

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 22nd June 2023 at 19:00 in the Lantern Room, Durham Town Hall. Durham. DH1 3NJ

Present: Councillors A Doig (in the Chair), L Brown, E Scott, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, G Holland, S Walker and H Weston.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and Ms Lynda Delf (member of the public).

1. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE (OR NOT) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM TODAY'S MEETING

Apologies were received from Councillors E Ashby, V Ashfield, C Lattin, N Brown, G Nair, R Hanson and R Ormerod.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor R Friederichsen declared an interest in the grant application by Climate Action Durham and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

Councillor A Doig declared an interest in the grant application by Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

Councillor L Brown declared an interest in the grant application by Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

Councillor E Scott declared an interest in the grant application by Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

Councillor S Walker declared an interest in the grant application by Merryoaks Community Hall and took no part in the discussions or vote on this application.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25TH MAY 2023

The minutes of the annual meeting held on 25th May were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. DISCUSSION WITH STEPHEN REED, DCC PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, ON SECTION 106 FUNDING PROCESS

The Chair advised that, in light of the high number of apologies from Members in advance of the meeting, he had asked that the discussion with Stephen Reed be deferred until the September Full Council meeting. As such, Stephen Reed was not in attendance and the item was deferred.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms Lynda Delf advised that she was attending the Parish Council meeting on behalf of the Elvet Residents Association and with a general interest in all Agenda items.

6. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing

Councillor G Holland presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 12th and 26th May 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee reports.

Report on objections to planning application and calls to Committee: DCC Central and East Planning Committee

In introducing his report, the Chair highlighted that it had been brought to the attention of the Parish Council that there has been concern at DCC about (i) the number of objections to planning applications and requests that the applications are brought before the Central and East Planning Committee by the City of Durham Parish Council Planning and Licensing Committee and (ii) objections to planning applications where the application – invariably involving HMOs – appears to fall within the formal requirements laid out in the County Plan (and especially in relation to Policy 16.3).

The Chair advised that he was keen to address this in some way with a formal approach to DCC. The Chair reminded Members that this matter has been discussed at previous Parish Council meetings – both Full Council and the Planning and Licensing Committee – and took the opportunity to thank all those involved in amending the original report from the April Full Council. The Chair advised that he would like this report to go to all Members of the Central and East Area County Planning Committee, Mr Stephen Reed and the Cabinet Member for Planning.

Councillor G Holland welcomed this report and expressed his unhappiness at the claim that the Parish Council appeared to be calling every application to the Central and East Area County Planning Committee. Councillor G Holland highlighted that the City of Durham Parish Council area was different to any other with very many planning factors e.g. a World Heritage Site, a surrounding green belt, significant development pressure and more to consider. Councillor G Holland advised that the right of call-in was an important provision for Parish and Town Councils which is enshrined in the County Council's constitution and that the City of Durham Parish Council has every right to call an application in to Committee and stand in solidarity with local residents.

Councillor E Scott advised that she had concerns over the wording of this report and felt that this was unwise, unless a formal approach had been made to the Parish Council expressing concerns over the number of call-in requests. Councillor E Scott advised that she was not aware of such an approach and therefore could not support the report and recommendation as drafted.

Councillor D Freeman advised that the Central and East Area County Planning Committee Members were very much aware of the reasons as to why a lot of application from within the City of Durham parish area came to Committee,

namely the high proportion of total applications in the City in comparison with other areas.

Councillor G Holland also expressed the concern that the Committee was made up of Councillors from outside the Central and East Area of the County. It was highlighted that this was a separate issue to the matter under discussion.

The Chair proposed that this report be re-drafted in such a way as to provide an explanatory note to Members and Officers and that this be sent to all concerned. Members unanimously **agreed** with this approach (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

• Environment Committee

In the Environment Committee Chair and Vice-Chair's absence, Councillor L Brown presented the Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 16th May 2023. There being no queries from Members, Councillor L Brown moved on to Committee reports.

Proposal to support the Green Move Out operation in the City this year

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council recently agreed to launch a voluntary contribution appeal to local landlords and letting agents in Durham City towards keeping the City clean and green.

