

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 28th March 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, N Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, G Holland, C Lattin, R Ormerod, E Scott and S Walker.

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and 8 members of the public.

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

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor H Weston.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor H Weston.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22ND FEBRUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2024 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair welcomed Ms Debbie Hills to the meeting and invited her to speak for 3 minutes. Ms Hills thanked the Chair and made the following statement to the Council on Leazes Bridge:

"Congratulations on your Quality Award Status by the National Association of Local Councils, recognising that Local residents know that the Parish Council will always act wherever it can to address their issues and concerns.

However, regarding Leazes Footbridge, to date you have let many residents down. 640 have signed the e-petition asking Durham County Council to re- consider repairing or replacing Leazes Footbridge. This figure would be much higher if digital signing of the petition were easier.

Since being here last time, I've learnt first-hand that the Officers of Durham County Council Highways Team, including Directorate level, regard members of the public as an irritant; the more they're asked to explain their decisions, the more recalcitrant they become. It's like stepping back into the 1980's.

I understand, however, that Elected Councillors fare somewhat better with Officers. I quote Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change who writes "Affected elected members of the City of Durham Parish Council, have been regularly updated since July 2023". I can only imagine how

things could have been different if these Parish Councillors had shared this information with others who would have known that Leazes Footbridge is so highly valued.

Statements that repair is "not economically viable" or "that the bridge cannot be repaired without significant investment and traffic disruption to both lanes of the A690" have been much 'copied and pasted'.

Freedom of Information requests about the bridge show that the concrete across the deck and fixings for the railings has failed and that there is also deterioration to the half joints. All caused by water ingress i.e. lack of appropriate maintenance by the same Highways team.

What the Residents want to know is which of these problems is the problem that has condemned the bridge, resulting in the recommendation for its complete removal rather than a repair?

And how much is this repair cost that is deemed "too much" and "economically unviable?"

The answer will hopefully be in the detailed structural assessment undertaken in July 2023. I asked Alan Patrickson to share it with yourselves (the PC). He wrote "At the time of writing the Council has not received a request from the Parish Council to do so, so I am unable to do this." Since then, both Belmont PCC and I have made Freedom of Information requests to see this structural report in its entirety.

Despite the growing voice of discontent, which could be silenced by putting this structural report and the costs of repair into the public domain, the Highways Team, and Alan Patrickson, have not done so. A cynical person might begin to wonder why.

In the meantime, I have a few answers which, I am told, have not been shared with yourselves (the PC).

The County Council has not yet taken steps to legally stop a Public Right of Way. It intends (I quote) "to submit a retrospective application to the magistrate's court to authorise the stopping up of the highway on Leazes footbridge." Shame on them.

The Highways Team have acknowledged the decision to demolish was not taken by any Committee of Elected Representatives, other than being, and I quote Alan Patrickson again "presented at the County Council meeting on 28th February 2024, which in governance terms gives the project full Council approval to go ahead." A couple of lines within a 500 odd page budget pack. Shame on them.

Continuing to quote Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as a reason not to repair, legislation entirely superseded by the Equalities Act 2010, is simply wrong I ask this Parish Council to ensure Leazes Footbridge is not demolished until all the repair details, including cost, are in the public domain.

There is a wonderful opportunity for Durham County Council to prove that they do listen to Residents and to support thousands of Residents in maintaining a safe and accessible walking and cycling route”.

The Chair welcomed Mrs Angela Darnell to the meeting and invited her to speak for 3 minutes. Mrs Darnell made the following statement to the Council on Leazes Bridge:

"Thanks to Debbie Hills – for all her hard work and continued resilience in asking challenging questions of both officers and councillors.

I would like to comment on the process described at the February parish council meeting - The Chair indicated that Amanda Hopgood asked the Parish Council to support a press release on the proposed closure of Leazes Bridge. Apparently, she gave no details on costings, impact and replacements etc. I was disappointed to learn that the Parish Council supported this request via emails to Parish Council Members.

I find it hard to understand why the Leader of the Council thought this was the right way to proceed on such a contentious issue and why did the Parish Council not challenge this request, asking for more details, before the press release was published.

