

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the annual meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Thursday 23rd May 2024 at 7:00pm in the Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF.

Present: Councillors A Doig, V Ashfield, L Brown, N Brown, D Freeman, R Friederichsen, G Holland, C Lattin, R Ormerod and S Walker.

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

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor S Walker was elected as Chair of the Parish Council. Proposed by Councillor A Doig and seconded by Councillor R Ormerod. Councillor S Walker read out and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of this Office.

There were no other nominations for the role of Chair.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor R Ormerod was proposed by Councillor G Holland and seconded by Councillor D Freeman for the role of Vice-Chair.

Councillor V Ashfield was also proposed by Councillor A Doig and seconded by Councillor R Friederichsen for the role of Vice-Chair.

Councillor V Ashfield was elected as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council by 5 votes to 3. There were 2 abstentions from this vote.

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

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors J Ashby, E Ashby, R Hanson, E Scott and H Weston.

4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

5. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25TH APRIL 2024

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

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms Polly Low advised that she was attending the meeting with a general interest in all Agenda items on behalf of Elvet Residents Association.

7. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor G Holland presented the minutes from the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings held on 22nd March and 5th and 19th April and 3rd May 2024. There were no queries from Members on these minutes. Councillor D Freeman did report however that the appeal for the care home facility at South Road in the parish had been allowed by the Inspectorate.

• Environment Committee

Councillor C Lattin presented the minutes from the Environment Committee meetings held on 12th March and 9th April 2024. There being no queries from Members on these minutes, Councillor C Lattin moved on to Committee reports.

Proposal for a blue plaque to commemorate the establishment of the first college for women at 33 Claypath, later St Mary's college

Members considered the proposal for a new blue plaque for 33 Claypath as the former Women's Hostel linked to St. Mary's College and which helped to provide residential accommodation for women to access higher education.

Councillor C Lattin advised that she felt that this was an excellent proposal originally put forward by Councillor J Ashby. Councillor C Lattin thanked Councillor J Ashby for his excellent work to date on this initiative.

Councillor C Lattin highlighted that Durham University's St. Mary's College is celebrating its 125th Anniversary this coming Academic Year 2024/25 and this would be an important aspect of events taking place over this Academic Year to celebrate this milestone in the College's history.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she fully supported this proposal and felt that, at some stage, the Parish Council should produce its own walking trail with all of its blue plaques included.

Councillor L Brown advised that she fully supported this proposal too and she looked forward to yet another successful unveiling event and hoped that the Clerk could secure another 'big name' to support its unveiling.

Councillor C Lattin highlighted that the City of Durham Trust has done a lot of work on the issue of plaques and she was pleasantly surprised to discover that the City has over 150 plaques in its area.

If approved, the Clerk advised that he would happily work with colleagues to ensure a successful unveiling event, with St. Mary's College already agreeing to fund the reception element of this project. In particular, the Clerk highlighted the plaque's location and the work which will need to be done on the logistics of this unveiling event, given the limited footpath space and how busy Claypath is from a traffic perspective.

Members unanimously **agreed** to support the production and financing of this plaque, as set out in the above report.

• **Business Committee**

Councillor R Ormerod presented the minutes from the Business Committee meeting held on 19th March 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor R Ormerod moved on to Committee reports.

Proposal from Durham Fringe on the 2024 Festival

Councillor R Ormerod advised that the Business Committee had recently met with the organisers of Durham Fringe and had a very good discussion with them about this year's forthcoming event.

Councillor R Ormerod particularly highlighted the growth in ticket sales, shows and attendees from 2023 compared with the 22 event. The Durham Fringe Festival 2023 was a huge success with an 82% increase in ticket sales and 93% of ticket purchasers saying they would recommend the festival to a friend or colleague.

Councillor R Ormerod advised that the organisers believe that part of the reason for this success was the beautiful new performance space they created on Palace Green, in a magnificent sculptured stretch marquee.

Councillor R Ormerod advised that the organisers want to build on the success of the Palace Green marquee, and in 2024 fill it with even more performances, including choirs, plays, children's shows and spoken word.

