

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 22nd February 2024 at 7:00pm in the Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF.

Present: Councillors A Doig (in the Chair), E Ashby, J Ashby, V Ashfield, L Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, G Holland, C Lattin, R Ormerod, E Scott and S Walker.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and 6 members of the public.

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

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors H Weston and N Brown.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor E Scott declared an interest in all of the reports listed for consideration under the Planning and Licensing Committee section of the Agenda and took no part in the discussion or vote on these items.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25TH JANUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2024 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair welcomed Ms Debbie Hills to the meeting. Ms Hills thanked the Chair for the opportunity to speak on the matter of Leazes Bridge in Durham City and made the following statement:

"On Thursday February 1st, the County Council issued a new Order for Temporary Footpath Closure of Leazes Footbridge, for repairs. 5 days later the County Council issued a press release saying the Footbridge is, in fact, to be demolished. 2 days later, you, the Parish Council, were able to issue a statement saying:

"the City of Durham Parish Council supports the proposals for alternative walking and crossing arrangements to offset the demolition of the Leazes footbridge"

I recognise Leazes Footbridge is in the peripheral vision of most of you, with perhaps only about 1,000 of your 25,000 constituents living in the bridge's vicinity. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the 22,000 students who range around Durham, and have their medical practice on the other side of the bridge, it is very disappointing that you made this statement before hearing the views of anyone who uses the footbridge.

The footbridge was built in 1974, a direct result of too many students of Hild and Bede injured on this exact stretch of road where you are supporting a new crossing. In 1974 there were far fewer vehicles and only 5000 University students

Had the Parish Council been asked to comment on what motorists and commercial drivers coming in and out of Durham will think of an additional pedestrian crossing on the west side of the A690 / A181 roundabout - you would know that this will cause consternation, indeed uproar, compounding the additional delays already being experienced.

Your Parish Council Committees are charged with delivering your Strategy.

The Environment Committee promotes cleaner air and sustainable travel. Another pedestrian crossing will undermine the SCOOT system.

The Planning Committee, with Environment, wants to protect our World Heritage Site and Conservation Areas, and to improve and protect the appearance of the City and its heritage. The Gilesgate Conservation area document states "As an ancient route/gateway into the City, Upper and Lower Gilesgate are of immense importance."

The Business Committee engages with local businesses, and wants to encourage a variety of them to ensure a wide range of choice for. Every business on Claypath says they are suffering from the closure of Leazes Footbridge and you will find a Save Leazes Footbridge poster in everyone.

The Order for Temporary Footpath Closure of Leazes Footbridge is not the required process, in law, to demolish the bridge.

An Application for Diversion or Extinguishing Public Rights of Way under Section 119 or 118 of the Highways Act 1980 IS, for which

"consent of parish council is required for diversion or discontinuation of highway, traffic signs and other notices"

When the application for Diversion or Extinguishment is made, I'm asking you, to oppose it. Repairs or replacement is the only way forward, which can be paid for under the North East Transport Plan.

A last thought for your moral compasses. The required process to demolish the bridge gives no voice to the 13,500 constituents of Belmont and Carrville, plus the unparished part of Gilesgate and Sherburn Road, who are regular walkers into and out of the City, hopefully to also include the new residents at Bent House Lane. These long-standing communities to the East of the city include a large percentage of Durham's social housing, and disadvantaged residents, who walk both out of necessity and for pleasure."

Ms Janet George and Mr Adrian Darnell both expressed their concerns at the proposed closure of the Leazes Bridge. Mr Darnell advised that he would like to raise further queries with Durham County Council over the review undertaken which had deemed that the bridge could not be repaired.

Councillor Lattin advised that she was aware that the County Council has funding for the replacement of Baths Bridge but not Leazes Bridge and had deemed Baths Bridge as a higher priority for replacement.

Councillor Lattin advised that she did not understand why Leazes Bridge could not be repaired or that both bridges could not be replaced with a cheaper alternative such as wood.

