

City of Durham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Wednesday 25th September 2024 at 7:00pm in the Main Hall of the Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Rd, Durham DH1 3QF.

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

Also present: Parish Clerk Adam Shanley and 4 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 R Ormerod, N Brown and R Friederichsen.

No other apologies were received.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

None received.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2024 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings, subject to the sentence "*Members **agreed** (9 votes in favour, 1 against) to provide £3,000 towards the travel trade promotion alongside Visit County Durham, as set out in the report provided*" being amended to "*Members **agreed** (9 votes in favour, 1 against) to provide £3,000 towards the City specific travel trade promotion being delivered by Visit County Durham, as set out in the report provided*".

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor G Holland presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from meetings held on 12th and 29th July and 9th and 23rd August 2024. There being no queries from Members, Councillor G Holland moved on to Committee updates.

Report on the recent project to assess all Non-Designated Heritage Asset within the Conservation Area

The Clerk expressed his gratitude to the large numbers of volunteers who had recently come forward to support this important work as part of the Conservation Area Management Plan.

In particular, the Clerk took the opportunity to thank Sue Childs for her support and agreeing to administer the responses from each volunteer. The Clerk also thanked Lee Hall for a very useful training session as part of this project and advised that he was aware that this had been very positively received. Sue Childs reported that most of the volunteers had now returned their reports and photographs as part of this project and she was busy collating these into a format which could be easily handed over to DCC.

Sue advised that there were approximately 60 or so assets outstanding from the list. The Clerk advised that he would chase up the volunteers who had yet to return their forms and ask that this be completed as soon as possible, as per the original agreement with DCC.

The Committee thanked the Clerk and Sue Childs for their work on this project. In thanking Sue, the Council presented Sue Childs with two gifts as a token of the Council's appreciation for all of Sue's tremendous work on this project. The Chair took the opportunity to thank Sue for her dedication to the heritage of the City.

Response to the recent NPPF changes consultation

The Clerk took the opportunity to thank Members and partners for their support in considering the 106 questions as part of the extensive NPPF consultation earlier this month. The Clerk advised that these had been carefully considered and that the full response had been drafted in accordance with the discussions on this important consultation.

Members unanimously **agreed** the draft responses to this important consultation and thanked the Clerk for writing these on behalf of the Parish Council.

Report on freehold housing in the parish area and estate charges

The Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council has recently been contacted regarding concerns over so-called "fleecehold" estates and the impact of these arrangements on local residents.

The Clerk advised that, at present, these estate management charges are known to apply in Mount Oswald, Aykley Woods and St. Margaret's Garth in our parish area. In fact, approximately 40% of all new estates built in England over the last five years are covered by these types of charges.

The Clerk highlighted that freehold estates are private or mixed-tenure estates where, unlike other residential areas, shared areas and facilities, such as roads, play areas and open spaces, are not owned or looked after by the local authority. Responsibility for their maintenance will instead rest with a private company (often the original developer) or homeowners themselves through a residents' management company (RMC).

The Clerk also advised that responsibility for estate management is normally agreed when the local authority grants planning permission. Authorities can be reluctant to take responsibility for common areas (a process known as 'adoption') due to the maintenance costs involved.

The Clerk advised that these arrangements are often controversial as, unlike leaseholders, freehold homeowners on these estates currently have very limited rights over the cost and quality of services provided. The Clerk advised that this is clearly something which the present Government recognises as an issue as a proposed bill banning these arrangements was set out in the King's Speech in 2024.

Councillor L Brown highlighted that this arrangement was in place in several estates across Neville's Cross and that she understood the problem from residents' perspective. This was echoed by the Chair who highlighted the lack of recourse or rights for residents with these arrangements.

Councillor E Ashby highlighted that, whilst she was very much in favour of the first aspect of the report to write to the MP to request that the MP lobbies Government on this, she was equally concerned at the proposal in the second part of the report to ask that DCC adopts new estates. Councillor E Ashby highlighted the financial issues facing all local authorities at present and felt that DCC is unlikely to accept this.

Members unanimously **agreed** to write formally to the local MP on this matter and request that she lobby the Government on this matter and looks to end these new fleecehold arrangements for residents.