Following the decision at Full Council in March 2023, an appeal letter was sent out in April to all landlords and letting agents who own property in the City. The appeal included a request that all contributions be received by no later than 16th June 2023.

The Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council had requested a contribution of £52.00 per property from all owners/ agents – approximately the equivalent of the Band D tax charge within the City of Durham Parish area in financial year 2023/24.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has now received a total of £1,508 from local landlord and agents. This figure was received from 8 individual payments – including one from Loc8me on behalf of several landlords – and a further 3 pledges of financial support have been made.

The Clerk advised that, in order to deliver on the aims of this funding, representatives of the Parish Council's Environment Committee had recently met with representatives of Durham University and Durham County Council, in order to decide on the most beneficial use of this additional funding.

During this meeting, it was highlighted that the background to this request centred around the experiences of Green Move Out day in 2022, which saw furniture and other items discarded in certain streets and a desire to combat this issue reoccurring. Albeit, it was recognised that 2022 was successful in ensuring that thousands of items were recycled/ donated to a local charity and that the team

had been able to deliver this scheme in spite of the many challenges of Covid-19, increased student numbers, etc.

The Clerk advised that an early proposal that the funding could go towards the hiring of skips in certain streets in hotspot areas was rejected by all those involved in the operation as this would go against the principle of Green Move Out and the desire to recycle goods. Other concerns centred around misuse of these skips as well as contamination issues.

Both Durham University representatives and the DCC Waste Management team advised that they felt there is a gap in the Green Move Out operation insofar as the two Sundays during move out are not currently covered from a waste collection point of view and therefore waste left on a Saturday will remain in place until Monday at the earliest.

The Clerk advised that Durham County Council has confirmed that they would be able to cover both Sundays at a cost of £2,000 in total for both days and Durham University very much welcomed this proposal at the meeting. This would ensure that any waste could be recycled and any furniture discarded may be re-used or donated to a local charity (e.g. British Heart Foundation).

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council's Environment Committee recently met in early June and agreed that all funding received from the voluntary contribution request should be allocated towards this operation.

The Clerk also highlighted that Hannah Shepherd had offered to put a further £2,000 from her own budget towards this work and therefore it was unanimously **agreed** that the total funding should be allocated on a) covering the two Sundays as set out above and b) additional Neighbourhood Wardens during move out at a total cost of £3, 508.00.

The Chair remarked that he felt that the figure of £1,508.00 collected from landlords had been extremely disappointing in view of the high number of student properties within the City of Durham parish area. The Chair originally proposed that this initiative be scrapped however withdrew this when asked that this be taken back to the relevant Committees of the Parish Council for further deliberation.

Proposal to support the work of the Wear Rivers Trust

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council had established a very strong working relationship with the Wear Rivers Trust over the last few years and the Environment Committee had recently benefitted from a meeting with the new Co-ordinator Jack Butlin.

The Clerk advised that the Durham Peninsula Invasive Non-native Species project is a long-term project aimed at connecting the dots across the project area to achieve a joined-up approach to managing, and raising awareness of, invasive non-native species (INNS), particularly Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed, and Giant Hogweed. The Clerk highlighted that the project has been active since 2021 and has already seen various successes, including intensive survey efforts which have produced in-depth maps of the project area; widespread management

of the source of Giant Hogweed within the Old Durham Beck system; and the creation of an active and engaged organisational register with members meeting regularly for steering / operations group meetings.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Council had agreed £3,000 in January towards supporting the work of the Wear Rivers Trust. The Clerk advised that the Trust is now seeking funding towards PA1/ PA6 training for volunteers, direct management action and educational sessions.

Members unanimously **agreed** to support this work with a fund of £3,000 as requested. (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

• Finance Committee

Councillor A Doig presented the Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 12th January 2023. There were no queries from Members on these minutes.

7. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 25th May 2023 as follows:

The Chair expressed his delight at welcoming the new Dean of Durham Reverend Canon Dr Philip Plyming to his new role. Dr Plyming's nomination for the role was approved last week by His Majesty King Charles and the Chair advised that he understands that an installation service for the new Dean will take place at the Cathedral at 3pm on 16th September. The Chair advised that he had asked the Clerk to write to Dr Plyming offering congratulations on his appointment and to express good wishes for a continued positive working relationship between the Parish Council and the Cathedral.