Councillor Ashfield expressed her concerns over pedestrian safety if the bridge were to be demolished and advised that she felt that the Parish Council may have given more time to consider the implications of the closure of the bridge before issuing a public statement.

The Chair thanked members of the public and Members for their contributions to this discussion. The Chair advised that, whilst it was too late to consider a formal motion on this issue, he would be happy to see a formal motion on this matter at the next available Parish Council meeting.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor G Holland presented the minutes from the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings held on 12th and 26th January 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee updates.

Verbal report on public inquiry relating to the Sniperley applications

Councillor G Holland invited Councillor J Ashby to open the discussion on this item. Councillor J Ashby noted that the Public Inquiry began on 30 January and the live sessions ended on 21st February. He had attended this Inquiry on behalf of the City of Durham Trust, not the Parish Council, and had attended all the sessions.

Councillor J Ashby advised that the Trust had many, well-documented concerns that he and his Trust colleagues were able to present at the Inquiry across several very intense sessions. Councillor J Ashby highlighted that there were tense moments; one of relevance here is when, in Week 2, the Inspector pointedly commented that she was surprised that no County Councillors and no Chief Officers had attended at all, given that this is the largest and most prestigious development allocation in County Durham.

Councillor J Ashby advised that his overall impression is that the appellants dealt well with the County Council's five putative grounds for refusal, down from 13 grounds that had been put to the County Planning Committee in September 2022. Much was apparently achieved in side-room discussions because of the willingness of the three main parties - the County Council, County Durham Land and Bellway - to find acceptable solutions to the key issues. Indeed, it is to the credit of the County Council that it declared it would have refused the applications as submitted. This provided the opportunity - in the form of the Public Inquiry - for moving the developers very considerably towards what should be a much better development than would otherwise have been the case.

Councillor J Ashby advised that the Trust nevertheless still has grave reservations, for example about the Design Codes presented by the appellants. The County Council's position is that it accepts them; the Trust considers that particularly the Bellway Design Code is not fit for purpose. Sniperley has to be the best housing development ever achieved in County Durham, and Design Codes are crucial for this.

Councillor J Ashby highlighted that the Secretary of State has called in the four appeals to be determined by him, so the Inspector will simply be making recommendations. If the Inspector recommends approval, much will depend on the conditions to govern many crucial matters including layout, design, phasing, roadworks, bus routes, walking and cycling pathways, renewable energy, green spaces and land stability.

Councillor J Ashby also noted that much of the County Council's issues have to do with ensuring actual delivery of a primary school, additional capacity in Framwellgate Secondary School, a local retail and health centre, public transport, the linear park, and compensatory improvements in the remaining green belt. These issues require complex legal agreements and Section 106 funding. Having seen the documents being discussed between the parties, Councillor J Ashby observed that they are not yet finalised. Indeed, the County Council's legal officer has asked for time to obtain agreement from her clients. It is up to the Inspector as to what she recommends to the Secretary of State by way of conditions and Section 106 agreements, perhaps with amendments.

Councillor J Ashby added that the Parish Council had legitimate concerns about significant consequential impacts within its area on education provision, health services and traffic congestion. Councillor J Ashby advised that perhaps the most obscure position at the moment is coping with traffic congestion at Sniperley roundabout and on the A167 from Sniperley to Neville's Cross. The County Council had relied almost entirely on its highway department's assurances that the requirements laid down by the Independent Inspector of the County Durham Plan are met, but the Western Relief Road Action Group is far from convinced. Councillor J Ashby suggested that the Parish Council may wish to pursue this issue.

Finally, Councillor J Ashby wished to put on record that the County Council's Case Officer had acquitted himself admirably, and was praised by the appellants' Barristers for his professional conduct at all times over the past three years that their clients have been involved. He also noted that the Trust had a far better involvement, especially being able to come back and refute mistaken assertions, than is possible in the five minutes, sometimes just two-and-a-half minutes, allowed at County Council Planning Committee although, in fairness, County Council Planning Committees do not and should not last three weeks.

