

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Friday 20th June 2025 at 11:00am in Room 1.01 in Clayport Library, 8 Millennium Place, Durham. DH1 1WA

Present: Councillors S Walker, E Scott, L Brown and P Layton.

Also present: Parish Clerk A Shanley.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor E Scott nominated Councillor S Walker to be Chair of the Parish Council's Finance Committee and this was seconded by Councillor L Brown. There being no further nominations, Councillor S Walker was duly elected as Chair of the Finance Committee.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor E Scott nominated Councillor L Brown to be Vice-Chair of the Parish Council's Finance Committee and this was seconded by Councillor P Layton. There being no further nominations, Councillor L Brown was duly elected as Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors L Wilson and E Hopgood. The Chair accepted that Councillor P Layton was attending the meeting as a substitute for Councillor E Hopgood.

4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor E Scott declared an interest in the grant application from Artickoke and took no part in the discussion or vote on this application.

Councillor S Walker declared an interest in the grant application from Durham Woodland Cemetery and took no part in the discussion or vote on this application.

Councillor P Layton declared an interest in the grant applications from Alington House and St. Oswald's Institute and took no part in the discussion or vote on these applications.

Councillor L Brown declared an interest in the grant application from Durham Woodland Cemetery and took no part in the discussion or vote on this application.

5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14th FEBRUARY 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th February 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

7. REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL AT THE START OF FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-26

The Clerk provided the following report on the financial position of the Parish Council as at 20th June 2025:

After a total expenditure of £263,296 in financial year 2024-25, the Parish Council carried £97,439 over to this current financial year (2025-26). In addition to this, £7,654 is to be refunded as part of a VAT rebate from expenditure incurred in 24-25 in this current financial year, resulting in a total of £105,093.

Of this £105,093:

- **£45,000** is held in general reserves.
- **£5,000** is held in election reserves.
- **£36,330** is presently ringfenced for the same project(s) to be carried over into financial year 25-26 as follows:
 - £15,000 from the staffing budget towards grant fundraising support (£5,000 already allocated).
 - £2,350 from the professional planning support (allocated to Article 4 report).
 - £8,263 from the planting budget (originally earmarked for the Market Place improvement project but used to reduce precept request for 25-26).
 - £4,878 from the Improving the River Wear project (additional £5,000 agreed in the budget for 25-26, of which £2,500 is allocated).
 - £3,839 allocated to Green Move Out (raised on the basis of this priority so must be attached to this – there will also be a further appeal later this financial year).
 - £2,000 from the emergency plan project (additional £2,000 agreed in the budget for 25-26).

On this basis and the understanding that each non-ring-fenced project/ priority is either removed or further budget was added for 25-26, £18,763 needs to either be reallocated or put into reserves. In agreeing its budget for 25-26 in January 25, the Parish Council provisionally proposed that £10,000 could be allocated towards the Operation Lentil budget (presently sitting at £40,000) but this is yet to be formally agreed by Full Council.

In agreeing its budget for financial year 2025-26, the Parish Council agreed an ambitious programme of work with a total precept request of £292,172.28. Copies of the Council's budget and strategy for 2025-26 have been circulated to all Members.

Our total income to date in 25-26 is £293,064.30 (including precept + £897 refund for the Battle of Neville's Cross leaflets (S106 funded project)).

Our total expenditure to date is £42,579.26 and all spends are within allocated budget headings.

The Parish Council has recently undergone a successful internal audit by Gordon Fletcher and once more the Parish Council has been commended for its excellent governance and procedures.

End of report

In view of the underspends and carry over from 2024-25, Members unanimously **agreed** to recommend to Full Council the following:

- £3,000 to be moved from the Improving the River Wear budget, leaving approx. £4,300 remaining in this budget for FY25-26.
- £5,000 to be moved from the (fundraising support) staffing budget in relation, leaving £8,750 in this budget for FY25-26 (of which up to £3,750 is already earmarked).
- £13,000 to be added to the Council's events budget (taking account of upcoming Autumn events as well as the Christmas light switch on).
- £2,000 to be added to the administration of the Council budget.
- £7,181 to be added to the small grants budget, taking into account the demand for grants this financial year.
- £3,000 to be added to the business events grant fund this financial year.
- £2,000 to be added to the contingencies budget.

