CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the City of Durham Parish Council held on Wednesday 24TH June 2026 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**), L Brown, T Cleaver, D Freeman, G Holland, R Handy, E Hopgood, P Layton, F Robinson, E Scott, M Wikes and L Wilson.

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

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

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members and those present. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillors V Ashfield, R Cornwell and C Lattin.

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Councillor E Hopgood declared an interest in item 9 on the Agenda and took no part in the discussion or vote on this item.

Councillor S Walker declared an interest in the grant applications for the Marra Project, IWG, NXCA API Action and took no part in the discussion or vote on these applications. Councillor S Walker also declared an interest in the grant application from Merryoaks Community Hall as a Trustee of the Hall and left the room during the consideration and vote on this application. Councillor E Scott chaired the part of the Agenda relating to grant applications under item 7.

Councillor F Robinson declared an interest in the grant application from Waddington Street URC and took no part in the discussion or vote on this application.

3. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 27TH MAY 2026

The minutes of the annual Council meeting held on 27th May 2026 were approved as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair invited members of the public to address the Council on matters appearing on the agenda.

Two local residents – Mr Ian Simmons-Thomas and Mr Matthew Phillips - addressed Members in relation to Item 6 concerning traffic management on Lowes Barn Bank. Mr Simmons thanked the Parish Council for placing the matter on the agenda and explained that concerns regarding the road extended beyond those

living immediately alongside it. It was emphasised that pedestrians, cyclists and motorists could all feel unsafe when using Lowes Barn Bank as a result of the combination of inappropriate vehicle types, high traffic volumes and excessive speeds.

Particular concern was expressed regarding the use of the road by large HGVs and coaches, which were considered inappropriate for the narrow, steep and winding nature of the route. The resident referred to vehicles travelling at speed towards bends and crossing the centre line, creating potentially dangerous situations for approaching traffic. Members heard that approximately 200 people lived in the immediate area and that Lowes Barn Bank also represented an important route into and out of the city for pedestrians and cyclists. It was noted that some cyclists used the footway because they did not feel sufficiently safe cycling on the carriageway.

Mr Matthew Phillips acknowledged that changes to the traffic arrangements could cause disruption elsewhere but argued that retaining the status quo was not a neutral option given the existing safety concern. Reference was made to the temporary one-way arrangements which had operated during the recent footway works and to the potential for future traffic growth associated with housing development to the west of Durham.

Mr Ian Simmons-Thomas urged the Parish Council to support further action by Durham County Council. It was acknowledged that the precise solution was ultimately a matter for the highway's authority, but the resident considered that the Parish Council could exercise significant influence by formally supporting the need for the existing arrangements to be reviewed. Members heard that the current traffic conditions restricted transport choices for those who might otherwise wish to walk or cycle and that this should be balanced against the inconvenience which alternative traffic arrangements might cause motorists.

Mr Matthew Phillips also made reference to the concept of traffic evaporation, whereby changes to road arrangements could encourage some journeys to transfer to alternative routes or modes of transport. Mr Phillips further suggested that Durham County Council should gather data during forthcoming temporary traffic arrangements in the Church Street area to provide evidence of the impact of such changes and inform future decision-making.

The Chair thanked both residents for their contributions and advised that the matters raised would be considered in detail under Item 6.

5. PRESENTATION ON SAVING THE ICONIC COUNTY HALL MOSAIC FROM DEMOLITION

The Chair introduced the item and welcomed Professor Bennett Zon, who delivered a presentation on the campaign to save the ceramic mosaic at the former County Hall from demolition.

Professor Zon explained that the mosaic formed part of the former County Hall complex and was considered to be an important example of twentieth-century public art. Members heard that the campaign involved local, regional and national

organisations and individuals, including heritage and conservation bodies, and that support had continued to grow as awareness of the threatened demolition increased.

The presentation provided Members with an overview of the mosaic's design and historical significance. Professor Zon explained that the artwork told the story of Durham City and County Durham through a series of images representing important people, places, legends, industries and events. These included St Aidan, the monks carrying the coffin of St Cuthbert, Durham Cathedral, the county's mining heritage and a range of local folklore and landmarks. It was emphasised that the mosaic was unique in presenting the history and identity of both Durham City and County Durham within a single artwork.

Members heard that the mosaic was also considered significant beyond the local area because of its distinctive artistic style. Professor Zon explained that its pixelated imagery anticipated later forms of digital art and visual culture and argued that this gave the work wider national and potentially international importance within the history of twentieth-century art.

