

# CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council Finance Committee held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 11:30am at Clayport Library. 8 Millennium Place. Durham. DH1 1WA**

**Present:** Councillors S Walker, L Brown, E Hopgood, E Scott and V Ashfield.

**Also present:** Parish Clerk A Shanley and Councillors R Cornwell, C Lattin and P Layton.

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor L Wilson.

## **2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

None received.

## **3. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

## **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None received.

## **5. REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The Committee received and noted the Clerk's detailed report on the current financial position of the Parish Council, which was confirmed as accurate up to 30 October 2025, with subsequent significant payments having occurred in early November. The Clerk advised that, notwithstanding these later transactions, the overall financial position of the Council remained stable and robust

It was reported that the Parish Council held a combined balance of £249,247.58 in its current accounts at the reporting date. This balance reflected year-to-date receipts totalling £312,362, the majority of which derived from the annual precept of £292,167. Additional income had been received from landlord contributions, grant funding, bank interest, and a VAT refund amounting to £7,654.87. Members noted with appreciation the work undertaken to secure these additional income streams.

The Clerk reminded Members that earlier in the financial year the Council had transferred £70,000 of its reserves into a Lloyds Bank community savings account. This account attracts a daily interest rate of 2.73%, which is projected to generate approximately £2,000 in interest income over a twelve-month period. This action was noted as a positive measure to strengthen the Council's financial resilience and maximise returns on reserves.

On the expenditure side, it was reported that total spend as at 30 October 2025 amounted to £164,986 across all cost centres, representing 43.9% of the approved annual budget at that point. It was further explained that certain budget headings, including staffing, administrative costs, and events, were already between 80% and 100% committed, reflecting the timing and nature of those activities. The net position at that date showed income exceeding expenditure by £147,377, which had strengthened the Council's general reserve position.

Members were advised that, following the circulation of the agenda, additional payments totalling just over £36,000 had been processed in early November. These included election costs of just under £25,000 and a forthcoming invoice of £10,000 relating to the Council's contribution to the Safety of Women initiative at the Night hub. Taking these payments into account, the Clerk confirmed that expenditure against the annual budget had now increased to approximately 54%, with further increases anticipated before the end of the financial year.

The Committee noted that both the internal and external audits for the year had been completed earlier in the year with no issues raised. The auditors had again commended the Parish Council for its strong financial management and governance arrangements.

Looking ahead, the Clerk reported a projected total spend for the current financial year of £327,058, equating to just over 90% of the approved budget. Ring-fenced income totalling £25,638 was identified, together with other legally or contractually restricted funds, including allocations for beacon events, fundraising support, election reserves, and specific project funding. Subject to current assumptions, this projection would result in an estimated headroom of £10,436 at year end.

The Committee discussed the implications of recent election costs exceeding the original provision and noted that the remaining election reserve would be limited. It was acknowledged that potential future by-elections could place significant financial pressure on the Council, particularly in larger wards. Members therefore recognised the importance of reviewing and, where possible, strengthening the election reserve as part of prudent financial planning.

The Clerk further outlined considerations relating to cash management and the holding of funds across different banking institutions. It was noted that £65,000 continued to be held in a NatWest account established on auditor advice during the COVID period, although this account currently attracted no interest. Members supported the principle of developing a clearer policy on cash holdings, balancing financial security with the opportunity to earn interest, and agreed that further advice from the auditors should be sought before any significant reallocation of funds.

In conclusion, the Committee formally noted that the Parish Council remained in a sound financial position, with healthy cash balances, adequate reserves, and no immediate financial pressures identified. Members agreed that the position should continue to be monitored closely, particularly in relation to election reserves, interest income, and projected year-end headroom, and that these matters would be revisited later in the financial year as more precise information became available

## **6. BUDGET AND PRECEPT SETTING PROCESS**

The Clerk reminded Members that there is a need for the Parish Council to have agreed its budget and to submit its precept request for the forthcoming Financial Year by the end of January 2026.

In order to support this work, the Clerk highlighted that all of the Parish Council's Committees have now met and have submitted the following budget proposals for their work from April 2026.

The Chair highlighted that Members began the process of reviewing the City of Durham Parish Council's medium-term plan earlier this year. Following an online questionnaire together with an informal strategy session in July 2025 as well as a Members' Away Day in September 2025, Members have set out a number of key priorities for the Council moving forward

Members also considered the budget requests from each of the Parish Council's Committees as well as the financial implications for any changes to the precept. Members unanimously **agreed** to recommend to Full Council an increase in the precept in line with the current inflation rate. As such, the Band D charge would increase by £2.41 and would therefore become £65.61. This would generate a total precept of £307,632.168 and would provide a slight surplus (based on the proposed budget in Item 8) of £2,532.17.