• **Environment Committee**

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

Proposal to launch a new Durham Tidy Gardens initiative

Councillor C Lattin highlighted the recent success of securing £8,000 from student landlords over the last two financial years and also advised that a portion of this funding was going towards additional waste collections for a Green Move In.

Councillor C Lattin also advised that an additional aspect of the funding from this appeal had been agreed by the Environment Committee to be directed towards supporting residents maintaining their front gardens (where applicable) and, as an added aspect of the proposal, to help educate residents on how to recycle.

The Clerk advised that, in establishing a number of reputable gardeners, the Parish Council has reached out to DCC and has been provided with 2 private companies who are able to cut grass and carry out general gardening maintenance. As such, there is no requirement on the Parish Council to provide gardening equipment or a service directly, this leaflet will simply pinpoint residents to an appropriate gardening service which will be chargeable for the resident.

Councillor C Lattin also advised that the Parish Council's Environment Committee is also keen to invite other gardening service providers to be part of this list of suppliers.

In the case of student properties, the Clerk highlighted that the Parish Council has received complaints from local residents about the condition of some student properties throughout the year. In a number of cases, landlord tenancy agreements stipulate that it is the tenants' responsibility to maintain the gardens and the Parish Council is also aware of anecdotal evidence that students are not having their deposits returned to them in full by some landlords because the garden areas are not maintained. Councillor C Lattin highlighted that this initiative by the Parish Council is entirely geared towards supporting residents in maintaining their gardens and, in the case of student properties, to make it easier for students to comply with their tenancy agreements and receive their deposit back in full.

The Clerk advised that Durham University has offered its support for this initiative although DSU does not support this initiative if student residents are expected to pay for the gardening service themselves.

The Clerk advised that anyone signing up for this scheme will have to do so via a Google Form allowing the Parish Council to assess the take-up of this initiative as well as supply those registering with a free bulbs pack.

The Clerk advised that the costs associated with this proposal involve the production and delivery of this leaflet at approx. £1,300 (based on 8,000 doors) as well as the cost of the bulb packs (dependent on take-up). The Clerk also advised that, although not every property will have a garden, a general delivery to all properties is easiest for the delivery company and each household will also benefit from the recycling information on the reverse of this leaflet too.

Councillor C Lattin stressed that all aspects of this initiative will be funded from the landlord appeal and will not come from Parish Council funds.

Councillors A Doig and V Ashfield advised that they felt that it would be difficult to recommend a supplier with whom the Parish Council has little to no knowledge or experience of working. Moreover, it was suggested that the Parish Council, if this scheme were launched, seeks to widen the list of suppliers residents could go to.

Councillor E Scott agreed that the Parish Council is not in a position to recommend suppliers.

It was **agreed** (8 votes in favour, 2 abstentions) that the scheme should be launched but in a more general way which warns tenants about the implications of losing their deposits if gardens aren't maintained but also did not recommend specific suppliers. The offer of free bulbs to students was also **agreed** to remain part of the scheme.

Proposal to request that BT remove or improve its telephone boxes within the Conservation Area.

The Clerk highlighted that there are several BT telephone boxes located around the parish area. Most of these boxes are relatively modern, glazed structures which are inappropriately designed for a Conservation Area.

Similarly, the traditional red phone boxes, such as telephone box at Lower Claypath and at Palace Green, make a positive contribution to the Conservation and, in fact, are considered Non-designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs). The Clerk advised that a number of these boxes are subject to vandalism, anti-social behaviour or are simply no longer functioning. The Clerk highlighted that, in June 2022, Ofcom updated its rules on public call boxes. BT now cannot remove a box if it meets one or more of these criteria:

- it is in a place without coverage from all four mobile network providers;
- it is located in an area with a high frequency of accidents or suicides;
- it has made 52 or more calls over the past 12 months; or
- there is other evidence that the box is reasonably needed at the site – for example if it is likely to be relied upon in the event of a local emergency, such as flooding, or if it is used to call helplines.

If a public call box that is the last at a site does not meet any of these four criteria, BT or KCOM can consult with the relevant local authority on removing it. BT and KCOM must take account of any views and evidence received from this consultation before deciding whether to remove the box. Public call boxes that are not the last at a site can be removed by BT and KCOM without consultation. BT maintains strict confidentiality regarding call volumes and will not share them with the Parish Council or any other agency.