The presentation addressed the practical challenges associated with preserving the mosaic. Members were advised that concerns had been raised regarding the strength of the cement backing, cracking between tiles, the potential need to divide the artwork into sections, health and safety considerations and the logistical difficulties involved in removal, transportation, reconstruction and reinstallation.

Professor Zon explained, however, that specialist conservation advice obtained by the campaign suggested that these difficulties were not insurmountable. Modern techniques existed which could enable the mural to be removed together with its backing structure rather than attempting to detach individual tiles. Members were shown examples of other large-scale twentieth-century ceramic artworks which had successfully been removed from threatened locations and reinstalled elsewhere.

The campaign's immediate priority was to secure a stay of execution before demolition of the former County Hall progressed to the point where the artwork could no longer be saved. Professor Zon emphasised that specialist conservators should be commissioned to undertake a proper assessment of the mosaic and determine the most appropriate method of removal and preservation.

Councillor G Holland questioned whether a suitable future location had been identified. Professor Zon explained that the campaign was proceeding in two stages, with the immediate priority being to prevent destruction of the mosaic. Once this had been achieved, detailed consideration could be given to its future location. Considerable interest had already been expressed by potential host organisations, although Professor Zon explained his preference was that the artwork should ultimately be displayed in a prominent and accessible civic location where it could be regularly viewed by residents and visitors.

During the discussion, Members strongly supported the principle of preserving the mosaic and emphasised the urgency of preventing its destruction before the available conservation options had been properly explored. It was suggested that

the campaign should seek national and potentially international media attention, given the significance of the artwork and the wider implications of its loss. Professor Zon confirmed that contact had already been made with a range of national and local media organisations and that the campaign was developing its presence across social media platforms. Members also heard that political support had been secured and that efforts were continuing to bring together institutional stakeholders.

Members questioned the likely cost of removing and preserving the mosaic. Professor Zon explained that specialist advice suggested a broad potential range from the low tens of thousands of pounds to around £100,000, depending upon the condition of the artwork and the method ultimately adopted. He considered that, if sufficient time could be secured, there would be opportunities to seek private donations, benefaction and grant funding, including potentially National Lottery support.

Members considered that the mosaic represented an important part of Durham's civic and cultural heritage and that every reasonable opportunity should be taken to investigate its preservation before demolition proceeded. The Council unanimously **agreed** to write to Durham County Council expressing its support for the campaign to save the County Hall mosaic. It was **agreed** that the Clerk would prepare a draft letter, circulate this to Members and, once finalised, send it to Durham County Council.

6. LOWES BARN BANK – RESIDENT CONCERNS REGARDING TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The Chair introduced the item and reminded Members that the matter had arisen following a request from a resident at an earlier Parish Council meeting to consider whether the temporary one-way traffic arrangements introduced during the Lowes Barn Bank footway improvements could be retained in some form.

The Chair explained that she had subsequently spoken with a number of local residents and that the report before Council sought to bring together the different views and concerns expressed. The Chair declared that she was a resident of the area, regularly drove and walked along Lowes Barn Bank and therefore had direct experience of the issues under discussion.

The Chair began by welcoming the recently completed improvements to the footways and placed on record appreciation for the work undertaken. Members heard that the previous condition of the footways had created serious accessibility difficulties and that the improvements had enabled people with limited mobility to use the route much more safely. The Chair referred to seeing mobility scooter users and pedestrians using walking aids accessing the improved footways in circumstances which would previously have been extremely difficult.

Members were advised that, despite the benefits of the footway improvements, concerns remained regarding traffic conditions. The Chair explained that Durham County Council highways officers had previously indicated that local residents

would not support a one-way system. However, the discussions she had held suggested that there was support amongst at least some residents for further consideration of such an arrangement.

The Chair acknowledged that the issue required the Parish Council to balance competing interests. A one-way arrangement could improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists and reduce vehicle conflicts, but it could also displace traffic onto surrounding roads and inconvenience residents elsewhere in the Neville's Cross area. The Chair further advised that Durham County Council officers had declined an invitation to attend the meeting on the basis that the issue had previously been considered.

The discussion also considered parking on Lowes Barn Bank. Members heard that many properties on one side of the road had no off-street parking and residents therefore had little alternative but to park on the carriageway or footway. Properties on the opposite side generally had driveways, although visitors sometimes parked on the footways. This could result in pedestrians being unable to use either side of the road safely. At the same time, if all vehicles currently parked partly on the footway were moved entirely onto the carriageway, the road could effectively be reduced to a single traffic lane.