So, what happens next? Councillor Freeman made it clear at the Feb. meeting that the bridge is to be demolished. He did not seem to know any details of costings but, if that is the case and the decision has been made, then the PC must look at the alternatives to the bridge very carefully.

Additional traffic lights are not workable as Victoria Ashfield demonstrated very effectively at the February meeting.

The underpass is dirty, dark, often with graffiti and the rough sleepers pitch their tents there. Have any Parish Council Members even used the underpass recently?

A new bridge is essential to the safety and well-being the Durham citizens. As Debbie explained in February – that was the reason for building the bridge in the first place.

The doctors at Claypath Surgery have written to DCC stating that the bridge is essential to their patients.

I want to give you some specific examples of the impact if the bridge is demolished: -

- *Social isolation of elderly and disabled residents who cannot get to the Hild/Bede site, who dare not use three sets of traffic lights – cars shooting the lights.*
- *Tourists lost and cutting across the A690*
- *Students using Ravensworth terrace and cutting across the A690*

- *Small businesses losing trade in Claypath – The Capital, Claypath Deli, The Woodman, Well Pharmacy – they are already suffering reduced footfall because the bridge is closed.*

Finally – from the local people I have spoken to the way this issue has been handled has caused a severe loss of confidence in both the PC and the CC. Over 600 signatures and rising.

I would ask the Parish Council and the County Council to think again and do ALL they can to ensure Leazes Bridge is not demolished.

Thanks to Janet George – she does a marvellous job as Secretary to the Residents Association – keeping everybody informed of local events.”

The Chair thanked Ms Hills and Mrs Darnell for their comments.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor G Holland presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 9th and 23rd February and 8th March 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee reports.

Report on the work of the licensing policy review working group

Councillor S Walker began by reminding Members that the Council has now agreed to contract the services of Nicola Allan to respond to the review of DCC’s Licensing Policy consultation on the Parish Council’s behalf.

Councillor S Walker advised that, in order to support the work of responding to this consultation, the Planning and Licensing Committee has established a licensing policy review working group in order that a review of this policy can be given its deserved time not usually possible at a Full Committee meeting.

Councillor S Walker also highlighted that, in order to promote as wide a public engagement of this consultation as possible, the Clerk has designed an information leaflet to be distributed to residents informing them that the consultation is taking place.

Councillor S Walker highlighted that the licensing policy review group is committed to progressing a Cumulative Impact Policy and a late-night levy as part of this consultation. Moreover, that the group is keen to look at other aspects of this policy such as how licensees address the issues of fake IDs and drugs in their premises.

Councillor S Walker advised that the group has agreed a timetable for formulating their response to this important consultation and that representatives of the Committee had met with DCC licensing officers earlier today.

Councillor S Walker and the Clerk remarked on the positive tone of the meeting and highlighted that a new online licensing portal – long campaigned for by the

Parish Council – is now at commissioning stage and is expected to go live in 12-18 months. Councillor S Walker thanked the licensing team for their time in meeting with the Parish Council.

Councillor S Walker also advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner has now agreed to fund the introduction of the Purple Flag scheme in Durham City.

The Chair thanked Councillor S Walker for her report on this and Members unanimously **agreed** to delegate responsibility for responding to and promoting this consultation to the licensing policy review working group.

Report on the World Heritage Site Setting Study Project Design Document

The Clerk presented a report by CBA Associates. The Clerk advised that the report provides information on the proposed methodological approach, timescales and outputs for the preparation of the Durham Castle and Cathedral WHS Setting Study.

The Clerk advised that this report represents the first deliverable for the project in line with the outcomes for stage 1 as defined in the tender submission.

The Clerk highlighted that the report has been prepared to enable the Parish Council and other stakeholders funding this work to comment on the proposed approach early in the project process to ensure that it reflects our needs.

The Clerk advised that this approach has also been shaped by an inception meeting held on 18th January 2024, which included members of the project steering group which includes representatives from Durham County Council, Historic England, Durham University, City of Durham Parish Council and Diocese of Durham.

Members advised that they were fully content with this report and congratulated its author. Members unanimously **agreed** to take an active and positive approach to this project, jointly funded by the Parish Council, and to await further feedback on this.

• Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the minutes from the Environment Committee meeting held on 13th February 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee updates.

Report on the recent project at Laburnum Avenue/ Lawson Terrace.

Councillor C Lattin reminded Members that the Parish Council had recently funded the clearing of land to the rear of Laburnum Avenue and Lawson Terrace as well as planting of new fruit trees.

Councillor C Lattin highlighted that Durham County Council had sub-contracted the work to clear this site and the contractors have been widely praised for their excellent work.

Equally, Councillor C Lattin advised that the volunteers who have supported the Parish Council in planting a range of fruit trees did an excellent job and Councillor C Lattin thanked them most gratefully.

Although not broken down to this detail at the time of quoting for the site, the Clerk advised that DCC officers based their quote for the clearing of the site on an estimate that the vegetation and rubble would be approximately 3 tonnes.

The Clerk advised that he was contacted in early March, six months following the clearing works by DCC's estimator who has now confirmed that the site in fact held nearly 30 tonnes of vegetation and rubble – a significant amount higher than that estimated at the time of the quote. As such, DCC has asked if the Parish Council might be able to provide further funding for the works undertaken.

The Clerk advised that the additional costs incurred were approximately £3,800.

- £2,300 for the tipping costs (originally estimated at £360 for 3 tonnes)
- £1,500 additional handling costs (there was so much in volume that contractors had to lead the plant up to a temporary storage area to allow it to be segregated then loaded by JCB into skips).

Councillor C Lattin advised that the above information was not communicated to the Parish Council during the works and therefore the request for additional funding is retrospective.

The Clerk advised that the budget assigned for this project is already fully allocated and therefore any additional contribution towards these works will need to be achieved from underspends in other budget areas.

The Clerk advised that the Environment Committee had recently met and confirmed that it would be minded to approve £1,000 extra towards the project retrospectively, subject to Full Council agreement. This would be a gesture of goodwill in the interests of maintaining good relations with the team at DCC who estimated for and organised the works to be carried out.

Councillor E Scott advised that she felt that the Parish Council should not pay for this error. This was echoed by Councillor V Ashfield who felt that the decision to sub-contract this work was not communicated to the Parish Council either.

Members considered the proposal to agree to provide an additional £1,000 funding towards this project, as set out in the report, as a gesture of goodwill.

Councillor E Ashby proposed that a decision on this be deferred until further information became available and this was seconded by Councillor C Lattin. A vote was undertaken resulting in 6 votes in favour of deferring and 6 votes against deferring. It was **agreed** not to defer a decision on this matter following the Chair's casting vote against deferral.

Members did not agree to provide an additional £1,000 funding towards this project (**Votes cast as follows:** 2 votes in favour of paying the additional £1,000, 8 votes against paying the additional £1,000 and 3 abstentions).

Proposal for a blue plaque to commemorate the location of the former Durham City Ice rink

Councillor C Lattin reminded Members that the Parish Council has funded the production of new blue plaques around the parish area, as part of our aim of promoting the rich and diverse heritage of the City.

These blue plaques seek to celebrate a person, event or building of significance and have been popular with visitors and local residents. Councillor C Lattin advised that, at a recent meeting of the Parish Council's Environment Committee, Members discussed the possibility of having a blue plaque produced to commemorate the former site of the Durham City ice rink, what is now the passport office.

Councillor C Lattin highlighted that Icy Smith was well known in the 1920s for selling ice, but as fridges became popular in the 1930s, he decided to build an ice rink (always his dream). He bought the ancient Mill at Freeman's Place at the bottom of Walkergate. He made it provide hydroelectric power for a while. He then knocked down some houses next door and built his ice rink.

Councillor C Lattin took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for his exceptional work on this project to date and reported that the Clerk had not only had the wording agreed for the plaque with the family of Icy Smith but had also arranged for Torvill and Dean to unveil this at an upcoming event in the City.

Members expressed their delight at this project and unanimously **agreed** to support the production of the blue plaque for the former ice rink, as set out in the above report and also to delegate full responsibility for organising the unveiling event to the Clerk.