The Chair also took the opportunity to welcome the new Mayor of Durham Councillor Leslie Mavin and new Deputy Mayor Councillor Liz Brown to their roles. Both Councillors were officially welcomed to their new roles at a Mayor Making ceremony earlier this month. The Chair advised that he looked forward to working with both Leslie and Liz in their new respective roles. The Chair advised that Councillor Mavin has made St. Cuthbert's Hospice her official charity for this year and he wished her every success in her fundraising efforts. The Chair also thanked Councillor David Freeman for his successful year as Mayor and for raising over £4,500 for the Durham branch of the Samaritans charity.

The Chair also reported that the Chief Constable Jo Farrell has been appointed as the first female officer to lead Police Scotland. Jo has been with Durham Police since 2016 and is now set to succeed Sir Iain Livingstone in Scotland's most senior policing role. The Chair took the opportunity to wish Jo and her family every success in Scotland and look forward to the appointment of the new Chief Constable for the force in due course.

The Chair also offered huge congratulations to all the winners of this year's Durham University Volunteering and Outreach Awards. The Chair welcomed that over 300 nominations – the most ever in the Award's history – were received for

individuals and groups at the University who give so much of their time voluntarily in the service of our community. The Chair highlighted that the Parish Clerk was delighted to present the Best Educational Award at the ceremony. The Chair thanked Katie Binks and her team for all they do.

The Chair reminded Members that voting is now open for the public to nominate the County Durham Tourism Superstar Award for 2023. The nominations are open on the Northern Echo website and are specifically for an individual who has shown the greatest passion for the county and a real dedication to giving visitors a priceless experience. The Chair advised that the Clerk will circulate details of this award and asked Members to help by sharing this as far and wide as possible.

The Chair advised that he was overwhelmed to read the latest report from the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Wardens Kirk Thiis and Antony Waterson – both have worked tirelessly for the community since commencing this role and the Chair advised that the Council should recognise outstanding service like this. The Chair advised that he was aware that the most recent meeting of the Parish Council's Environment Committee had discussed this and the Clerk is presently looking to nominate both Kirk and Ant for an outstanding achievement award – an award run internally at DCC for staff members who have excelled in their role.

The Chair reminded Members that the Neville's Cross Community Association is hosting a special "Best practice in responding to planning applications that affect you" event at the Merryoaks Community Hall on 26th June from 7:30pm. The Chair thanked the Association for organising this event and for supporting residents to make their voices heard and to identify key policies within the local development plan to help best frame their arguments when being consulted on new proposals.

The Chair also advised that he was delighted to attend the official opening of the Hall and advised that he would once again like to warmly thank all those involved in its building. The Chair particularly thanked Councillor Susan Walker and her husband Glen for their outstanding work in setting up the Hall and for managing its day-to-day running.

The Chair expressed his deepest disappointment at news that Durham University is pulling its funding for the Safety of Women at Night hub in our City – the Chair advised that he felt this to be a terrible decision and one which the Parish Council is making every effort to overturn. Over 40% of all incidents dealt with at the hub – ranging from safe transport home to more serious sexual offences – involve a student of our university. Particularly at a time when safety of women and girls is such a serious issue at a local and national level. The Chair advised that he will be writing directly to the Vice Chancellor on this issue to try and resolve this matter. The Chair advised that the hub is providing a life-saving service and the University cannot continue to cut back on essential services like this as it has done with its Neighbourhood Warden and Police provision for our City.

The Chair advised that he was delighted to attend a multi-agency meeting earlier today and to meet and discuss the coming months with our new Safer Streets Coordinator for Operation Lentil Ashleigh White. The Chair advised that Ashleigh has hit the ground running in this role and the Council anticipates a report of the

Operational Lentil project by the end of next week and this will cover April, May and June. The Chair thanked everyone involved in this project.

The Chair took the opportunity to remind Members about the process for communications between residents and our Inspector Dave Clarke or any officers. The Chair particularly asked Members to be mindful not to include Dave in group communications between residents over emails on issues which are reported by members of the public.

8. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR 2022/23

- I. Members unanimously **agreed** the actions arising from the report of the internal auditor 2022-23
- II. Members unanimously **agreed** the annual governance statement 2022-23
- III. Members unanimously **agreed** the draft annual accounts for 2022-23
- iv. Members unanimously **agreed** the register of assets 2022-23
- v. Members unanimously **agreed** the accounting statement and explanation of variances 2022-23

9. 2023/24 ALLOCATION OF GRANT FUNDING TO LOCAL VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

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 2023/24 towards grants for local and voluntary organisations.

The Clerk advised that the grant funding window opened on 1st April 2023 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 2nd June 2023 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 2022.

The Clerk advised that Members have been provided with the full details of all applications.

The Clerk advised that, at its most recent meeting, the Finance Committee noted that there was an underspend of circa. £7,000 from the previous financial year and agreed to reallocate £5,400 of this funding towards additional funding for grants this financial year.

Members considered the merits of each application and unanimously **agreed** to allocate funding as follows:

Applicant	Project	Amount requested (£)	Amount agreed by Full Council (£)
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Alington House	We run 3 sessions of fitness sessions for the over 50's which has proved to be beneficial both mentally and physically. This also offers the chance to combat loneliness and isolation. To continue this very important project we need funding to pay our qualified fitness tutor.	2,500	2,500
Climate Action Durham	We want to continue to meet monthly in the City of Durham to raise awareness of the urgent situation of the climate damage which has been and is being done by humanity on our environment and to explore the way by which we can individually and collectively contribute to limiting this damage.	1,500	500
Discovering Durham CIC	Discovering Durham's "Show Us Your Shelf" campaign is an innovative initiative aimed at encouraging people to support local businesses and embrace locally sourced products. The campaign invites participants to dedicate a shelf in their kitchen specifically for locally sourced items and then share a picture of their shelf, known as a "shelfie," on social media platforms. The primary goal of the campaign is to inspire individuals to incorporate more locally produced goods into their daily lives and to raise awareness about the importance of supporting local businesses. By dedicating a shelf to these products, participants showcase their commitment to the local economy and sustainable consumption. The act of sharing a shelfie not only serves as a personal expression of support but also has a broader impact. It acts as a catalyst for encouraging others to follow suit and create their own dedicated shelves. Through this collective sharing of how participants utilize the locally sourced products, the campaign aims to foster a sense of community and inspire a ripple effect of support for local businesses. By leveraging the power of social media and the visual appeal of shelfies, Discovering Durham hopes to create a widespread movement that highlights the benefits of buying locally sourced products. Ultimately, the "Show Us Your Shelf" campaign aims to strengthen the local economy, promote sustainable practices, and foster a sense of pride and connection within the community.	1,500	1,500

DMC 4 Durham CIC	Covid-19 followed by the cost-of-living crisis has had a long and lasting impact on small local independent businesses and families in Durham City. Businesses are seeing a vast reduction in footfall and people 'spending local' as families are increasingly watching their finances. We could like to create some free-standing community art installations on Market Hall stall roofs in collaboration with local artists/sculptors and primary schools in the area which will hopefully encourage families to visit and see how much Durham City centre has to offer. In addition to this, we would like to apply for funding for a hand truck/ sack barrow in order to support the operations of the market and to make this easier for staff on market days.	850	850
Durham Fringe	All of our volunteers are local people who give up their time to support this community arts festival. In recognition of the hard work that is given freely and to give a sense of belonging to the group, Fringe gives each volunteer a T-shirt for when they are on duty but it is theirs to keep. At each of our venues we provide snacks and a non-alcoholic drink which is offered free of charge to volunteers. In addition, all volunteers are given free access to as many Fringe performances as they wish to see. Therefore, we are applying to the Parish Council for a contribution towards the costs of T-shirts and to cover the costs of refreshments and travel expenses when requested. Our aim is to enable local people to participate in a voluntary group and support residents who volunteer their free time	1,000	1,000
Lowes Barn Community Project CIO	Within the new Merryoaks Community Hall, we have the facilities for meetings, conferences and public lectures which require the use of modern audio-visual equipment. This is something we currently do not have and is a gap in the offering that we provide for the local community. We plan to buy two or three screens that will enable a presentation to be made and shared throughout the Hall making the experience more inclusive for all participants irrespective of their ability or location within the Hall. A grant from the Parish Council will enable us to offer a more complete package to groups meeting in the Hall to the benefit of the inhabitants of Durham City	5,000	5,000