The Chair thanked Councillor J Ashby for his comprehensive report and also for attending each session of the Inquiry in order to provide this report.

Report by Jo-Anne Garrick on strengthening County Durham Plan Policy

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council had commissioned a report by its consultant Jo-Anne Garrick, in order to inform discussions between the City of Durham Parish Council and Durham County Council (DCC) specifically regarding opportunities to strengthen County Durham Plan Policy 16 to better manage the intensification of HMOs within the city.

The Clerk highlighted that Jo-Anne's report was set out such that it provides: a) a background to CDP policy 16, b) a section describing different approaches to the management of HMOs through planning policies and the outcome of planning appeals in those areas; and c) a section which sets out possible policy approaches that the parish council could consider highlighting in discussions with Durham County Council.

The Clerk advised that Jo-Anne's report had highlighted a number of very interesting different policy approaches taken by other Local Authorities, in whose area a University or several Universities have a significant presence.

The Clerk highlighted that the Planning and Licensing Committee had recently met and agreed to adopt the recommendations in full in Jo-Anne's report.

The Clerk also advised that DCC's planning development and planning policy teams had invited the Clerk, Jo-Anne and a Councillor to a meeting with them to discuss this report in more detail.

The Chair thanked the Clerk for his work with Jo-Anne on this matter. Members unanimously agreed to adopt the recommendations with Jo-Anne's report and await further feedback from the Clerk via the Planning and Licensing Committee on the outcomes of the meeting with DCC officers.

Report by the Parish Clerk on appeals data for County Durham.

Members warmly welcomed the research work carried out by the Parish Clerk on the matter of appeals history across County Durham. The Council warmly congratulated DCC on its success at resisting appeals to the Inspectorate against inappropriate development.

The Council also particularly welcomed that the report highlighted the success of the Parish Council in overturning an original recommendation to approve schemes in some cases at application stage and then subsequently at appeal.

Members agreed that the work of the Parish Council's Planning Committee very often involved dealing with issues which were at the heart of residents' concerns.

Members **agreed** to note this report and take the opportunity to thank DCC for their excellent track record in resisting appeals.

• Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 9th January 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee reports.

Report by David Miller on the condition of the existing Public Rights of Way network within the parish area.

Councillor C Lattin presented an excellent report from David Miller which set out the outcomes of a survey of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the City which includes statutory footpaths and bridleways.

Councillor C Lattin advised that the survey was carried on behalf of the Parish Council by volunteers in order to discover the condition of the network and how well it serves the public on 14th October 2023. The survey is a response to the Council's document 'Looking Forwards - Durham as a Creative and Sustainable City' Initiative 7: Identifying, conserving and Improving Footpaths in and around Durham City.

Councillor C Lattin highlighted that the survey is intended to provide evidence of where the paths require improvement and to report the findings to Durham County Council's Rights of Way team for action to be taken where necessary and possible. This could include both minor maintenance and cases where more significant interventions are proposed, for example to reinstate a path or to seek a Path Creation Order.

In summary, Councillor C Lattin highlighted that the survey has shown that the network of public rights of way (PROW) in the Parish is comprehensive, well used and mostly in good condition with 94% is either in good condition or passable requiring only minor improvements:

- 76% are in the Category of 'good' requiring no action.
- 18% are in the category 'passable/minor problems. The most common fault is the lack of finger posts or obscured finger posts (usually by being overgrown) from the road. The next most common faults are muddy patches or the requirement for minor repairs to surfaces or stiles.
- 6% are in the category of 'difficult or impassable' where more serious problems suggest greater interventions. There are a few instances where reconstruction of surfaces including drainage provision would be desirable. Also, there are a few cases where paths have disappeared largely through disuse that should be examined. There are also instances where path creation could be desirable which are included in this category because of lengthy processes involved.