Proposal for a blue plaque to commemorate 12 Church Street as the former home of Professor Dame Rosemary Cramp.

Councillor C Lattin also advised that, at the same Environment Committee meeting, Members discussed the possibility of having a blue plaque produced for 12 Church Street in our parish.

Councillor C Lattin highlighted that 12 Church Street is an interesting and listed historical building in the Elvet part of the parish area. More significantly however, 12 Church Street is the former home of renowned archaeologist and the first female Professor at Durham University, Professor Dame Rosemary Cramp.

Councillor C Lattin advised that Professor Cramp lived and worked here from November 1972 until June 1988. It was getting the chair, with the consequent boost in salary, that made it possible for her to buy this house. It is understood that it was getting the chair which was actually the decisive factor that led to her move to Church Street, where she is said to have loved her little house and its proximity to the churchyard and walks along the river.

The Clerk advised that, given the building's listed status, if this proposal is approved, a planning application must be submitted for permission to install this blue plaque.

Dr. Zara Worth, a member of the public from Elvet Residents Association, spoke in favour of this proposal and asked Members to support this.

Dr Worth highlighted that, having this plaque in this particular location, on a route trodden by thousands of students on their way to and from the Bill Bryson library, will inspire so many female students.

Dr Worth added that, whilst young female students make their way back and forth from their classes, this plaque will also signpost for them a possible career path that not so long ago would have been inconceivable for a woman

Members unanimously **agreed** to support the production of the blue plaque for 12 Church Street.

Breathe Clean Air project with three primary schools in Durham City

Councillor R Friederichsen advised that the Breathe Clean Air project by OASES will enable Durham city schools to engage with Clean Air Day (June 20th 2024). The project will make schools aware of the importance of clean air, and how action to improve air quality benefits human health and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Councillor R Friederichsen advised that OASES will also investigate the barriers to action - the children will design a survey to establish current knowledge and awareness of the issue and what/why current travel choices are made within their whole school community. OASES staff will work with children and teachers at three schools (St Oswald's, St Margarete's, and Neville's Cross primary schools).

Councillor R Friederichsen advised that the project aims, objectives, and deliverables will include raising awareness of the co-benefits of reducing air pollution by and for the school community, and to encourage behaviour change. The objectives of the project are to:

1. Motivate schools, children and parents to take action to reduce school-related air pollution.
2. Investigate the barriers to related action.
3. Identify potential priority areas for follow up to support behaviour change.

Councillor R Friederichsen also advised that the deliverables of the project will be:

1. a survey, co-created and analysed with children, and a final report which will be made available to schools and the Parish Council, and which will inform the
2. whole-school assembly on the topic (covering key facts, challenges and solutions), and
3. two class sessions about the topic at each school.

Councillor R Friederichsen also advised that this project will also establish the potential for follow-up projects that facilitate more direct action; e.g. supporting the increased use of e-bikes to transport children to and from school, creating and supporting walking buses, and other ways to reduce car travel to and from schools.

Councillor R Friederichsen highlighted that the original intention within the allotted budget for this project was to work with the 3 schools and 1 class per each year group, however the Environment Committee had agreed to recommend increasing the budget slightly to ensure that all classes were able to partake in this initiative.

Councillor D Freeman advised that he was very much in favour of this project but asked the Environment Committee to ensure that the additional funding came from their own budget and not through the Council's contingencies budget. The Clerk confirmed that this would be possible.

Members unanimously **agreed** to support this initiative with the increased budget set out within the report.

- **Business Committee**

Councillor R Ormerod presented the Business Committee minutes from the meeting held on 16th January 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor R Ormerod moved on to Committee reports.

Proposal to support the Durham City Theatre with the replacement of its windows and improve the aesthetics of Fowler's Yard.

In highlighting the small step successes of the Business Committee already on the project to improve Fowler's Yard, the Clerk also advised that the Committee is continuing its work on two pressing matters which remain top priorities for this project

1. Tackling the proliferation of bins in the service yard area of Fowlers Yard – with a meeting of all businesses and accommodation providers with a bin(s) in this area planned for after Easter.
2. Replacing the windows and repointing the brickwork to the façade of the Victorian section of the Durham City Theatre building – the current windows are seriously impacting on the façade of the building and the wider area and are also proving hazardous to the integrity of the building and repair works are deemed urgent.