Merryoaks WI	To purchase a receiver and possible second hand held microphone to compliment the equipment we already have to allow more flexibility and inclusion. To purchase a full Zoom license to allow us to continue when needed to have speakers from other parts of the country and to enable us to have hybrid meetings when required.	300	300
St. Cuthberts Church	Installation of a Baby Memorial, Installation of new signage, Renewal of footpaths, Professional Fees (architect and archaeologist).	2,000	2,000
St. Cuthberts Hospice	Many of our visitors still prefer to meet and visit guests outdoors to prevent the risk of infection. Our gardens continue to provide much needed sensory stimulation and therapeutic benefit to our patients and their families. It is important that we continue to maintain and rejuvenate the mature gardens we are most fortunate to offer. We are so grateful for the support of the City of Durham Parish Council and would use any subsequent funds to continue to improve accessibility around the Hospice grounds and enhance experience for all who visit our gardens through improvements and essential repairs. Your donation will be used to pay for new and replacement tools, equipment, plants and furniture. As a result of these funds and improvements, we will be able to remain a welcoming, peaceful and accessible environment for our patients, families and visitors, through innovation and repair. Over a 12-month period we expect that over 1,000 patients and their families will be able to enjoy the therapeutic value of nature within our grounds.	4,250	1,750
St Margaret Centre	The replenishment of consumable materials used in the craft room, woodworking, shop supplies and horticultural sections of the Centre.	5,000	3,000
St Nicholas Church	To help fulfil our aims of serving the community and acting as an eco-church we need to reclaim the church's graveyard which has been neglected (and desecrated) over the last 10 years. We want to turn it into a heritage rest and recuperation area potentially with mini-allotments for older residents to use and designated picnic and meeting areas and areas for rest and contemplation.	2,000	2,000
	Total	£25,900	£20,400

10. APPOINTMENT OF AN ARMED FORCES CHAMPION FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council has taken a lead at a local level on events such as Battle of Britain, D-Day commemorations, Remembrance Day and many more.

In order to promote the role of the Parish Council in its support for our Armed Forces personnel, the Clerk advised that he had been asked if the Council might consider establishing a new Armed Forces Champion role from within its membership.

The primary aim of the Armed Forces champion would be to maintain the Parish Council's commitment to support the Armed Forces and their families and veterans, and raise the profile of the support provided by the Council and the community as a whole.

To help define this role further, the following Terms of Reference were proposed to Council:

Armed Forces Champion Terms of Reference

1. The Nomination

The Parish Council shall nominate one Member at its annual meeting in May to undertake various roles consequential on the Parish Council's activities to honour our Armed Forces and continued links with the DLI. The councillor will be termed 'City of Durham Parish Council Armed Forces Champion' and will act to strengthen the Council's work on events such as D-Day, the Battle of Britain, Armistice Day, Remembrance Day, etc.

2. The Nomination process

Any councillor may nominate themselves for the role. Any nomination should be submitted in writing to the Clerk 7 clear working days before the meeting. Any nomination should be seconded by another councillor whose name should be recorded on the written submission. The nomination will be subject to a majority vote of the Full Council. In the event of two or more nominations, there will an election whereby the successful nomination will have a majority of votes cast; in the event of a tie, the Chair will have the casting vote.

3. The Length of Nomination

The period of nomination shall be for one calendar year; it may be renewed annually.

4. The Roles

The Armed Forces Champion's roles are as follows:

- Principal objective - raise the profile and needs of the Armed Forces community, within the Council and the parish area.