The Chair also raised the issue of HGV traffic. Members heard that there appeared to be widespread concern regarding large vehicles using Lowes Barn Bank, particularly because the width and alignment of the road meant that two HGVs could not always pass safely. Photographic evidence within the meeting papers demonstrated large vehicles crossing the centre line, and concern was expressed that HGVs and coaches were using a route which was unsuitable for vehicles of that size.

Councillor G Holland considered whether a weight restriction could provide a potential solution. It was noted that Durham County Council had previously indicated that the road did not satisfy the necessary criteria for a formal HGV restriction. The possibility of advisory signage stating that the road was unsuitable for HGVs was therefore discussed as a potential alternative but the Clerk warned that advisory signage may not be possible.

Councillor T Cleaver advised that he fully supported the residents present at the meeting and stated that Lowes Barn Bank was clearly inappropriate for HGVs and a weight restriction and other schemes should be explored to address this.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the proposed one-way arrangements. Councillor L Brown considered how traffic would be redirected and the potential impact upon Neville's Cross Bank, the A167, Mary Oaks, Hastings Avenue and other surrounding roads. Concern was expressed that the temporary arrangements introduced during the footway works had resulted in significant congestion, including queues extending considerable distances at peak periods.

Councillor L Brown acknowledged the genuine concerns of Lowes Barn Bank residents but emphasised that the Parish Council had a responsibility to consider the interests of residents across the wider area. It was recognised that measures

which benefited one group of residents could create unintended consequences elsewhere.

Further discussion took place regarding the absence of reliable traffic data. Members considered that temporary arrangements associated with roadworks and other infrastructure projects provided opportunities to assess the effect of changes to traffic flows. It was suggested that Durham County Council should make greater use of such opportunities to gather evidence before determining whether permanent changes were appropriate.

Members also considered the importance of Lowes Barn Bank as an active travel corridor linking existing cycling and walking routes. Concern was expressed that cyclists currently felt compelled to use the footway because of conditions on the carriageway, thereby creating potential conflicts with pedestrians. Members recognised that improving safety for cyclists and pedestrians should form part of any future consideration of traffic management measures.

Members **agreed** (by 6 votes in favour, 2 against and 4 abstentions) to request Durham County Council Highways to review traffic management arrangements on Lowes Barn Bank, including the feasibility of a partial one-way system once the roadworks at Meadowfield have been completed.

Members **agreed** (by 5 votes in favour, 3 against and 4 abstentions) to request an update from Durham County Council regarding the possibility of introducing a weight restriction for heavy goods vehicles using Lowes Barn Bank.

Members **agreed** (by 7 votes in favour, 1 against and 4 abstentions) to request support from Durham County Council Highways in preventing on pavement parking.

7. COMMITTEE UPDATES

• Planning and Licensing Committee

Councillor L Brown presented the Planning and Licensing Committee minutes from the meetings held on 15th and 29th May 2026. There being no queries from Members, Councillor L Brown moved on to Committee reports.

New County Durham Plan: scoping report consultation

Councillor L Brown presented the report on the commencement of Durham County Council's preparation of a new County Durham Plan and the publication of the associated Scoping Report consultation. Members were advised that the consultation represented the first formal stage in preparing the new Plan and sought views on the key issues, priorities and strategic choices that would shape future development across County Durham.

Councillor L Brown highlighted the significance of the review, noting the changes to national planning policy since the adoption of the existing Plan in 2020, the substantial increase in assessed housing need and the introduction of a revised national plan-making system.

Councillor L Brown explained that the Scoping Report covered a wide range of important planning matters, including housing and economic growth, climate change, infrastructure, transport, town centres, biodiversity, the historic environment, healthy communities and the future protection of Green Belt land. Members also noted that the consultation sought views on alternative strategies for accommodating future growth and that more than 800 sites had been submitted to Durham County Council through its Call for Sites exercise. It was therefore considered particularly important that the Parish Council engaged at an early stage to help represent the interests of Durham City and influence the strategic direction of the emerging Plan.

Particular attention was drawn to the relationship between the new County Durham Plan and the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor L Brown advised that the Neighbourhood Plan formed part of the statutory development plan and would need to remain in general conformity with the strategic policies of the new Local Plan. Members noted that the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan Review Working Group would shortly begin developing a roadmap and programme for reviewing the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan, enabling this work to proceed alongside and remain aligned with the emerging County Durham Plan.

Following consideration of the report, Members unanimously **agreed** to note the commencement of the County Durham Plan review and publication of the Scoping Report consultation; to invite the Planning and Licensing Committee to engage positively in the consultation process; and to note that the review of the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan would proceed alongside the County Durham Plan review through the work of the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan Review Working Group.