The Clerk advised that the Victorian section attached to the south-end of the Theatre is a large-scale warehouse building constructed from handmade brick and incorporating timber windows painted in red (North elevation) and blue (West elevation). Although this part of the building has been heavily altered over time, with the upper floor rebuilt from modern brick, this section of the building is considered to be of considerable character, appearance and historic interest.

The Clerk advised that he has recently submitted a planning application for the like-for-like replacement of the windows to this section of the building (application ref: DM/24/00447/FPA) and is awaiting elevation drawings from the Theatre's chosen architect for this application to go live. Equally, the brick repointing is permitted development and does not form part of the application submitted for the Theatre.

In total, the works are likely to cost between £34-£36,000.

In order to fund these new windows, the Clerk advised that he has reached out to the County Council's community economic development team and has a verbal agreement of £20,000 towards these works (with a possibility of a slight uplift if required), on the condition that this does not exceed 70% of the total costs for these works.

Moreover, the Dramatic Society is able to provide £4,000 of its own funding towards these works.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council's Business Committee unanimously agreed to recommend to Full Council that the £10,000 funding agreement for the improvements to public toilets instead be allocated to these works.

In light of development pressure in this area, the Clerk recommend that the Parish Council condition any contribution towards these works, such that there be a requirement to return the £10,000 should the building be sold to another operator.

The Clerk took the opportunity to thank Councillor E Ashby for her ongoing work and support with this project and stressed that delivery of these improvements to this important independent community facility – whose key aim is to provide cultural/ theatrical entertainment at an affordable cost to the public – will give the area a real uplift.

Members unanimously **agreed** to provide £10,000 of funding towards this project, as set out in the report provided, and to reallocate this from the toilets fund.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 22nd February 2024 as follows:

The Chair began by thanking Councillor Esther Ashby on her continued championing of Fowler's Yard issues. The Chair remarked that the Council has received an excellent report already this evening on the issue of the windows at the City Theatre and the Chair advised that Councillor Ashby and our Clerk have arranged a roundtable with all businesses in Silver Street currently using this area for waste storage and disposal. Moreover, the Chair remarked how pleased he was to hear a report that, following a meeting Councillor Ashby had with the waste refuse team, the team have been able to reduce the number of bins here by 6 bins after agreeing to a more regular collection arrangement – the Chair thanked all those involved with this project.

The Chair also remarked how pleased he was to hear a report of the last Business Committee meeting where two teams within DCC were particularly commended for their recent work with the Parish Council – namely the community economic development team and the waste management team. The Chair thanked them for their ongoing support for Parish Council initiatives.

The Chair also sent his best wishes for a speedy recovery to our Member of Parliament Mary Foy on her recent breast cancer diagnosis. The Chair advised that Mary is very much in our thoughts and prayers at the moment and we hope to have her back on top form very soon.

The Chair remarked how sad he was to receive a report this week that Boots appear to have put out an official communication to a resident advising them that the Parish Council cut the Terracycle pill packet scheme without notice. As Members are aware, this is not the case and the Chair advised that he was aware that the Clerk and others have been at great pains to clarify this with the staff. The Chair advised that he would be writing a formal letter to Boots' head office asking them to clarify their reasoning for saying this and to immediately retract and correct their records on this matter. The Chair advised that the Parish Council has invested heavily in this remarkably successful scheme and he sincerely hoped this does not overshadow this scheme which Boots themselves ended.

In addition, the Chair advised that he was aware of the exceptional work by Councillors Lattin and Ashfield to locate a new home for these boxes. The Chair advised that he was delighted to hear that Councillor Lattin has secured the agreement of Whitfields in between Belmont and Durham City parishes and is hoping that the two Councils might jointly fund the scheme for a year at £2,000 each. By which time, the new scheme offered by Boots – fully funded by them – will be expected to be up and running though obviously this is dependent on the redevelopment of Prince Bishops too. The Chair asked for an agreement at this meeting that the Parish Council seeks to progress this with Belmont Parish Council and this was unanimously agreed by Members.