- Foster and maintain good working relationships with the Armed Forces community.
- Represent the Parish Council at key events centred around honouring the Armed Forces community both past and present, e.g., Durham City Remembrance Day.
- To act as the cultural link between the Parish Council and the DLI, County Council, Armed Forces and other stakeholders on the redevelopment of the DLI museum.
- Understand the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) and the needs of the Armed Forces Community in relation to Council policies and service delivery. Ensure awareness is cascaded to staff who have daily contact with the public through engagement.
- Actively communicate the AFC and the work in promoting it within the Council and the community, ensuring that Armed Forces Champion names and contact details are publicised and known both internally and externally through various communication channels.
- Act as the first point of contact for local Armed Forces Units and other key stakeholders, such as Service charities and other service providers.
- Ensure all areas of Council services recognise the needs of the Armed Forces community
- Understand Armed Forces activities and events within the parish area

5. Reporting

The Armed Forces Champion reports to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Full Council, as appropriate.

6. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The nomination should act at all times within the Parish Council's Standing Orders, with particular reference to SO18 (Financial Controls and Procurement), SO22 (Relations with Press/Media), SO24 (Communicating with District and County or Unitary Councillors), SO25 (Restrictions On Councillor Activities), FR 10 (Orders for work, goods and services), FR11 (Contracts), FR15 (Insurance) and FR17 (Risk management). The nomination should also act in accordance with City of Durham Parish Council policies on Communications, Environment and Sustainability, Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, Safeguarding and social media.

Members unanimously **agreed** the Terms of Reference for the Armed Forces Champion., as set out in this report. (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

Members unanimously **agreed** to establish the Armed Forces Champion role, as set out in this report. (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

The Clerk advised that he had received a nomination of Councillor E Scott for this role. This was proposed by Councillor L Brown and seconded by Councillor S Walker. The appointment of Councillor E Scott as the Armed Forces Champion was unanimously **agreed** by Members. (8 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions).

The Chair reminded Members that this role would be reviewed at the annual meeting of the Parish Council each May.

11. REPORT FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The Chair presented the following minutes from the most recent meeting of the Parish Council's Community and Residents' Association Forum (CRAF).

In doing so, the Chair highlighted what was a difficult meeting and reported that the Whinney Hill Community Group has now resigned from the Forum.

The Chair advised that he hoped to have a meeting of the CRAF soon, in order that the Terms of Reference, as revised, could be agreed by all Associations present.

Minutes of the Community Residents' Association Forum annual meeting held on Wednesday 26th April 2023

Present: Adam Shanley and Alan Doig (City of Durham Parish Council) Richard Hornby and Carole Lattin (Gilesgate Residents Association), Alan Hayton and Des Ward (Whinney Hill Community Group), Simon Priestley (Crossgate Community Partnership), David Rosser (Sheraton Park Residents Association), Mike Costello (Distressed Residents in the Viaduct Area), Kirk Leister (St. Nicholas Community Forum), Mr John Ashby, Mr John Lowe (Side Residents Association) and Walia Kani (Durham University Residents Forum).

Also present: Inspector Dave Clarke (Durham Police) and PC Michael Ashurst (Durham Police).

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Roz Layton (Elvet Residents Association).

2. Election of Officers

Alan Doig was elected as Convener of the Forum, proposed by David Rosser and seconded by Simon Priestley.

Roz Layton was elected as Deputy Convener of the Forum, proposed by Alan Doig and seconded by Simon Priestley.

Adam Shanley was elected as Secretary of the Forum, proposed by Simon Priestley and seconded by Richard Hornby.

3. Approval of the draft minutes of the Forum meeting held on 25th January 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

In approving the minutes, Alan Hayton proposed that the Forum develops a mechanism by which the minutes can be approved before being presented at a Full Council meeting. The Secretary advised that he would seek to have these circulated for comments/ amendments prior to the next Full Council meeting where they would be presented.

Alan Hayton also advised that he felt that the views of the Forum did not appear to be given any due consideration when looking at the Full Council minutes and he felt that the views of the Forum on particular issues should be highlighted at meetings and minuted accordingly.

4. Consideration of the Terms of Reference for this Forum

The Convener reminded Members that there is a need for the Forum to review its Terms of Reference each year and this usually took place in April at the annual meeting of the Forum.