- **Environment Committee**

Councillor F Robinson presented the Environment Committee minutes from the meeting held on 12th May 2026. There were no queries from Members on these minutes.

- **Finance Committee**

Councillor S Walker presented the Finance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 13th May 2026. There being no queries from Members, Councillor S Walker handed over the Chair to Councillor E Scott to take the grants report.

Report on grant applications from local community and voluntary organisations for Financial Year 2026-27

Councillor E Scott presented the report on grant applications received from local community and voluntary organisations for the 2026/27 financial year. Members were reminded that the Parish Council had allocated a total budget of £21,297 towards its community grants programme, including £6,297 reallocated from the Community Centre Support Fund.

Councillor E Scott explained that applications had been assessed in accordance with the Parish Council's grants policy, which sought to support projects that met

the Council's aims and objectives, demonstrated clear community benefit and responded to identified local needs.

Members were reminded that the grants programme was intended to encourage participation in voluntary and community activities, strengthen the effectiveness of local organisations, support residents experiencing social and economic difficulties, improve the local environment and ensure equality of access to services and opportunities across the Parish.

Councillor E Scott advised that the grant funding window had opened on 1st April 2026 and had been widely publicised through the Parish Council's website, social media channels and direct correspondence with local organisations.

Applications received by the deadline had subsequently been subject to detailed consideration by the Finance Committee, which had assessed the merits of each application, the benefits proposed for residents and the local community, the level of financial need demonstrated and the extent to which the projects represented appropriate use of public funds. Members noted that the Finance Committee had undertaken a thorough assessment of the applications before making its recommendations to Full Council.

Councillor E Scott presented the individual applications received, together with the amounts requested, the nature and purpose of the proposed projects and the recommendations made by the Finance Committee.

Members recognised the important contribution made by local voluntary and community organisations to the wellbeing of residents and welcomed the range of projects seeking support through the Parish Council's grants programme. It was noted that successful grant awards would be subject to the Council's established monitoring and evaluation requirements and that organisations should not presume that financial support would automatically continue from one year to the next.

Following consideration of the report and the recommendations of the Finance Committee, Members **agreed** to approve the recommended grant awards to local community and voluntary organisations for the 2026/27 financial year, with payments to be made in accordance with the arrangements set out in the report, as below.

In view of the remaining £2,000 from this fund, it was further **agreed** that this funding should remain open during the course of this financial year in case of any additional/ urgent applications/ projects requiring funding.

Organisation	Project	Amount requested	Amount agreed by Full Council
Dead Dog Gallery - Durham Sixth Form Centre	We are seeking funding of £1,900 to support our Community Class Programme, delivered at The Dead Dog Gallery and our Visual Arts Centre in autumn 2026. As we enter the next phase of arts development, we are expanding our gallery programme to deliver more residencies, exhibitions and community classes that foster a more creative, connected and inclusive city. This programme will: • Deliver 10 community classes between September and December 2026 • Engage approximately 200 participants. • Provide paid opportunities for 2 local artists. • Offer student volunteering opportunities, supporting pathways into creative careers. The programme prioritises DH1 residents, particularly those experiencing loneliness, isolation, or limited access to creative opportunities. It fosters intergenerational learning, strengthens community connection, and contributes to Durham's identity as a culturally vibrant and inclusive city. The project aligns with Durham's recognition as part of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, embedding creativity, lifelong learning and participation in community life.	£1,900	£1,900
The Marra Project	The grant would support Transoup, a regular social event for trans and non-binary young adults, held at Merryoaks Community Hall. The project provides a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space where participants can meet others, foster a community atmosphere, and eat a free nutritious meal. Sessions include a shared vegan meal, refreshments, and informal social activities in a sober environment. All participants are part of at least one socially marginalised demographic, intersecting with mental health vulnerabilities, disability, and more. As such, there is an unexpectedly high incidence of medical dietary needs above and beyond statutory food allergen requirements, meaning specialist food	£1,152	£1,152