The Chair offered his congratulations to the Clerk on securing Torvill and Dean for the unveiling of the new blue plaque marking the site of the former Ice Rink. The Chair remarked that this is really incredible work. The Chair also thanked Councillor David Freeman for his support with this initiative as Councillor Freeman was instrumental in securing a meeting for our Clerk with the passport office estate manager.

The Chair expressed his real frustration and upset over the recent HMO appeal decisions in Neville's Cross. The Chair advised that he felt that this is made all the more frustrating by the seemingly contradictory statements from the same Inspector on different appeals. The Chair expressed his gratitude to Councillors John Ashby and Grenville Holland for following up on this matter and the Parish Council is now seeking a meeting with our Head of Planning at DCC.

The Chair expressed his gratitude to the Council's licensing team who met with our Clerk and Councillors Walker and Ashby today. The Chair advised that he was aware that this was a really useful meeting where the Council was encouraged to make any and all representations on the ongoing consultation on the Council's Licensing Policy – a desperately important document with significant implications for our parish. The Chair advised that the good news from today's meeting is the confirmation that DCC will be moving forward in 12-18 months with a new supplier

for an online licensing portal – something this Parish Council has long campaigned for.

The Chair also thanked the Clerk for getting the new signage for the Battle of Neville's Cross walk agreed and in production – this should be with us in a matter of weeks and the Clerk has already been in touch with David Butler regarding the possibility of another one of David's excellent walking tours of the site. The Chair expressed his delight that David – a walking encyclopaedia of knowledge about Durham as the former county archivist – has agreed to do this for us in the summer.

The Chair also advised that, as equally as impressive, is that the project has come in under budget by approximately £6,000 and the Clerk has already got to work with Neville's Cross Councillors on another potential use of this public art Section 106 funding.

The Chair noted that he had recently signed off the invoice for the DCC election costs of £3,894.05 which had to be paid from the Parish Council reserves.

The Chair noted that he was one of two nominated CDALC representatives on the Committee. While the majority of complaints related to Parish Councillors the Committee did not discuss how to address this, other than to ask how much the inquiries into complaints cost. The Committee had not, over three meetings, acknowledged the presence of the representatives.

7. MOTION BY COUNCILLORS R ORMEROD AND C LATTIN ON LEAZES BRIDGE

Councillor R Ormerod proposed the following motion on Leazes Bridge and this was seconded by Councillor C Lattin:

"This Council:

Notes with sadness and concern the closure of Leazes Footbridge due to structural problems.

Recognises that large numbers of residents of our parish, from Belmont Parish and from the unparished area in between are distressed and inconvenienced by this.

Urges Durham County Council to ensure it has investigated all possible options for repair of the bridge before it commits to demolition.

Understands that if demolition is necessary the cost of replacing the bridge is likely to be very high and not affordable in the next financial year but nevertheless asks that Durham County Council replace the bridge when finances allow.

Accepts that regardless of whether the bridge is repaired or replaced it is likely to remain closed for many months.

That being so, this council asks that Durham County Council provides an alternative crossing point incorporating a signalised crossing facility by upgrading

the western side of Gilesgate Roundabout so that pedestrians can be better protected when crossing the A690, and requests a site visit involving officers, Councillors and the Parish Clerk to discuss the proposed route of any such crossing”.

Councillor V Ashfield expressed her disappointment at the motion and advised that she could not support this at all. Councillor V Ashfield expressed her concerns at the lack of transparency around the closure and subsequent proposed demolition of Leazes Bridge and echoed the concerns of residents in attendance at the meeting who had spoken under public participation.

Councillor E Ashby proposed the following amended motion and this was seconded by Councillor R Ormerod:

"This Council:

Notes with sadness and concern the closure of Leazes Footbridge due to structural problems.

Recognises that large numbers of residents of our parish, from Belmont Parish and from the unparished area in between are distressed and inconvenienced by this.

Urges Durham County Council to ensure it has investigated all possible options for repair of the bridge before it commits to demolition.