Councillor C Lattin ended her assessment by taking the opportunity to thank David Miller for this excellent report and the volunteers who worked with the Parish Council in October 2023 on this work.

Members unanimously **agreed** to accept all of the recommendations within the report as follows:

- The City of Durham Parish PROW Survey Report, Analysis and Recommendations, be adopted following the inclusion of any further comments and be forwarded to Durham County Council for support and action.
- Request that Durham County Council reports, taking particular notice of the Parish Council's views that the PROW network is 'the poor relation' to the highway network and that full potential of PROWs be exploited by promoting the most important footpaths as a vital part of getting around the City, improving health and well-being, and enjoying the experience of the City
- A copy of the submitted report be sent to the volunteers with the thanks of this Council.

To consider supporting efforts to improve the drainage of the football field and adjacent adult fitness area at Merryoaks.

Councillor S Walker advised that she had recently presented a report to the Environment Committee in relation to the continued flooding of the football field and adjacent adult fitness area in Merryoaks.

Councillor S Walker advised that the field and adult fitness areas are well used by the local Merryoaks and Neville's Cross communities though it is clear that there is a significant flooding issue occurring within these areas which impacts on their use and enjoyment.

Councillor S Walker highlighted that the land in question is owned by Durham County Council.

Councillor S Walker also advised that, although there is a substantial amount of Section 106 funding (£141,015.20) available within the Neville's Cross Ward from the development of the Police HQ at Aykley Heads (**application ref: 8/CMA/4/73**), this is designated to Sports England who are not minded to use these funds for drainage solutions on existing provision but rather designated towards enhanced provision of sports facilities within the Ward. The latest proposal for the use of this funding towards enhanced provision involves a scheme with Durham School in our parish.

Members were advised that the Parish Council's Environment Committee agreed that this funding could be essential in ensuring that this free and open (albeit existing) provision of open green space for sports and recreation activities is safeguarded into the future.

The Environment Committee has asked if Full Council might consider seeking a resolution to this matter for its residents in the Merryoaks part of the parish. As a first step, the Parish Clerk has approached a

groundworks company to see if they can provide an estimate of the likely costs for rectifying the drainage issues at this field.

The Clerk advised that Environment Committee Members have asked if an approach to DCC might be possible to seek a resolution to this problem either through funding via the S106 funds or otherwise.

Councillor E Scott advised that she felt that the question of using S106 funding from the Aykley Heads development would not be possible. Councillor E Scott also highlighted that it may be possible for the Parish Council to resolve this matter but it all comes down to costs.

It was unanimously **agreed** that the Clerk and Councillor S Walker should work together in seeking a resolution to this matter by speaking with appropriate contractors to get an idea of costs for added drainage to the field.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 25th January 2024 as follows:

The Chair began by thanking all those involved in last week's fantastic blue plaque unveiling event for Bow Cottage; a really outstanding event. The Chair highlighted that Bow Cottage was the birthplace of the beloved 'Journey' and many other sculptures which form part of an incredible portfolio of works by a great man and which have become outstanding features of the City's cultural heritage and interest. It is only right that we honour this contribution and I know that Fenwick himself was delighted to see such a great attendance; not least from former pupils Sir Brendan Foster and Alan Smith. My thanks to them especially for attending.

The Chair also thanked Members involved in the fruit tree planting taking place across the parish area. The Chair advised that it was great to see the photos of the volunteers – both student and permanent residents alike – planting trees at the top of Lawson Terrace on Saturday. The Chair remarked that it is difficult to believe that that land was only a few months ago an overgrown, impassable mess filled with rubble and the like and now it is a beautiful orchard of fruit trees.