	needs to be provided. Many participants are immunocompromised and as such testing for COVID-19, along with air purifiers a necessary part of the event. The group provides an important source of peer support and community connection for individuals who may otherwise feel isolated or excluded from mainstream social spaces. Funding is requested primarily towards room hire costs and food to enable the sessions to continue on a sustainable basis.		
Durham City Harriers	The club in its current form is consistently performing well in regional athletic competitions, particularly cross country and road running, with multiple accolades in the harrier league (xc), north eastern xc competitions and local road races. The club was awarded club of the year in 2023 for its improvements. There has been increased club investment in increasing our capacity for more juniors as of spring 2025, several new coaches have been recruited for development and foundational work with 8-12 year olds in particular. Additionally a new sprint section has been added to complement the clubs access to the athletics track at maiden castle, the hope is the club will develop and progress multiple young people in many of the athletics fields that are so popular in this nation. Junior membership of the club has grown to 85 in the last calendar year. We are now looking to improve our clubs access and availability of training equipment to accommodate the additional membership and continue to provide for the training and athletic needs of the local community for many years to come. The additional resources will also hopefully assist us to expand our membership offer (we have nearly 30 children on the junior waiting list).	£1,500	£1,500

Durham & District Prostate Cancer Group	Durham and District Prostate Cancer Group (CIO application currently under review with the Charity Commission) is seeking funding to support community based prostate cancer awareness and early detection activities within Durham and surrounding areas. Funding will help the group provide community awareness events, pop-up information stands, educational materials and facilitated PSA testing opportunities delivered in partnership with appropriate healthcare professionals and organisations. The project aims to encourage earlier awareness and help-seeking amongst men who may otherwise not access support or testing. The group has already identified strong local demand for this work through existing support meetings and previous awareness activities. Funding will contribute towards: • PSA testing event costs • venue and equipment costs • awareness materials and publicity • community outreach activities • volunteer support and event expenses The initiative will particularly benefit men who may be reluctant to seek support, are socially isolated, or may not otherwise engage with preventative health initiatives. What difference will the project make? The project will help increase awareness of prostate cancer, promote earlier detection, reduce isolation and encourage men to seek advice and support earlier. The group currently supports approximately 120 members and has already delivered awareness activities within the local community. Previous testing initiatives identified individuals who required further medical follow up, demonstrating the importance and potential impact of early awareness and testing opportunities. The project will also help improve community wellbeing by providing accessible support, information and signposting for men affected by prostate cancer and their families.	£2,000	Agreement in principle of £2,000 depending on further information.

	Who will benefit? Men affected by prostate cancer and their families or carers living in Durham and surrounding areas. The project will particularly benefit older men and those who may not otherwise engage with support or preventative health initiatives. About the Organisation Durham and District Prostate Cancer Group CIO is a volunteer led community organisation providing peer support, awareness activities and information for men affected by prostate cancer and their families. The group holds regular meetings and awareness activities and works in partnership with community organisations and healthcare contacts to improve awareness and support early detection initiatives.		
Durham aged mineworkers housing association	Resident Involvement, looking to create more resident Involvement for our residents to reduce loneliness, isolation and promote healthy wellbeing, bring communities together with coffee mornings, craft sessions, gentle exercise gardening clubs etc	£5,000	£0
Durham Hospital Radio	2 YELLOWTEC Mika Folding Monitor arms are required to allow Ergonomic positioning of PC monitors in Studio 3 particularly for presenters who have acute poor eyesight allowing for the screen to be positioned for optimal clarity and reduced eye strain whilst maintaining a healthy working environment.	£500	£0
Friends of Durham Woodland Cemetery	Whilst we are currently financially stable, we are not yet in a position to have the lodge reroofed after it was damaged in the storms of previous years. The lodge which is owned by the Trust was regularly hired by families for funeral ceremonies and memorials which provided an income to cover the outgoings of the Trust. The Lodge also provides a meeting place for volunteers and Trustees. We are slowly working towards raising the estimated £8000 (quotes have been obtained) but are constantly aware of the ongoing deterioration of the roof and the constant loss of tiles which have almost gone.	Any contribution	£2,000

IWG application (made under NXCA)	Durham International Women's Group has previously received support from Ustinov College, Durham University, which enabled us to deliver activities that brought together women from diverse backgrounds and supported community integration. The success of this work has demonstrated the ongoing need for our activities but sadly the College support is no longer available to us. So our purpose for applying for a grant is to secure funding that would enable us to hire a venue for regular meetings, finance any insurance or safeguarding costs that might arise and give us a budget to cover some of the costs of craft and activity materials, cooking and cultural activity supplies, children's resources, refreshments, evening event costs and guest facilitators. If we had any left-over we would like to reinstate the hugely beneficial family trips we used to take to such places as Holy Island or the Lake District.	£2,500	Agreement in principle of £2,500, subject to the IWG becoming its own constituted group.