The only exception to this policy occurs when law enforcement agencies request access to these records for investigative reasons.

Councillor L Brown highlighted that the list of BT phone boxes included in the Agenda by BT was incorrect and expressed her concern that BT appeared not to know the location of its assets.

Councillor E Ashby advised that whilst she supported the proposal in principle, she did not feel that the Parish Council should be looking to replace the boxes with a tree as suggested in the report.

Councillor D Freeman advised that he would only support an audit by BT as opposed to an all-out request to simply remove boxes as he felt that these telephone boxes were still used and valued by some members of the community.

Members unanimously **agreed** to ask BT to carry out an audit of its telephone boxes in the City of Durham Parish area. Where it is the case that the box does not meet any of the criteria above and is either broken or vandalised, this should be removed.

• **Finance Committee**

Councillor A Doig presented the Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 18th June 2024. There were no queries from Members.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

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

The Chair began by highlighting how wonderful it is to see the works to the City Theatre at Back Silver Street now completed. With new brickwork and windows, the Theatre is looking the best it has done in many years. These works highlighted how urgently in need of repair the building was and the Chair highlighted that this project has likely extended the life of the building significantly. The Chair remarked that this is a great project to undertake in order to safeguard this aspect of the City's cultural heritage and thanked the Durham Dramatic Society, DCC and Councillor Esther Ashby for all their work on this project. The Chair reminded Members that the Theatre is hoping to host a small thank you reception on 30th September at 6pm.

The Chair also extended her thanks and appreciation to Councillors Lattin and Ashfield. Through their initiative with local landlords, the Chair highlighted that we are now funding additional waste collections as part of a Green Move In operation alongside DCC. The Chair remarked that this is really so welcome for so many residents and in recognition of the amount of waste generated as many thousands of students move into the City for this coming academic year.

The Chair offered a huge congratulations to Durham University on its return to one of the top five Universities in the land by this year's Sunday Times Good University guide. The Chair remarked that this is a real source of pride for the community of which the University is a major part and long may that success continue. For anyone joining us in Durham for the first time this year, the Chair wished a very warm welcome.

The Chair offered further congratulations to Durham Cathedral on the news this month that visitor numbers have soared over the Summer thanks to the Peace Doves exhibition. The Chair remarked that it is amazing to hear that approximately 80,000 visitors came to our City to see this exhibition and it is clear that events at the Cathedral such as this are major drivers for additional footfall in Durham. The Chair advised that this is great news particularly as the Cathedral celebrates its 931st birthday this year.

The Chair remarked that she particularly welcomed the news this month that Durham County Council's Cabinet has now approved its Public Spaces Protection Order against anti-social behaviour. The Chair advised that she really hoped that this will be a further tool for the Police and Neighbourhood Wardens in tackling some of the behaviours we are witnessing from a small minority attending our City during the day.

The Chair remarked how pleased she was to hear that planning is well underway for the event to unveil the blue plaque dedicated to Professor Dame Rosemary Cramp. The Chair offered a very big thank you to Professor O'Brien, Professor Sarah Semple and the University's archaeology department for their support in this project. The Chair advised that the Parish Council looks forward to this event

on 4th October and the event the following month for the 33 Claypath blue plaque unveiling.

The Chair advised that she was deeply disappointed to hear in the news this week that talks over the Milburngate development remain at a deadlock. The Chair remarked that this half-finished development has blighted our City for years and there appears to be no end in sight. The Chair urged all parties to do all they can to expedite this process swiftly for the benefit of our City and its residents and finally get this development to a point where it is safe to be occupied.

The Chair advised that she joined issue with our Clerk's correspondence earlier this week on the report to DCC's Full Council today which appeared to suggest that an assessment of a Late Night Levy and Cumulative Impact Policy should only take place once Milburngate is completed. The Chair remarked that this seemed to be a commitment without a timescale and that she was therefore grateful to hear that this matter has now been deferred until the next Full Council in October with the reference to that timescale being removed.

The Chair offered her sincere congratulations to all involved in this year's Durham In Bloom competition. The Chair advised that it really is fantastic to see Andrew Jackson's legacy continue and to see Durham City win gold for best small city and Wharton Park for winning best in category for the first time this year too. A big well done everyone.