*Understands that if demolition is necessary the cost of replacing the bridge is likely to be very high and not affordable in the next financial year but nevertheless asks that Durham County Council **to commit to replacing** the bridge when finances allow.*

Accepts that regardless of whether the bridge is repaired or replaced it is likely to remain closed for many months.

That being so, this council asks that Durham County Council provides an alternative crossing point incorporating a signalised crossing facility by upgrading the western side of Gilesgate Roundabout so that pedestrians can be better protected when crossing the A690, and requests a site visit involving officers, Councillors and the Parish Clerk to discuss the proposed route of any such crossing”.

Members voted in favour of this amended motion and voted as follows on the now substantive motion:

Councillor Rupert Friederichsen - against
Councillor Esther Ashby - abstain
Councillor John Ashby - abstain
Councillor Richard Ormerod - for
Councillor Grenville Holland - for
Councillor Carole Lattin - for
Councillor Nicola Brown - abstain
Councillor Elizabeth Scott - for
Councillor Susan Walker - for
Councillor Alan Doig - for
Councillor David Freeman - for
Councillor Liz Brown - for
Councillor Victoria Ashfield - against

A named vote having been requested by Councillor R Ormerod and accepted by Members.

8. REPORT ON THE FORTHCOMING CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER FOR DURHAM CITY

The Clerk reminded Members that a previous attempt to introduce a PSPO in Durham City had not been progressed by DCC's Cabinet.

The Clerk advised that the Police and DCC had worked constructively on a revised PSPO and following DCC Cabinet's approval of this report, it is now expected that DCC will be launching a six-week public consultation from 7th May 2024, seeking views on the introduction of this PSPO.

The Clerk advised that the order may have effect for up to 3 years and the Local Authority must consult with the Chief Officer of the police, the local policing body, and local communities' before issuing the order.

The Chair reminded Members that Durham Police have highlighted the need for such an Order to the Parish Council and are seeking our support in both supporting the introduction of this PSPO but also in making the public aware of the consultation and its implications for the City.

As part of its work on the licensing policy review working group, Members have agreed the content of a leaflet to be distributed around the parish area and unparished part of Gilesgate to make the public aware of this upcoming consultation and also the ongoing consultation into the review of the Council's licensing policy.

The Clerk highlighted that the scope of any PSPO could include restrictions on the following:

● Begging

- a) Any behaviour that causes nuisance, distress or blight upon the city including nuisance begging such as by a cash point, in a shop doorway or on public transport
- b) All persons are prohibited from approaching other persons in the street in order to beg them for money.
- c) Any activity in the street causing a public nuisance such as obstruction of doorways or pavements, including unreasonable behaviour whilst intoxicated and acting in a threatening, abusive or insulting manner.
- d) All persons are prohibited from sitting or loitering whilst in possession of signage or other items ancillary to, and for the purposes of, begging or soliciting money from passers-by.

● Urinating or defecating

- (a) No person shall urinate or defecate in public restricted areas other than by use of a lavatory made available for use by the public.

● Use of intoxicating substances

- (a) The ingestion, inhalation, injection, smoking or other use of psychoactive intoxicating substances shall be prohibited in restricted areas.
- (b) Where an authorised person reasonably believes that psychoactive intoxicating substances are being ingested, inhaled, injected, smoked, or otherwise used in a restricted area they will require any person to surrender said substance and any associated items.

Members unanimously **agreed** to submit a letter of support for this proposed PSPO and to take any and all actions required to ensure that the public are aware of this consultation taking place from 7th May 2024.

Due to the confidential nature of the following items, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the LGA 1972 Act and section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. At this point in time the press and the public were asked to leave the room.

9. TO REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES IN DURHAM CITY

In agreeing to continue to provide professional support for local businesses, the Parish Council unanimously **agreed** to continue to fund the Indie Durham City project for a further 2 months' period until the end of May only. Members also unanimously **agreed** to delegate to the Business Committee the responsibility for reallocating this funding on a specific project which provided professional support for local businesses.

10. GOOD CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2024 AWARD

Members **agreed** to award the Good Citizen of the Year 2024 Award to: Jacqui Toase, Dave Cuthbertson, John Lowe and David Miller.

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

Signed,



**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(25th April 2024)**