Merryoaks Community Hall	1. To get a sign installed at the hall 2. Free children's activities - We previously ran free children's holiday activities from May to December 2025, which were extremely popular. Every session was fully booked, and due to high demand, we increased capacity from 20 to 30 children per session. Although the hall is located in an area considered relatively affluent, discussions with parents, carers, and volunteers have shown that many families are unable to afford extracurricular activities such as sports, arts and crafts, and mental health-focused programmes. Funding from other sources, such as Fun and Food, has not always been accessible to these families due to eligibility criteria. By offering activities at the community hall, we can ensure all children have access, regardless of financial circumstance. The sessions provide a safe and welcoming environment where children can build friendships, develop confidence, and improve social and interpersonal skills The programme also addresses physical health. Childhood obesity is a growing concern, and our activities encourage physical activity, promote healthy habits, and reduce screen time. Children will also gain informal education on wellbeing and nutrition. By reducing social isolation and supporting mental and physical health, the programme helps children thrive holistically. A grant of £2,000 will enable us to deliver sessions during school holidays, supporting over 300 child attendees. This funding will provide high quality, engaging and enriching activities, ensuring children in our community have access to experiences that improve their wellbeing, confidence and physical health.	£2,500	Agreement of £2,000 towards children's activities, on the condition that a box seeking donations towards these activities be in situ at the Hall to allow for further funding. As well as an additional £500 agreed in principle for the sign, conditional on further information about the size, appearance, etc of this sign.
NXCA API action	To produce a banner to commemorate the Battle of Neville's Cross; part of which we are hoping to engage local schools	£200	£0 but with an invitation to re-apply with a more detailed application this year.

St. Margaret's Centre	We are seeking funding to purchase materials and equipment needed to run the Centre's wide variety of Health and Wellbeing Activities in the joinery workshop, craft room, and gardens. This will benefit the 250 people currently referred to the service, as well as the estimated 200+ people who will be referred over the next 12 months. These activities provide people with skills training that will support them to better maintain their homes, mindfulness techniques that can offer a distraction from chronic pain and mental distress, and the opportunity to do something that makes them feel good around other people who understand at least some of what they are experiencing. They are designed to help people build confidence in themselves, while benefiting from a sense of structure that soften absent in their lives. The materials needed to run these activities include: • Joinery workshop - wood, screws, glue, stains and varnish, and the purchase and maintenance of equipment • Craft room - art suppies like paint, pastels, and glue, textile crafts supplies such as fabric, scissors, and embroidery hoops • Gardens - compost, seeds, new tools as needed	£4,000	£2,000
Waddington Street URC	Two elements to improve facilities for all user groups. 1. Upgrading of carpets on entrance, stairs and passageways into community used hall and meeting room. 2. Necessary upgrading of audio system to be a more flexible, user friendly and inclusive experience. (also less crackly and prone to outside interference!)	Any contribution	£3,500
			Total £19,052

8. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on matters arising since the Full Parish Council meeting on 27th May 2026.

The Chair began by placing on record her thanks to everyone involved in the planning and delivery of the recent Mo Mowlam blue plaque unveiling event. Members heard that the Parish Council had been delighted to work alongside Durham University and Mo Mowlam's family to ensure that one of the University's most significant alumnae was appropriately recognised and commemorated. The Chair reflected that the unveiling had been a particularly special occasion and thanked all those who had contributed towards its successful organisation and delivery.

The Chair also expressed her appreciation to the organisers of the recent Eco-Fest, which had appeared to attract record attendance and had provided residents with an important opportunity to access information and advice on environmental sustainability and the practical steps that could be taken to live more sustainably and safeguard the environment.

The Chair further reported on her attendance at the Durham Regatta alongside Councillors E Scott, T Cleaver, M Wilkes and R Cornwell. Members heard that the event had once again demonstrated the considerable amount of work undertaken by organisers and volunteers to deliver an annual event which made an important contribution to the profile of Durham City. Particular thanks were extended to the Regatta Chair, Michael Laing, Debbie Mortimer and the wider organising team for their continued dedication and hard work.

Turning to Durham Pride, the Chair reported that the 2026 event had widely been regarded as the biggest and most successful Durham Pride to date, attracting significant numbers of people to the city. The Chair expressed her thanks to Mel and the wider organising team for the considerable amount of work undertaken throughout the year to deliver the event and highlighted the important support provided by organisations which recognised the significance of promoting equality and diversity throughout County Durham.