Finally, the Chair advised that she understands that Durham University will very soon be reaching out to us on two major new developments in our parish – namely the redevelopment of Hild and Bede and the development of a new Data Centre at Aykley Heads. The Chair highlighted that the Clerk has already circulated a meeting date and time for the Data Centre discussion and this will be going ahead on Wednesday 2nd October at 1pm at the former business school.

The Chair thanked Durham University for their engagement with us pre-application. The Chair remarked that she very much welcomed the proposal of a data centre at Aykley Heads and this investment in our City. The Chair highlighted that this has the potential to bring high-skilled jobs to our area as well as providing a highly advanced computing machine for exceptionally fast data processing.

7. TO REVIEW THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

The Clerk advised that there is a need to consider the Membership of the Planning and Licensing Committee. The Clerk highlighted that, although the Committee historically has not struggled to form a quorum, Members have noted that the Committee membership is very often reduced to five Members due to competing commitments.

The Committee meets every two weeks on a Friday at 12 noon to carry out the planning and licensing functions of the Parish Council. This is a very important Committee whose work is wide-ranging and planning matters and the way in which the Parish Council exercises its planning functions in particular are regularly listed

as being amongst our residents' top priorities. The licensing functions of this Committee are equally as important.

The Clerk highlighted that the current membership of the Committee is as follows:

- Grenville Holland (Chair)
- Susan Walker (Vice-Chair)
- Esther Ashby
- John Ashby
- Nicola Brown
- Robert Hanson
- Carole Lattin

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she is content to step in more regularly as a substitute Member in the event that any Member is unable to attend any Committee meetings.

In light of some Members either not being able to attend these meetings at all and other Members having competing roles at the County Council, it was recognised that seeking replacement Members would be difficult.

Members recognised the issue of non-attendance but **agreed** that, on balance, the Committee Membership should stay as existing but with acceptance of Councillor V Ashfield's offer of being a more regular substitute for this Committee.

8. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCIL'S CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

The Chair highlighted that, throughout the local government sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment, and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils.

The Chair advised that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and county associations have responded to this by setting up a Civility and Respect Working Group to oversee the Civility and Respect Project.

The Chair highlighted that NALC, SLCC, and OVW believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

The Chair advised that the Civility and Respect Pledge is being introduced because there is no place for bullying, harassment and intimidation within our sector. The pledge is easy for councils to sign up for and it will enable councils to demonstrate that they are committed to standing up to poor behaviour across our sector and to driving through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct.

The Clerk reminded Members that the City of Durham Parish Council has adopted a Dignity at Work Policy and this is reviewed annually.

The Chair advised that NALC is inviting all Councils to take the Civility and Respect Pledge and those that do can legitimately showcase this logo on their website and all literature as a sign of the Parish Council's commitment to this area of our sector. To date, 1,591 Councils have signed the Civility and Respect Pledge.

The Chair highlighted that, by signing the Pledge, the City of Durham Parish Council is agreeing that the Council will treat Councillors employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles and that it:

- Has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors
- Has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work policy
- Will seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise
- Will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens
- Will continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council through for example the Local Council Award Scheme
- Supports the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

It was unanimously **agreed** that each Member should be invited to sign the Civility and Respect Pledge if they so wished.

9. PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES IN THE CITY

The Clerk advised that, at the beginning of 2024, Durham Area Youth and Durham City Youth received funding through the ASB Trailblazer project to engage with young people who were presenting at several locations in Durham City. A small number of the young people were known to be causing an above average proportion of ASB, resulting in higher community tensions with residents and visitors. The project therefore very much focused on engagement and building up relationships with the aim of reducing this youth related ASB.

The Clerk advised that, over the length of the project, the youth workers have engaged with approximately 15 – 30 young people on a Friday evening and have made good inroads in helping some of them make positive choices around their actions.

The Clerk highlighted that this initial funding was very much a pilot project and in addition to it being successful in terms of engagement, has also brought an increased awareness around safeguarding issues in relation to some young people.

The Clerk advised that it has been reported that this has led to increased partnership working with Children and Young Peoples Community Support Service and there are now firm links with the exploitation and missing from home officers who are aware of the issues in the city.

