on from the discussion relating to the proposed budget at item 6 of the Agenda, Members **agreed** to present the following precept options for financial year 2025/26 to Full Council in January, with Option 3 being the recommended budget from the Finance Committee:

Precept options

Option 1 (freeze the precept) - Should the Parish Council wish to freeze the precept at £61.60. This will generate a total income of £284,770.64.

Option 2 (raise the precept in line with inflation) - As of November 2024, the UK's inflation rate was 2.6%, which is higher than the previous month's 2.3% but lower than the long-term average of 2.82%. Should the Parish Council wish to increase the precept

in line with inflation at 2.6%, this will equate to a Band D charge of £63.20 and generate a total income of £292,167.28.

Option 3 (raise the precept in line with the Finance Committee's recommended budget) – this will result in an increase of £5.50 on to the Band D precept charge from £61.60 to £67.10 – an increase of 8.55%.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 16th April 2025 at 11am

Wednesday 18th June 2025 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, appearing to be 'A. M.', followed by a long horizontal line.

**Chair of the Parish Council Finance Committee
(14th February 2025)**