The Chair placed on record her thanks to the Parish Council's Environment Committee for its work in delivering almost 100 new summer floral hanging baskets across Durham City. Members heard that the displays had significantly enhanced the appearance of the city's principal streets and had received extremely positive feedback from residents and visitors. The Chair thanked everyone involved in coordinating and delivering the project and welcomed the positive contribution the displays were making to the appearance of the city centre.

The Chair also updated Members on progress with the two projects supported through the Parish Council's Community Centre Support Scheme. She thanked Alington House for progressing at pace its application to Durham County Council relating to the installation of new windows and also expressed her appreciation to Maeve Minns for her work in developing and progressing a number of funding applications on behalf of the City Theatre. The Chair welcomed the progress being

made with both projects and looked forward to seeing the proposed improvements advance further.

Members were further updated on work undertaken by the Clerk and Councillor R Cornwell to research a new audio system for future Full Council meetings. The Chair thanked them for their work and noted that, whilst the cost of the preferred system exceeded the Clerk's general expenditure limit of £1,000, the Clerk held delegated responsibility for the purchase of stationery and Members had expressed their support for the purchase of the new equipment. The Chair advised that it was hoped the new audio system would be available for use at the next Full Council meeting and would improve the arrangements for future meetings.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Amanda Hopgood as the new Mayor of Durham City and paid tribute to the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Gary Hutchinson. She reflected upon the outstanding contribution made by Councillor Hutchinson during his term of office and thanked both him and his wife Pamela for the manner in which they had represented Durham City and County Durham. The Chair wished Councillor Amanda Hopgood and Neil every success and enjoyment during the forthcoming civic year.

The Chair also congratulated all those recognised in His Majesty The King's Birthday Honours List. Particular congratulations were extended to Sir Carlos Frenk for his contribution to cosmology and to Rhiannon Hiles, who had been awarded a CBE for her contribution to museums and the heritage of the North East. The Chair welcomed the recognition afforded to both recipients and their significant achievements.

Finally, the Chair reminded Members that the Clerk would be taking annual leave between 2nd and 11th July 2026 and wished him an enjoyable and well-deserved break.

9. REQUEST TO SUPPORT THE MAYOR'S CHARITY APPEAL

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has received correspondence from the Mayor's PA at Durham County Council on behalf of the newly elected Mayor of Durham City Councillor Amanda Hopgood, asking if the Parish Council would consider supporting the mayor's charity appeal this year.

Following her election as Mayor in June 2026, Councillor Amanda Hopgood announced that she would be supporting St. Cuthbert's Hospice in the City of Durham parish area and Point North; two charities close to her heart.

The Clerk advised that no specific amount has been requested in the letter from the Mayor's PA and any offers of a donation will be gratefully received and acknowledged and any donations will be provided to the charity.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Parish Council has previously supported the past Mayors' appeals with a donation of £500.

Members unanimously **agreed** to support the Mayor's charities with a total donation to the appeal of £500; split equally between the two charities.

10. PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE REPLACEMENT OF THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE PLAQUE AT MILLENNIUM PLACE

The Clerk presented the report seeking the Parish Council's support for the replacement of the Queen's Golden Jubilee commemorative plaque located on the elevation of Clayport Library facing Lower Claypath. Members were advised that the plaque commemorated the official opening of Millennium Place by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 8th May 2002 as part of the nationwide celebrations marking the fiftieth anniversary of her accession to the throne.

The Clerk explained that the plaque represented an important record of a significant royal visit and civic occasion in Durham City's recent history and commemorated both the Queen's visit and the role of Millennium Place in the regeneration of the city centre.

The Clerk reported that, following more than twenty years of exposure to weathering, the condition of the plaque had deteriorated significantly. The engraved lettering had become increasingly difficult to read, the surface had suffered substantial degradation and its overall appearance no longer appropriately reflected the importance of the event it commemorated.

Members were advised that inspections undertaken by contractors acting on behalf of Durham County Council and the Parish Council had concluded that the plaque had deteriorated beyond practical repair. Professional advice had therefore recommended a full like-for-like replacement rather than attempting restoration works which would be unlikely to provide a satisfactory or durable outcome.

Members heard that the proposed replacement plaque would replicate the original design, dimensions, wording, appearance and fixing arrangements but would be manufactured from slightly thicker stainless steel to improve its longevity and future maintenance. The total cost of manufacturing and installing the replacement plaque was £576 excluding VAT, and Councillor E Hopgood had generously offered to fund the works in full. The Clerk therefore emphasised that the Parish Council was being asked to provide its formal and moral support for the project rather than make any financial contribution towards its delivery.