The Clerk advised that additional funding has again been granted from the ASB Trailblazer fund and a proportion of this has been made available to the project which should be able to recommence in September 2024. The amount of funding has reduced meaning the project is only able to operate for a further three months, possibly until the beginning of January 2025.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has been asked if it would consider making a contribution of £2,000 towards this project. Although this was not budgeted for in January, the Finance Committee and Environment Committee have recently met and feel that there is flexibility within current budgets (e.g. contingencies) to fund this request.

Councillor V Ashfield advised that she could not be more in favour of this proposal and expressed her upset that youth services had been so heavily cut from local authority budgets in funding reductions. Councillor V Ashfield expressed the desire that youth service provision could one day become a statutory service by local authorities.

Councillor D Freeman also expressed his strong support for this initiative and expressed the hope that this could be a further step by the Parish Council to tackle anti-social behaviour in the City.

Members unanimously **approved** the allocation of £2,000 towards this project.

10. COMPLETION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S EXTERNAL AUDIT 2023/24

The Clerk reminded Members that each year the Parish Council undergoes two sets of audits - one internal audit and one external audit. These audits are a legal requirement which assess the Parish Council's policies, standing orders, financial regulations, VAT returns, cashbook, bank statements, minutes, website and more to ensure good governance and compliance.

Earlier this year, the Internal Auditor carried out a review of the Parish Council's workings and provided a positive report, as provided to Members. Mazars LLP have now completed their external audit for the year ended 31 March 2024 and have certified the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The Clerk advised that no issues have been identified in the external audit review. As such, the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 set out what the Parish Council must do at the conclusion of this audit.

Members thanked the Clerk for his work on this audit and unanimously **agreed** to note the conclusion of the external audit for 2023/24 and to instruct the Clerk to take all appropriate action, as set out in the report provided.

11. REPORT ON PLANNING FOR THE REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2024 EVENT.

The Clerk presented an extensive report on plans for the Remembrance Sunday event this year, highlighting the huge amount of work going into planning this event.

The Clerk highlighted that he is working with partners to once again ensure that the Parish Council hosted a successful Remembrance weekend this year. The Clerk particularly highlighted this event as an important year as the City looks to mark the 200th anniversary of the RNLI. The Clerk advised that the Remembrance organisers were delighted to be welcoming the National Deputy Chair of the RNLI to the Remembrance Dinner and Parade this year as well as a contingent from the RNLI as part of the parade.

The Clerk also highlighted that the Parish Council would be working alongside the Durham Markets Company on the organisation of Uniformed Services Day on 1st November 2024 and would also be supporting the Festival of Remembrance this year too.

Councillor E Ashby expressed concerns at the workload of the Clerk for these events and sought assurances that the delivery of these events was being supported by other partner organisations. The Clerk thanked Councillor E Ashby for this and assured that the organisation of these events is being supported by partners, such as the County Council and others.

Members thanked the Clerk for his excellent work on this event and unanimously **agreed** to note the report provided and the preparations being made for this event and to delegate all organisational and budgetary responsibility for this event to the Clerk.

12. REPORT(S) FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

Report by Councillor J Ashby on the meeting of the University's student housing management group held on 6th September 2024

Councillor J Ashby presented the following report to Members:

- *On student numbers, the indications for the new Academic Year 2024/25 are of about 200 fewer post-graduates and about 100 more undergraduates than was intended. Definitive figures will come from the December 'census' once no-shows, late arrivals and early drop-outs have settled down. There are a few first years who did not opt for University accommodation but have not indicated that they have found themselves private accommodation, so the University is pro-actively addressing every case to make sure that they do have somewhere to live.*
- *The University's analysis that matches their address records against the County Council's Class N Exemptions has been completed, and the report with headlines and details will be made available soon. This report will be immensely useful in considering planning applications and also in thoughts about improving Policy 16.3.*