The Convener reminded Members that the existing Terms of Reference for the Forum had been pre-circulated in advance of the meeting. The Convener also advised that the changes made and circulated were amendments he had made to the Terms of Reference. The Convener reminded Members that this is the Forum whereby any comments of changes to the Terms of Reference may be made and agreed.

Alan Hayton and Des Ward advised that the amendments to the Terms of Reference had been circulated without any reference at all to who had made the changes. Alan Hayton also objected to Forum Members not having been asked in advance for their own amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Des Ward advised that he felt that Councillors should not be involved in this Forum and any Parish Councillors attending these meetings should be asked to leave. Des Ward advised that he felt that this went against the principle of the Forum and objected to Councillors attending the meetings. Des advised that he felt that Parish Councillors have their own political agendas which could get in the way of issues being progressed.

Des Ward and Alan Hayton asked for an audit of the Parish Clerk's emails in the run-up to the establishment of the Forum so that the original reasons for establishing the Forum could be considered.

Mike Costello advised that he felt that more was achieved for the community on DURF without Councillor attendance at those meetings.

Alan Doig advised that he would be content to leave the Forum and allow for this to become a meeting of all of the parish's Residents Associations only without anyone from the Parish Council involved. Des Ward objected to this statement by the Convener.

The Secretary highlighted that this Forum is an opportunity for Members to discuss the Terms of Reference for the Forum and to agree these in this Forum and proposed that a vote take place following the discussion to agree the newly drafted Terms of Reference. Alan Hayton and Des Ward advised that they were opposed to a vote on this in this meeting as Associations had not had the opportunity to discuss the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Fiona Adamson advised that she felt having Councillors attending this meeting was important so that they could listen to the views of residents on particular issues. Fiona also advised that she would struggle to justify calling a meeting of her own Residents Association simply to look at the Terms of Reference of the Forum; a matter which some residents may consider to be quite trivial.

Simon Priestley and Dave Rosser also advised that they supported Councillors attending the Forum meetings.

Richard Hornby advised that he felt that this was an issue for the individual Residents Association to nominate their chosen representative. Richard advised that, if the chosen representative so happened to also be a Parish Councillor, then this was fine but the Councillor was attending the meeting as a resident representing their individual Association.

Carole Lattin highlighted that she had been nominated by Gilesgate Residents Association to represent them on this Forum and she therefore felt entirely justified to attend these meetings.

The Secretary highlighted that Carole is an extremely proactive Councillor along with 14 colleagues for the community and that he felt that having Carole and Alan attend the meetings had not hampered any projects in any way, indeed quite the contrary.

The Secretary also advised that a decision on whether to allow Parish Councillors to attend the Forum was fundamental to the ongoing running of the Forum. The Secretary also objected as an employee of the Council to the idea that he would be the link between residents' associations and the forum.

The Secretary advised that he is simply an administrator of the Parish Council not the spokesperson or decision-maker and that he felt that these meetings were becoming increasingly hostile; something which runs the risk of becoming a HR matter for the Parish Council as an employer if he is to be left alone to defend any decisions.

This statement was supported by Kirk Leister who said that he did not feel that Parish Councillors attending the meeting but with a different hat on caused any issues at all.

The Convener proposed that a decision on the Terms of Reference be deferred until a special meeting in June could take place where these could be properly considered. The Convener asked all attendees to take the Terms of Reference to their respective Associations and come forward with any proposed changes for the next meeting.

5. Update on the Service Level Agreement between Durham Police and the City of Durham Parish Council

The Convener welcomed Dave Clarke and PC Michael Ashurst to the meeting and thanked them for their work in the City.

Dave began by confirming that the two additional officers as part of the Operation Lentil project in the City began in early April and they were already a visible presence around the City and its surrounding residential areas.

Dave advised that he was aware that the additional officers had already dealt with a number of incidents since commencing and having the additional resource for the City meant that issues were being dealt with much quicker than they were prior to the Operation.

Dave took the opportunity to thank the Parish Council and local residents for their ongoing support with this Operation and time will tell what difference this makes for the City in addition to the work already being done by the Parish Council and others on the Safety Hub.

The Secretary highlighted the exceptional amount of work which Dave Clarke has put into this Operation and his ongoing work to make the City a safer and more pleasant place for residents.