The Clerk highlighted that the main marquee is 15 x 20 metres and seats 160. There will be a linked catering marquee, which will be where audiences gather before and after shows. The total cost of delivering the stretch tent marquee, giving the festival visibility in this high-profile space, is £10,700.

Councillor R Ormerod advised that the organisers are requesting a contribution of £5,000 towards the costs of delivering the marquee. This would be a much-needed contribution to our overall costs of c. £107,000 this year.

Councillor R Ormerod advised that the Business Committee had recently met and agreed to provide the requested £5,000 funding, as set out in this report.

The Clerk also advised that the Fringe has offered to acknowledge the Parish Council's support in all literature and marketing materials for this year's Festival.

Members unanimously **agreed** to support the event and to provide the £5,000, as set out in the above report.

To consider a proposal from the Parish Council's retail consultant on ongoing professional support for businesses

The Clerk reminded Members that, in agreeing to continue to provide professional support for local businesses, the Parish Council had agreed to continue to fund the Indie Durham City project for a further 2 months' period until the end of May only.

The Clerk highlighted that a special meeting of the Parish Council's Business Committee had taken place where this matter was recently discussed and the Committee felt more minded to request from the Parish Council's retail consultant a set of key targets or KPIs to help guide the Committee on its ongoing commitment with this service.

Members considered the updated proposal from the Council's retail consultant on proposed future priorities and services. Members unanimously **agreed** to refer this back to a further meeting of the Business Committee, where a more project-based approach to this funding could be considered. The Clerk highlighted that a further special meeting of the Business Committee would be taking place in mid-June and Members unanimously **agreed** to extend the current arrangement with the Indie Durham City project until the end of June to allow the Committee and Full Council to consider proposals.

8. CHAIR'S UPDATE

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

The Chair began by paying tribute to my predecessor Councillor Alan Doig. Being Chair of a Parish Council is a difficult and at times thankless role. As a Council that doesn't stand still for a moment and one which is always working on the next project, there are always bound to be disagreements and compromises to be made. But Alan has led this organisation with great skill and much energy. Whilst Elizabeth's legacy as Chair was establishing the Council in the first place and building up our Remembrance activities to what they are today, Alan's legacy will most certainly be more police on our streets and the Council achieving a Quality Award last year. A very big thank you Alan.

The Chair also offered her thanks to Alan for the tremendous way he chaired yesterday's annual meeting of our parish. The Chair remarked that it was great to see that the weather did not put off members of the public from attending, hearing about the work of this Council and asking questions. The meeting was an extremely positive one the Chair felt and encouraged more Members to attend this event in future please. The Chair thanked Durham Sixth Form Centre for stepping in at the last minute, accommodating us so wonderfully and free-of-charge too. The Chair also thanked our guest speaker Dave Clarke who have a terrific update on policing in the city.

The Chair advised that she was disappointed not to be able to hold our annual meeting at the usual venue of the Town Hall this year. The Chair echoed the concerns expressed by Members across this Council at the direction the Town Hall appear to be going in, in terms of their high room hire costs now. Each booking now has to put a minimum of £500 behind the till in order to secure a booking – this makes our City's Town Hall – an asset to our community and a jewel in our county's crown – completely unreachable for many groups and I hope that Durham County Council will review this direction of travel.

The Chair highlighted that the Clerk has been working tirelessly on the organisation of the D-Day anniversary event on 6th June. The Chair reminded

Members that a reception is planned at County Hall with the lighting of the beacon taking place immediately afterwards by none other than His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant Mrs Sue Snowdon and the new Mayor of Durham. The Chair thanked the Charter Trust for their support with this event and for agreeing to fund part of this reception. The Chair remarked that she felt that the Memorandum of Understanding with the Freemen about these events ought to be reviewed in due course too, in order to avoid any perception that the Parish Council is solely responsible for the lighting of this beacon.

The Chair also took the opportunity to thank all those involved in the brilliant day unveiling the blue plaque dedicated to Durham City Ice Rink. The Chair advised that she was well aware of the enormous work the Clerk and others put into making this event so wonderful. Not least, securing Torvill and Dean and raising the profile of the Parish Council's work is extraordinary – thank you again to Durham Sixth Form, local artist Lewis Hobson, Councillor Ashfield and Lattin and Icy Smith's family for making this a day to remember.