The Chair also thanked Councillor Esther Ashby for her continued leadership in championing the very serious matter of the poor condition of Fowler's Yard in our parish. Whilst a number of our actions have addressed some issues, such as the added CCTV to address fly tipping at the back of the Indoor Market, the additional signage and our Neighbourhood Wardens issuing fines, there are some big challenges still to tackle in this area. The Chair expressed his delight to see that we are moving forward to replace the City Theatre's windows and that the Clerk has been working tirelessly on this and that there is a meeting with the landowner next week to address the proliferation of industrial bins here too. We await the outcomes of both of these matters in due course.

The Chair also thanked DCC Highways team and particularly Kieron Moralee for his support in addressing the parking issues for residents of Diamond Terrace. As Members are aware, the parking provision for these residents had been removed by a developer in the area and this left this group of residents without any parking at all. Kieron and our Clerk have worked out a solution to this at a site visit and the Council is moving forward to formalise this arrangement – an excellent outcome for all concerned and a very welcome note from one resident who has thanked the Parish Council enormously for its support with this matter.

The Chair also thanked Councillors Lattin and Ashby for taking such an active role in the recruitment process for the new Durham University Community Liaison Manager. The Chair advised that he gathered that there were some very good candidates for this role and we await the outcome of this process in due course. We also wish Hannah Shepherd well in her new and more senior role with more of a housing focus; a key issue that the Chair advised that he was sure that Hannah will excel in.

The Chair expressed his deepest regret over the news that Durham Community Association – the tenant charity responsible for the running of the Shakespeare Hall – has recently decided to enter into voluntary insolvency as a charity. The building must legally be used as a temperance Hall for community use though it will be closed to all groups from the end of next week. The Chair advised that he and the Clerk met with the Shakespeare Trust who wish to remain in a landlord only capacity and therefore need another group to come in and help run this facility. It may be possible to consider a multi-agency community resolution to this matter which the Chair advised that he and the Clerk are exploring with various partner organisations.

The Chair expressed his huge congratulations also to the Durham Markets Company and DCC for a super successful set of Lunar New Year events to mark this new year of the Dragon; a symbol of vibrant energy and promising opportunities. Councillor Ashby caught the lettuce on our behalf so it is sure to be a year of prosperity ahead. The Chair advised that he certainly hoped that it is one for the irreplaceable Brian Stobie – an excellent officer at DCC – who has announced he is taking early retirement. The Chair remarked that Brian is a real can-do personality who has been a terrific friend to our Council and we wish him every happiness and success for the future.

The Chair advised that he was aware that there are raging passions over the issue of the demolition of the Leazes footbridge in our City. The Chair remarked that the Council has heard some very impassioned arguments from residents over the last few days and tonight. That said, the Chair advised that there is no getting around the cost implications for either repairing or replacing this footbridge and these are costs which the County Council is unable to bear. The Chair remarked that he stood resolutely behind his previous statement – agreed by this Council – that sadly these difficult decisions are an all-too-frequent reality for Local Authorities up and down the country at present following years of cuts to services from central Government.

On an unrelated matter, the Chair made a plea to all residents in our parish to please be mindful of their communications to both elected Members and our staff. Being a Parish Councillor is a rewarding and volunteering activity but sometimes a challenging one too. The Chair advised that he was especially disappointed some days ago to have sight of an email to one of our Members which manifestly fell below the standards of decency, dignity and respect he expects Councillors to be treated with. Every person here tonight is here because they have a love for our City and a desire to make this the best community it can be. The Chair asked that everyone please be mindful of this.

The Chair also took the opportunity to clarify that the recent press stories regarding the discrepancies between planning and licensing hours for certain premises within the City and the use of the term 'Wild West' were no reflection on any individual officer at DCC and their excellent work with the Parish Council. The Chair welcomed the statement response from DCC that they would be taking any breaches in permissions seriously and thanked them for this.

I am pleased that the Government is now offering all local Councils the opportunity to take advantage of a free framed picture of His Majesty the King. Our Clerk has put in the order for our own portrait and we are open to suggestions for a new home in Durham – for the portrait not our Clerk.