All Forum Members thanked Dave Clarke and his team for their work and agreed that this additional visible presence was really having a positive impact on the City.

Forum Members highlighted that the big issue in the City at present is the issue of nuisance begging and expressed their disappointment that DCC had not pursued a PSPO against begging in the City centre. Dave Clarke advised that he and his team are currently looking to build up an evidence base to go back to DCC on this to try once more for a PSPO.

The Forum unanimously **agreed** to draft a letter of support for such a PSPO in the City and to send this in to DCC at the earliest opportunity.

In relation to Operation Lentil, Dave advised that he and the Secretary would soon be conducting interviews for a new Safer Streets Co-ordinator role; funded by the PCC's office as part of the SLA and he hoped to have someone in post full-time in the near future.

The Convener thanked Dave Clarke for such a positive update. Having received a round of applause from Forum Members, Dave Clarke and Michael Ashurst left the meeting.

6. Discussion on proposed report on a) additional HMO licensing and b) the impact of Durham University on the parish area

The Secretary reminded Members that, further to previous discussions and correspondence on the BRE report on Durham University, he and John Ashby were able to meet with BRE representatives on 1st March 2023.

The Secretary reminded Members that he had asked BRE to focus on providing the Forum with a separate cost and scoping document for two areas:

1. A report setting out a justification for the introduction of an additional HMO licensing scheme for Durham City; and
2. A report which focused on the information we have agreed and which is set out in the attached document kindly produced by Alan Hayton for us.

In the case of number 1, the Secretary advised that BRE have now advised that they no longer offer this service since their last report in 2012 for the County Council but offered an alternative service which focused more on housing stock modelling, etc. The Secretary advised that the Forum has concluded in writing that this would not be appropriate for our needs.

Since that meeting therefore, the Secretary advised that he has reached out to over 10 local authorities across the country who have successfully adopted an additional HMO licensing scheme and asked if they have used the services of an external consultant to produce the report justifying their own schemes. A number of whom recommended the same Housing Sector Market Research consultancy and the Secretary advised that he had reached out to this consultancy firm to enquire about the costs for a report but again this company does not offer this service.

The Secretary also highlighted that he has reached out to the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils, the County Durham Association of Local Councils, the Institute for Licensing and private contractors to locate someone to carry out a business case for this; all of which had been to no avail.

In relation to the larger report detailed above at point 2, the Secretary highlighted that BRE advised that such a report would carry a significant workload, hourly-rated consultancy fees, boots on the ground for surveys, etc. and the likely costs for this would be well into the £100ks - far beyond the means of the Parish Council. It is therefore regretful that the Forum will not be able to proceed with this proposal at this time.

John Ashby highlighted that a compulsory, self-financing private landlords' registration scheme is/was DURF's top priority in the Issues and Actions Register. This arose from a well-received presentation of the Sheffield 'SNUG' scheme at DURF's national conference in 2016. John advised that both the Parish Council and DURF have sought the introduction of such a scheme in Durham.

John highlighted that the purpose of the scheme would be: (i) give better protection for student, (ii) require external maintenance of the property, and (iii) require management of nuisance e.g. noise from early morning parties, wheelie bins and parking.

John advised that DCC officers committed in February 2022 to putting together a business case, including the role of the housing officer(s) involved in such

inspections, and what funding would be required to recruit such officers. However, there has been no further progress as the County Council officers have subsequently felt unable to commit to working on a draft business case unless and until other agencies, notably the University, have committed to some funding for these additional officer resources.

John advised that he is aware that the local MP and Jeremy Cook (Durham University) are soon to meet with landlords and letting agents in the City and that Jeremy is presently pushing for the national Selective Licensing Scheme to be amended to recognise the special situation in University cities.

John recommended that the Forum should welcome such a proposal as well as the University pressing for a resumption of the County Council's work, currently suspended, on the business case for a licensing scheme for Durham City like the Sheffield SNUG scheme, with estimates of staffing requirements and costs.

This was unanimously **agreed** by Forum Members.

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

Signed,

Forum Convener

End of report

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, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(27th July 2023)**