- *There has been a positive meeting with the Code of Practice landlords to consider possible further items of good practice. The Code of Practice will be promoted to students via the Housing Hub on the University website. Also, the PBSA liaison group is being re-started; this has greater importance than ever as it is apparent that PBSAs are the major route for decreasing the number of students in HMOs. However, the landlord representative reported that the costs of constructing PBSAs has risen sharply, with implications for rents and indeed for bringing any further PBSAs forward.*
- *The DCC representative explained that the disrepair workload is increasing as returning students report concerns with the new Academic Year's HMO accommodation. The team's compliance work regarding gas and electricity certificates is ongoing. A dedicated page for students on Do-it-Online has been created but needs to be made easier to find.*
- *A draft Additional Licensing Scheme has been put forward by DCC and is being considered by the University and DSU for a verdict in about 6 months' time. The landlord representative on the group reminded us that existing legislation provides most of the tools but is not consistently applied or enforced.*
- *The Durham Students Union will be launching a 'Rate Your Landlord' scheme shortly. DSU plan to hold a "Find your housing" fair/workshop in November, and wish to have the Parish Council and resident groups involved to provide a flavour of each locality. I indicated that this would be welcome.*
- *The County Council's Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan will be submitted to Full Council probably in January 2025. The Housing Needs SPD will be adopted under delegated powers by December 2024. Various amendments have been to recognise the particular nature of the housing market in and around Durham City, and the need for affordable housing for students. It is currently being reviewed in the light of the proposed changes to the NPPF. We need to see the final document for assurance, or not, on key issues for the Parish Council, such as the step-by-step methodology for assessing "need" for student accommodation of a particular type in a particular location.*

End of report

Report by Councillor C Lattin on the most recent meeting of Durham University's Community Engagement Task Force.

Councillor C Lattin presented the following report to Members:

- *The Chair, Claire O'Malley gave an update. She re-iterated that the University is being careful not to exceed the cap they have put on student numbers for 2024 – 5. There have been dups in applications for post graduate UK courses. She was open about the need to increase student fees.*
- *Richard Baker, Director of Development and Commercialisation, gave a presentation. The University see many opportunities for partnership with the North East devolution agreement. University Vice Chancellors are taking it in turns to sit on the devolution board for the North East Mayoral Authority. They are looking to develop further innovation and investment. He talked about Aykley Heads and NetPark in Sedgefield as particular growth areas. The university is an anchor institution in the north east and further re-development is taking place*

as part of the new Durham innovation district, in partnership with DCC. There are three catapults in Netpark, which all have innovation centres. Catapults are seen as schemes and projects which can cause and lead expansion.

- Ged Baker spoke about developments in culture. There is to be a major exhibition on space sciences, including light years. This is in partnership with DCC on satellites. And is a three-year programme. Other partners are international e.g. NASA. There are estimated to be 10,000 new jobs to be created in satellite science. There will be a summer Space Fair. They are developing a touring exhibition about the James Webb space telescope. This links with the lux muralis at the cathedral. In October there will be a celebration of science in a marquee on Palace Green. Over 40 events are planned throughout the county for next year.*
- Student Engagement Strategy – presented by Katie Binks who leads on Community Engagement and volunteering. She talked about the ongoing development of community involvement in the Assembly Rooms and local schools such as a Shakespeare project with Parkside School. Student and staff volunteers play an active role in developing performing art work with schools and also in sustainability. There are many summer schools, open to local schools such as Performing Arts summer camp, and many sporting activities. She gave an example of the university opening access to its Steinway pianos for school music exam practice. Volunteers also support music lessons and development. For the forthcoming year, their aim is to increase community use of university facilities from 10,000 to 12,000 and to continue to act as a hub for community sport. The overarching goal is to promote a culture amongst university students and staff of service to others. Opportunities should be meaningful and meet the needs of the community. 25% of staff members and one sixth of students are volunteers.*
- A new development is E-Sports. This is a new space at Maiden Castle for gamers, to make it a safe environment and also a social one. Teams can play together or take on external teams. There was a tour of the E-Sports room which is indeed impressive – all the up-to-date equipment and comfortable gaming chairs! Already 200 students are signed up and taster sessions are being offered to the community, in school holidays. They also give tips on staying safe online, code clubs etc.*
- James Cook from DCC Spatial policy told the meeting about the consultation of Minerals and Waste and also on the proposed National Policy Planning framework.*
- Ashleigh White told the forum about the success of Operation Lentil and strategies to reduce parking in the Market Place and on Elvet Bridge. There is also a project to make rented properties safer. Many older properties only have one lock to the front doors which students then leave unlocked. They are proposing keypads.*

End of report

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

Signed,

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

**Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council
(24th October 2024)**