7. INTRODUCTORY REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY CONSULTATION

The Clerk highlighted that Durham County Council has recently launched a consultation on the review of its Statement of Licensing Policy for County Durham.

The Clerk advised that the existing Statement of Licensing Policy runs between 2019-2024. Whilst the Policy applies countywide, its content has particular implications for the City of Durham parish area as home to over 232 active licensed premises.

The licensing policy aims to balance the legitimate needs of businesses and public demand for leisure and cultural activities alongside the need to mitigate against potential adverse effects.

The Clerk reported that Durham County Council is now reviewing its current policy and are looking to understand if the policy provides sufficient and satisfactory information on the four licensing objectives, and in particular:

- the problem of drink spiking
- licensing hours and opening hours
- sexual harassment and misconduct and gender-based violence

DCC also want to know if the public feel that there is anything missing from the policy.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council's previously stated positions on the current policy is that a Cumulative Impact Policy and a late-night levy on licensed premises are missing features of the existing policy.

In setting its budget for 2024/25, Members approved a fund of £5,000 towards professional support in responding to this consultation. This is a key part of the work of the Licensing Committee and will surely set the parameters for all future applications in Durham for the next five years.

The Clerk advised that he has been seeking a suitable professional to support the Parish Council in responding to this consultation. To date, the Council's former barrister Ms Nicola Allan has advised that she will be able to support the Council with its response to this consultation.

The current consultation is now live and will run until 3rd May 2024.

The Clerk advised that, whilst the Parish Council's Planning and Licensing Committee will be reviewing this in forthcoming meetings, he had discussed this with Councillor S Walker and agreed that the bulk of the work on this consultation should take place as a working group outside of Committee time.

Councillor E Ashby asked that this consultation be a fixed item on the Agenda of the Planning and Licensing Committee until the end of the consultation period. The Clerk confirmed that this would be the case.

Members unanimously **agreed** to a) engage the services of Nicola Allan to support the Council in its response to this consultation, b) re-confirm that its position remains in favour of a Cumulative Impact Policy and a Late-Night levy and c) to take an active role in the working group to help formulate the Council's response and also promote an active public engagement in this policy review process, given its significant implications for the parish and its residents.

8. REPORT ON SECURING THE FUTURE OF THE DURHAM CITY SAFETY HUB

The Chair reminded Members that the Parish Council is a funding partner for the City Safety Hub at St. Nicolas Church. In setting its budget for 2024/25, the Council agreed to provide £10,000 worth of funding for the hub for this financial year. This is in addition to the funding provided in 2022/23 of £10,000 and the same amount this current financial year.

Since opening on the 5th February 2022, the Clerk advised that the hub has proven to be a positive and at times life-saving facility for Durham City on the busiest three nights of the week. Working between the hours of 8pm and 3am (to date) they have provided necessary support, assistance, and guardianship not only to females in a vulnerable or at-risk state, but also males in a similar situation.

The Clerk highlighted that the hub has dealt with nearly 4,000 incidents since launching and these can range from the most serious life-threatening issues to the everyday care and wellbeing facility.

The latest (confidential) report from January 2024 of the hub's operations and incident log has been sent to Members.

The new running costs for the hub are set out below, based on 3 Safer Streets Officers and a running time of 9pm to 3am on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights.

	Nightly cost	Weekly cost (based on 3 nights)	Annual cost (based on weekly costs x 52)
Accommodation	£40	£120	£6,240
Safe travel	£15	£45	£2,340
Security	£137	£411	£21,372
(DCC) Safer Streets Officers x 3	£439.20	£1317.6	£68,515
Total	£631.21	£1,893.63	£98,467

The Clerk highlighted that the above costs have been significantly reduced from the previous running costs of the Hub (circa. £130,000) owing to a successful negotiation with St. Nic's Church to reduce their room hire costs.

The above costs also represent the minimum staffing level required for health and safety reasons to ensure the Hub can continue safely for all involved. A dedicated police presence attached to the Hub will likely cost an additional £150/ officer/ night.