The Clerk further advised that the necessary discussions had taken place with Durham County Council as the owner of the asset. The Council's Corporate Property and Land Team had confirmed its support for the like-for-like replacement, whilst the Planning Service had advised that planning permission would not be required because there would be no material alteration to the plaque's size, location, appearance, illumination or method of fixing. Members also noted that Councillor C Lattin and the Clerk had recently discussed the proposal with the relevant Durham County Council Cabinet Member, who had similarly expressed support for the project.

Members were advised that the replacement plaque would remain an asset of Durham County Council and would continue to be maintained by the authority. It was also suggested that consideration should be given to preserving the original plaque in an appropriate location, such as The Story, for safekeeping and as part of the official historical record.

The Clerk concluded that replacing the plaque would preserve an important feature associated with Durham City's civic heritage, improve the appearance of a prominent location within the Conservation Area and ensure that the significance of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee visit and the official opening of Millennium Place continued to be recognised and understood by future generations.

Following consideration of the report, Members unanimously **agreed** to support the principle of the proposed replacement of the Queen's Golden Jubilee commemorative plaque with a new plaque matching the original design and specification and thanked Councillor E Hopgood for generously agreeing to fund this.

11. REPORT FROM PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Report by Councillor S Walker on the most recent meeting of the County Durham Association of Local Council (CDALC)

Councillor S Walker presented the following report from the CDALC meeting held on 21st May 2026 as follows:

The CDALC meeting on 21 May focused on a range of national policy and legislative updates relevant to town and parish councils. The most significant item for councils was the update on the Employment Rights Act 2025, with additional briefings on the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026, planning and renewable energy developments, and rural housing challenges.

Employment Rights Act 2025 – Key implications for Councils

The Employment Rights Act 2025 represents a major overhaul of UK employment law, with phased implementation through 2026–2027. It is expected to have substantial implications for parish and town council employment practice and governance.

Key changes include:

- *Day-one employment rights, including statutory sick pay, parental and paternity leave, and new bereavement leave entitlements*
- *Significant unfair dismissal reforms, including a reduced qualifying period (2 years to 6 months, expected 2027) and removal of the compensation cap*
- *Flexible working becoming the default, with employers required to justify any refusal on clear business grounds*
- *Stronger regulation of casual and zero-hours contracts, including rights to guaranteed hours and compensation for cancelled shifts*
- *Tightened restrictions on "fire and rehire" practices, with most dismissals for refusal of contractual changes becoming automatically unfair*
- *Enhanced protections around redundancy, including increased penalties for failure to consult*
- *Stronger workplace harassment duties, including liability for third- party harassment and enhanced whistleblowing protections*

- *Establishment of a Fair Work Agency to oversee enforcement Implications for parish and town councils Councils should expect:*
- *Increased legal and financial risk in employment matters*
- *A need for stronger HR systems, documentation, and governance processes*
- *More robust recruitment, induction, and probation procedures*
- *Greater reliance on professional HR advice and updated policy frameworks NALC has issued updated model policies (including sickness absence, bereavement, paternity leave, and whistleblowing) to assist councils in preparing for the changes.*

Priority actions Councils are advised to:

- *Review and update HR policies and employment contracts*
- *Ensure councillors and staff are briefed on the changes*
- *Strengthen documentation and decision-making processes*
- *Review casual and zero-hours arrangements*
- *Prepare for flexible working as standard practice*

Other matters

The meeting also received updates on:

- *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026, which strengthens parish council involvement in neighbourhood governance and introduces a Community Right to Buy for local assets*
- *Planning and renewable energy, including increased pressure for wind, solar and battery storage development and opportunities to engage through the forthcoming County Durham Plan review (2026–2029)*
- *Rural housing challenges, highlighting ongoing shortages of affordable housing in villages and encouraging parish councils to engage with local housing need assessments and community-led solutions*

End of report

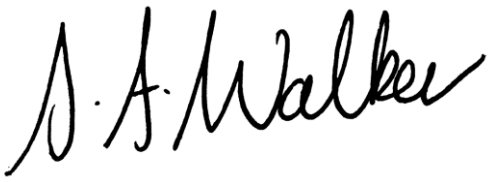
Due to the confidential nature of the following items, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in 3 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.

12. PROTECTING OUR DURHAM CITY GREEN BELT

Members considered recent planning applications within the parish area and the recent publication of the *Call for Sites* as part of the review of the County Durham Plan. Members reaffirmed their strong commitment to safeguarding the green belt in and around the parish area and **agreed** to state publicly the Parish Council's ongoing and future intentions to protect the Durham City green belt.

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
(22nd July 2026)