The Chair advised that she was delighted to read that our Clerk has managed to secure British actor, comedian and author Sir Tony Robinson from Time Team to unveil the plaque for Professor Dame Rosemary Cramp. This event will now take place on 21st June with further details to follow in due course. The Chair advised that she understands that Durham University have been lending our Clerk every support and we hope to have a wonderful reception at Palace Green Museum of Archaeology, where the exhibition "Under Durham" will still be on display. Thank you to our Clerk and Elvet Residents Association for their work to date on this.

The Chair reminded Members that all official communications from the Parish Council – or which may be perceived as being from the Parish Council – must go through the Parish Clerk in advance. This will help to avoid any misunderstanding of the Parish Council's stance on a particular issue in our parish.

The Chair remarked that she was rather disappointed to hear today that we weren't consulted on the works at Gilesgate and Leazes Road by DCC Highways in advance of a letter hitting doormats. The Chair advised that she was sure this was an oversight for which we have received an apology. The Chair advised that the removal of Leazes Bridge is a sensitive and controversial issue in our City and we hope to have more consultation on these issues in advance. The Chair advised that the site visit with officers is still going ahead as planned for Councillors only later this month.

The Chair advised that it is great news to see the works to Durham City Theatre progressing so well. The planning application the Clerk acted as agent on was approved earlier this week and the grant application to DCC has gone in and hopefully a suitable supplier from the four who have quoted to date can be selected and these works started ASAP. The Chair advised that it is right that we support organisations such as the City Theatre as an independent cultural facility in our City. The Chair thanked the Council's economic development team who have been wonderful in their support with the grant funding.

The Chair advised that it is wonderful to see that the Story at Mount Oswald is now set to open to the public from 14th June. The Chair advised that we are all

really looking forward to seeing this much-anticipated archive and history centre for our County open its doors. There is a real sense of excitement for this and our thanks to Councillor Elizabeth Scott and her team for their work on this.

The Chair thanked everyone who did a lot of the work on the Council's response to the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy review earlier this month. Nicola Allan has produced a fantastic case in favour of a cumulative impact policy and a late-night levy for the City.

The Chair also reminded Members that there are two very important consultations live at present – the County Council's Air Quality Management Plan and a proposed ASB Public Space Protection Order for the City. Very important issues indeed for our City and the Parish Council will be responding to these in due course, having already agreed to support the PSPO.

Finally, the Chair wished Councillor Liz Brown many congratulations indeed on becoming the new Mayor of Durham. The Chair expressed best wishes to Liz at her Mayor Making next month and advised that she could think of no better representative for our County than Liz. The Chair also thanked Lesley wholeheartedly for all the support she has given to our events this year.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COUNCIL POLICIES

The Clerk reminded Members that there is a legal requirement for Parish Councils to review on an annual basis its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other important documents.

The Clerk advised that, as per the agreement at the April Full Council meeting, a Working Group, comprising Councillors A Doig, E Ashby, J Ashby and S Walker, had reviewed these documents and the amendments had been set out in reports to Councillors.

The content and wording of each document was **agreed** as set out in the following link: <https://cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk/important-documents-and-policies/> (Votes were as follows: 10 votes in favour, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions).

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Councillors Ashby, Ashby and Doig for their work and support with this work.

10. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR 2023/24

- I. Members unanimously **agreed** the actions arising from the report of the internal auditor 2023-24
- II. Members unanimously **agreed** the annual governance statement 2023-24
- III. Members unanimously **agreed** the draft annual accounts for 2023-24
- iv. Members unanimously **agreed** the register of assets 2023-24
- V. Members unanimously **agreed** the accounting statement and explanation of variances 2023-24.

In doing so, Members took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for his expert management of the Parish Council's finances and for his work on this audit.

11. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S CLIMATE LEAD

The Clerk reminded Members that, in February 2022, the Parish Council had agreed to appoint Councillor R Friederichsen as its first Climate Lead. This was again agreed at the Full Council meetings in May 2022 and May 2023 and a set of Terms of Reference for this position were also established.