In turn, Members also **agreed** the following recommended budget to Full Council in November:

### **Budget for 2026/27 (expenditure only)**

#### **Planning and Licensing Committee**

| <b>Item of expenditure</b>                                                         | <b>Cost (£)</b>  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>PRIORITY 1: Representing the parish on planning and licensing matters</b>       |                  |
| Professional support in responding to planning applications and licensing hearings | £5,000.00        |
| Review of County Durham Plan policies                                              | £2,000.00        |
| <b>PRIORITY 2: Improving the licensed economy</b>                                  |                  |
| Enhanced drug searching scheme with Durham Police                                  | £600.00          |
| <b>PRIORITY 3: Tackling shoplifting and anti-social behaviour</b>                  |                  |
| Best Bar None                                                                      | £2,000.00        |
| <b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>                               | <b>£9,600.00</b> |

#### **Environment Committee**

| <b>Item of expenditure</b>                                        | <b>Cost (£)</b>   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>PRIORITY 1: Noise abatement</b>                                |                   |
| <i>What to do if you have a local issue in Durham leaflet...</i>  | £2,000.00         |
| <b>PRIORITY 2: Clean Air, Clean and Green City</b>                |                   |
| Planting budget                                                   | £20,000.00        |
| <b>PRIORITY 3: Emergency plan</b>                                 |                   |
| Community emergency plan – emergency boxes                        | £2,000.00         |
| <b>PRIORITY 4: Improving the appearance of our City</b>           |                   |
| Neighbourhood Warden SLA                                          | £13,000.00        |
| <b>PRIORITY 5: Promoting the heritage of our parish area</b>      |                   |
| Heritage project                                                  | £5,000.00         |
| <b>PRIORITY 6: Enhancing the River Wear</b>                       |                   |
| Supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust (Education and INNs) | £2,500.00         |
| <b>PRIORITY 7: Improving housing standards for students</b>       |                   |
| Rate Your Landlord annual awards scheme                           | £500.00           |
| <b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>              | <b>£45,000.00</b> |

#### **Business Committee**

| <b>Item of expenditure</b>                                                                                  | <b>Cost (£)</b>   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>PRIORITY 1: Increasing footfall through events</b>                                                       |                   |
| Hosting events in Durham City (Remembrance Sunday, Christmas events, D-Day Anniversary, miscellaneous).     | £45,000.00        |
| Sponsoring community events with local businesses – a specific focus on improving the early evening economy | £15,000.00        |
| <b>PRIORITY 2: Improving shop frontages in the City</b>                                                     |                   |
| Christmas Frontage Awards (previously under Environment Committee)                                          | £1,500.00         |
| <b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>                                                        | <b>£61,500.00</b> |

## Finance Committee

| Item of expenditure                                  | Cost (£)          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>PRIORITY 1: Improving community facilities</b>    |                   |
| Community centres/ facilities fund                   | £40,000.00        |
| <b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b> | <b>£40,000.00</b> |

## Full Council

| Item of expenditure                                                                                          | Cost (£)           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>PRIORITY 1: Administration of Parish Council</b>                                                          |                    |
| (Office rent, room hire, audit, insurance, printing and postage, newsletters, website and other expenditure) | £22,000.00         |
| <b>PRIORITY 2: Training of staff and Councillors</b>                                                         |                    |
| Training budget                                                                                              | £2,000.00          |
| <b>PRIORITY 3: supporting local community and voluntary organisations</b>                                    |                    |
| Grants budget                                                                                                | £15,000.00         |
| <b>PRIORITY 4: Staffing costs</b>                                                                            |                    |
| Clerk salary (including salary, pension, NI on costs)                                                        | £90,000.00         |
| <b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>                                                         | <b>£129,000.00</b> |

|                                                      |                   |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Contingencies                                        | £15,000.00        |
| Election reserve                                     | £5,000.00         |
| <b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2026-27 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b> | <b>£20,000.00</b> |

| Committee                                                | Cost (£)           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Planning and Licensing Committee</b>                  | £9,600.00          |
| <b>Environment Committee</b>                             | £45,000.00         |
| <b>Business Committee</b>                                | £61,500.00         |
| <b>Finance Committee</b>                                 | £40,000.00         |
| <b>Full Council</b>                                      | £129,000.00        |
| <b>Contingencies and election reserves (to be added)</b> | £20,000.00         |
| <b>TOTAL PROVISION IN 2025/26 AGAINST PRIORITIES</b>     | <b>£305,100.00</b> |

## 7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 11:00am via Zoom.

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  
(14<sup>th</sup> January 2026)**