8. REPORT ON GRANT APPLICATIONS 2025-26

The Clerk reminded Members that, at the January meeting of the Full Parish Council 2023, Councillors formally agreed to allocate £15,000 of the budget for 2025/26 towards grants for local and voluntary organisations.

The Clerk advised that the grant funding window opened on 1st April 2025 and this has been advertised on social media, the Parish Council's website, through the local press and through direct e-mails.

The Clerk reminded Members that organisations were asked to apply by mid-June 2025 in order that the Finance Committee may consider this at its meeting in June and make a recommendation to Full Council in June. Once approved, all grant payments will be made at the end of June 2025.

The Clerk advised that Members have been provided with the full details of all applications. Members considered the merits of each application and unanimously **agreed** to allocate funding as follows, taking into account the additional allocation of grant funding agreed in the earlier item on the Agenda:

Organisation	Project	Amount requested	Amount agreed by the Finance Committee
Alington House	To re-establish a garden group within Alington House, growing fruits and vegetables which the volunteers can take home and encouraging wellbeing by working in the outdoors. Since Covid we had a volunteer project from Ingeus repair access and build a seating area which our users enjoy but many have expressed an interest in gardening again and we are looking for funds towards extra accessible planters (we had raised beds built but these are down steps that are uneven) and plants	£750	£750

Artichoke	A grant from City of Durham Parish Council would enable us to engage Parishioners in a curator-led tour of the festival before it opens to the public, with opportunities to meet the creative team, learn about the artworks and celebrate Lumiere as a community. We will target communities who are underserved by creative activities and who face barriers to taking part, including low-income families. We have strong links with local schools and community groups, and we would work with City of Durham Parish Council to identify priority communities to engage in the tour. We will also work with the Parish Council to promote volunteering opportunities to Parishioners during the festival. Lumiere volunteers guide audiences and provide information about the artworks, meeting new people, developing their confidence and gaining a sense of community pride and belonging.	£1,000	£0
Durham Hospital Radio	The station has an item of equipment which urgently needs repairing at a cost of £1570. Also a contribution of £1430 against our annual running costs would be extremely beneficial.	£3,000	£1,570
Durham Scratch Choir	New printer to print all the music sheets for our choir	£250	£300

Durham Woodland Cemetery	Apart from a ring-fenced grant from Durham Crematorium Fund for 5 memorial benches for each of the glades in the cemetery our funds barely cover even our basic expenses (insurance etc). Our income prior to the covid pandemic came primarily from the hire of the lodge at the Woodland cemetery by families wishing to hold funeral services and memorials. Sadly the lodge has suffered severe storm damage to the roof, for the repair of which we have been quoted around £7000. We are intending to apply to Point North for a grant to help with this repair. We will then be able once again to hire out the lodge to bereaved families as mentioned. As a newly formed group of trustees we are also looking at various ways whereby we can raise regular funds including a possible nominal annual subscription from our membership. In the meantime, we would like to promote the Cemetery and provide information leaflets for funeral Directors and the general public. We are eager to attract volunteer working parties who would assist in the conservation of the area and keep it in good order. We would also like to improve the facilities offered by the lodge. Other than that, we depend upon donations and gift aid.	£500	£500
Friends of Pelaw Woods	We require materials - wood, drains, tools. To date this year we have purchased wood, a pond liner and new scythes. We also hire a contractor to cut the grass in autumn in specific locations. Over the last 4 years we have been spending donations generated by the former Chairman opening his private garden. These reserves are now spent. The current bank balance is £64. The proposed grant will fully fund us for the forthcoming 12 months.	£350	£350