The Chair advised that the Durham City Medics have previously carried out their duties free-of-charge as a charity. Their model of operation will soon be changing and they are intending to join forces with the newly established Durham City Street Friends, another group of volunteers working to ensure a safe night time economy in the City. They will remain a cost neutral element to this budget.

Durham County Council, the lead partner behind the Safety Hub, has approached all partners to seek out a more sustainable (3-year) funding model for the Hub.

As such, the below funding model has been suggested based on partnership commitments for the Hub:

Partner organisation	Commitment towards costs over 3-year period
Public Health (DCC)	£60k
Durham PCC (subject to change depending on May 2024 elections).	£60k
City of Durham Parish Council	£30k
Durham BID	£30k
Durham University	£30k
Serious Violence Duty (national funding to be paid in 2024/25)	£50k

Durham AAP (if successful)	£12k
Total	£272k

It has always been the hope of the Parish Council that the hub could be funded into the long-term by the trade itself.

DCC is keen to secure funding over the 3-year period as soon as possible.

Councillors V Ashfield and D Freeman expressed their concerns that the University – a much larger organisation than the Parish Council – has only committed to the same £10,000 per year as the Parish Council and the BID. In light of a larger number of issues dealt with by the hub relating to supporting students, Councillors V Ashfield and D Freeman advised that they would have expected a higher contribution from the University.

This was echoed by Councillor G Holland who advised that he felt that the press should be informed of this low contribution from the University.

Members expressed concerns about making a definitive 3-year commitment at this stage, particularly given that the new Parish Council will be elected in May 2025 and therefore it would be unreasonable to tie the hands of future Councillors to such a commitment.

Members noted that a further £10,000 funding had been agreed for financial year 2025/26 and also unanimously **agreed** in principle only to a further two years' of funding.

9. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVE(S) ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor J Ashby presented the following report on the most recent meeting of the University's Student Housing Strategy Management Group:

- 1. Terms of Reference: these have been amended to re-name the group as the Student Housing Management Group. I queried where the crucial work on a strategy for housing for students would be placed; the answer is that DCC and DU and DSU have together agreed to prepare a housing strategy and an implementation plan for student housing in Durham city. I believe from the response by PVC Jeremy Cook that the stages and outcomes of this work will be shared with the Student Housing Management Group, but I need to check with University's Senior Manager Community Relations and Housing.*
- 2. The University has met with senior officers of the County Council to explore next steps with the draft County Housing Strategy. It was accepted that significant additions are needed to recognise the particular nature of the housing market in and around Durham City caused by the student population. There was less convergence on the University's assertion (and the Parish Council, DURF, DRAF and DSU) that an Additional Licensing Scheme is needed.*

- work remains to be done on evidence of need. It is fair to say that PVC Jeremy Cook felt strongly that the need is obvious.

- 3. There was an update on the well-publicised issue of missing gas and electricity certificates. The Public Register of Licensed HMOs is apparently up-to-date. However, there are still many licensed HMOs whose records are missing. The County Council served 250 Notices before Christmas requiring that the missing certificates be provided. The majority of landlords have complied but there are 13 premises where an up-to-date gas certificate has not been provided to DCC; 47 electricity certificates still missing; and 4 where both are missing. Enforcement action will be taken in early February, and possibly prosecutions thereafter. Publicity may also assist with the outstanding cases.*
- 5. Planning update and policy: CDP Policy 16 review was raised and the Parish Council's consultant's report welcomed. Several possible PBSA schemes have been put to the University at pre-application stage. The University will make formal comments in due course.*
- 6. Durham Students Union (DSU) noted that affordability of accommodation is a more serious issue than ever and are seeking a benchmark such as 50% of income.*

End of report

The Parish Clerk presented a confidential report to Members on the most recent meeting of the Durham BID's board.

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.', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(28th March 2024)**