

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Friday 14th February 2025 at 12:00pm via Zoom.

Present: Councillors A Doig (in the Chair), V Ashfield, J Ashby, L Brown and D Freeman.
Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley, Councillors C Lattin and S Walker and Prof. Steven Lindsay

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor H Weston.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15th JANUARY 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Professor Steven Lindsay advised that he was attending the meeting as a Member of the Elvet Residents Association who had a particular interest in Item 5 on the Agenda.

Steven advised that Elvet Residents Association are strongly in favour of a 20mph speed limit for the entire length of Church Street, not just the area around the school. Steven also advised that ERA would also very much like to see a one-way system implemented on Church Street.

Steven advised that ERA has three main concerns with the current proposal:

1. The positioning of the signs - ERA would like the proposed signs at both ends of Church Street, not just around the school.
2. ERA would also like the 20mph limit to be in effect throughout the day, not just during school drop-off and pick-up times.
3. Whilst ERA very much understands the budget constraints, Steven advised that the Association feels that the £28,000 price tag is too high.

Steven indicated that ERA would very much support the Parish Council in lobbying Government to enable more comprehensive and effective 20mph schemes across the country.

The Chair thanked Steven for his report to the Committee and for sharing ERA's views on this matter.

5. CONSIDERATION OF RECENT SECTION 106 APPLICATION - DCC TRAFFIC ASSETS - INSTALLATION OF A PART-TIME ADVISORY SCHOOL 20MPH SCHEME IN THE AREA OF ST OSWALD'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Members carefully considered the content of the application paperwork as well as Steven's report from the local Residents Association in the area. In agreeing to support

this application, Members unanimously agreed the following response to this application:

The Parish Council wishes to commend both Durham County Council and St Oswald's school for bringing forward this long-awaited initiative to improve pedestrian safety on Church Street. As the main route to and from the University's main campus as well as the location of the school along this road, Church Street is one of the busiest pedestrian streets in the City. The safety of school children and other pedestrians is of paramount importance and we fully support any measures which enhance road safety in our community.

Whilst the Parish Council has consistently advocated for a permanent 20mph speed limit running the entirety of Church Street, the Parish Council recognises the statutory and budgetary constraints which have influenced this proposal. In 2013, the Department for Transport provided revised guidelines on the Setting Local Speed Limits (DfT Circular 01/2013), encouraging traffic authorities to consider introducing more 20mph limits over time, and over a larger number of roads. However, it also advises that 20mph limits are most appropriate where the mean speed (85th percentile) is already at or below 24mph. At present, we understand that the mean speeds on Church Street exceed this limit and therefore a 20mph speed limit covering the entirety of Church Street would only be possible with further (costly) traffic calming measures.

Notwithstanding this, and in considering the existing road layout, comprising side roads, accesses, parking and restrictions, current pedestrian usage and vehicle movements, the Parish Council appreciates that the introduction of physical traffic calming features to slow traffic down would likely to be inappropriate as they are generally aimed at maintaining lower speeds where an excess problem is present.

Additionally, the Parish Council recognises that there are minimum length requirements for the implementation of a standalone speed limit and Church Street falls short of these requirements. Considering this, a legal permanent speed limit could only be implemented if it included a wider area and this would certainly impact traffic flow and emergency response times in these city centre locations.

In recognising these constraints on the local traffic authority, we would invite Durham County Council to join us in further lobbying central Government to ensure that all roads adjacent to primary schools can be designated as 20mph zones, that the minimum length requirements be reviewed and that appropriate funding is allocated to local authorities to achieve this vital safety improvement.

On the application itself, we understand that the costs originally associated with this scheme may have been reduced to circa. £20,000. Before final approval of this funding application, we would appreciate confirmation of the total amount of funding now being sought and would particularly welcome the use of solar-powered signage as opposed to signs that rely on power from the grid. A solar-powered solution aligns better with our environmental commitments and will contribute to reducing carbon emissions associated with the scheme's implementation.

The Parish Council also acknowledges concerns regarding the potential increase in emissions caused by vehicles slowing down and speeding up within the proposed advisory zone, particularly given that Church Street is already identified as an area of air quality concern. As such, the Parish Council is delighted to be proactively working with DCC's public transport team on its own Section 106 proposal to install new green roof bus shelters in the area. These shelters will play an important role in carbon capture and mitigating air quality issues. We look forward to submitting a funding bid for this initiative in due course and trust that Durham County Council will give this its full support.

We very much look forward to working with the County Council on the delivery of this proposal and would particularly be interested to learn more about how the effectiveness of this scheme is to be monitored once installed.

End of report

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Friday 20th June 2025 – 11:00am in the Parish Council office.

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 'J. A. M. H.', written in a cursive style.

**Chair of the Parish Council Finance Committee
(20th June 2025)**