Seven Stories	The Tiger Who Came to Tea touring exhibition from Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books, delivers an unforgettable in-centre experience for children and their grown-ups — combining nostalgia, photo opportunities, and interactive fun. This will increase family footfall, dwell time, and social media buzz this summer. Supported by the Seven Stories unique story telling free to families throughout the day. We will also run book donations weekly whilst this exhibition is in Two Tales supporting books into communities.	£6,000	£2,700
St. Nicholas Community Forum	SNCF DELI COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT: SNCF commenced a community garden project January 2025 – the SNCF Deli Community Garden Project. Our aim is to provide a space where the local community can work together to grow chemical free produce throughout the year and share gardening skills and knowledge. The area is inclusive, child friendly and supports the environment and wildlife. By May 2025 we have 15 regular gardeners, mostly novices, but also wider community support from many other people within the local area who get involved when they can, help as needed with larger jobs, give donations of tools, plants and advice. We promote the project through local forums to encourage other residents to get involved and have linked with the University and students are welcome to join when they can. The community garden has already become something more than a communal space to grow produce. It is flourishing into a space of wellbeing, creativity, growing social connections and friendships. There are opportunities for everyone involved to share and learn gardening, woodwork, produce growing, environment, nature and wildlife skills and knowledge. Together we have cleared the site and planted a large variety of vegetables and herbs, all are growing successfully. We plan to further develop the community garden; to maximise produce growing space and	£2,964	£2,964

the potential for more members of the local community to be involved. We would like to apply for funding to purchase staging for the existing polytunnel in the garden (we are currently using makeshift shelves which limit the growing area), a greenhouse where we can grow more produce all year round and a small shed which will be custom made to be accessible and green, using reclaimed wood and a sedum roof. The shed will be used to safely store away tools under cover and resources that can be used by our community gardeners (seeds, gardening guides, etc). This will help us maximise use of the space we have.

We are requesting support for Stage Two of the garden development – polytunnel staging, a greenhouse (which includes greenhouse structure, installation, materials to prepare the base, internal staging, automatic window open system and gutter and water butt to utilise rainwater), a small green roof shed and seed trays/plant pots for planting.

The SNCF Deli Community Garden has Public Liability Insurance and comprehensive risk assessments for all activities. All necessary requirements are in place for student volunteering opportunities through Durham University volunteer platforms.

We are a new member of Social Farms & Gardens and look forward to working towards their vision: 'People and communities reaching their full potential through nature-based activities as a part of everyday life' and have joined the RHS Grow With It national programme to get year-round community growing support.

St Cuthbert's Hospice	Our gardens continue to be a focal point of the hospice and are enjoyed by our patients and visitors. 2025 is an extra special year because we have been chosen to be the recipient of the "Hospice Garden" which will be showcased at the Chelsea Flower Show in May. Afterwards it will be rebuilt in our grounds for the benefit and enjoyment of everyone who visits us. The additional garden will improve our grounds and continue to provide sensory stimulation and therapeutic benefits not only to our patients but to everyone who visits. The grant would be used to improve the site/garden and complete essential repairs which will contribute to our grounds being a welcoming and peaceful place for all who visit them. We anticipate at least 1000 would visit our gardens which includes patients, families, carers, health care professional, staff, volunteers and the public.	£4,250	£0
St Margaret's Centre	To purchase IT equipment (3 x laptops) to help us deliver activities, training and support.	£1,047	£1,047
St Oswald's Institute	Renovation of kitchen to include: isolation of gas supply; creation of serving hatch with food warmer below; provision of electric refreshment preparation and food reheating facilities, in line with C. of E. 2030 net zero target, for e.g. providing soup and Warm Space, and other community functions.	£5,000	£12,000
	Total:		£22,181

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was **agreed** as 10th September 2025 at 11:00am.

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
(10th September 2025)**