The Clerk reminded Members that this role and these Terms of Reference must be reviewed on an annual basis at the Council's annual meeting.

Members unanimously **agreed** the Terms of Reference for the Climate Lead role and also unanimously **agreed** to appoint Councillor R Friederichsen as its Climate Lead for the ensuing year of the Parish Council; as proposed by Councillor C Lattin and seconded by Councillor V Ashfield.

12. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S ARMED FORCES CHAMPION

The Clerk reminded Members that, in June 2023, the Parish Council had agreed to appoint Councillor E Scott as its first Armed Forces Champion. The Clerk advised that this role was primarily a ceremonial role where Councillor E Scott may represent the Parish Council at such events as the Remembrance Day parade and all other events with a main focus on the past and present contributions of the armed services. In addition, the role involves working with the Clerk and partners on the organisation of these important events.

The Clerk reminded Members that this role and the Terms of Reference associated with this role must be reviewed on an annual basis at the Council's annual meeting.

Councillor C Lattin advised that she was unaware that this role even existed and had she been aware, she would have voted against it on the basis of the precedent it sets for the need for other Champion roles for other demographics.

The Chair reminded Members that this role was established last year and that Councillor E Scott has worked a lot with the Clerk on the organisation of Remembrance Day in particular and also represented the Council at this event.

It was **agreed** to defer a decision on this item until the next Parish Council meeting, in order that Councillor E Scott may speak more on what this role has entailed since it was established.

13. TO DECIDE ON APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Members considered the current list of Parish Council representatives on all of the local organisations listed in the report to Council.

Members also considered that the Parish Council has agreed to have a representative on outside local organisations only where the aims of these groups are aligned with the strategic objectives of the Parish Council in the exercise of its functions.

In considering this list of organisations, Members were of the view that the University's Community Engagement Task Force's Economic and Citizenship sub-groups, the PBSA Liaison Group and Durham Access Group were no longer in existence.

In addition, Councillor S Walker advised that the AAP Board decided on the Parish Council representative on its Board and this would not be a decision for the Parish Council itself to take. Councillor S Walker confirmed that the AAP Board already has an AAP representative covering their area, including City of Durham parish. The Clerk also reported that he had been asked to represent the Parish Council on the World Heritage Site Steering Group.

In view of all this, Members unanimously **agreed** that the Parish Council should be represented on the following organisations, with the respective representative for each of these organisations being as follows:

Local organisation/ body	City of Durham Parish Council representative
Community Engagement Task Force	Victoria Ashfield
Community Engagement Task Force sub group - Lived Environment	Carole Lattin
CDALC Larger Councils Forum	Esther Ashby, Adam Shanley and Richard Ormerod
City Safety Group	Adam Shanley
Durham BID board	Adam Shanley
Durham AAP Board	Susan Walker
World Heritage Site Steering Group	Adam Shanley
Durham University's Student Housing Management Group	John Ashby

14. TO DECIDE ON PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members unanimously **agreed** the membership of each Committee for this year of the Parish Council as follows:

Planning and Licensing Committee (7 Members) Grenville Holland Susan Walker John Ashby Carole Lattin Esther Ashby Nicola Brown Robert Hanson	Environment Committee (6 Members) Carole Lattin Victoria Ashfield David Freeman Liz Brown Nicola Brown Rupert Friederichsen
Personnel Committee (5 Members) Alan Doig Elizabeth Scott Grenville Holland Victoria Ashfield Susan Walker	Business Committee (6 Members) Richard Ormerod David Freeman Susan Walker Grenville Holland Esther Ashby Alan Doig
Finance Committee (6 Members) Alan Doig David Freeman John Ashby Victoria Ashfield Helen Weston Liz Brown	

15. CYCLE OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS

The following cycle of meetings (all commencing at 7pm) were unanimously **agreed** by Members:

2024

27th June
25th July
26th September
24th October
28th November

2025

23rd January
27th February
27th March
24th April

There being no further business, the Chair thanked all those present for their attendance and participation and closed the meeting.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. A. Walker'.

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(27th June 2024)**