

# Community Residents' Association Forum meeting - Agenda

Forum contact details:  
Telephone 07704 525630  
Email: parishclerk@cityofdurham-pc.gov.uk

1<sup>st</sup> November 2023

Dear Forum Members,

I hereby invite you to a meeting of the **Community Residents' Association Forum** will be held in **Clayport library meeting room** on **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 17:00pm** to transact the following business:

- 1. Welcome and apologies**
- 2. Approval of the draft minutes of the Forum meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023**
- 3. Consideration of the Terms of Reference for this Forum** – included with this Agenda
- 4. To receive an update on ongoing Parish Council issues** – including the review of the County Durham Plan and budget setting process for 2024/25
- 5. To receive an update on student housing issues in the parish area**
- 6. To consider the proposal to adopt a Climate Emergency Plan for the parish area.**
- 7. To agree the dates of the next meetings of this Forum**

We look forward to welcoming you to this meeting.

Kindest regards,

**Adam Shanley**  
**Forum Secretary**

## **Minutes of the Community Residents' Association Forum annual meeting held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Present:** Adam Shanley and Alan Doig (City of Durham Parish Council) Richard Hornby and Carole Lattin (Gilesgate Residents Association), Alan Hayton and Des Ward (Whinney Hill Community Group), Simon Priestley (Crossgate Community Partnership), David Rosser (Sheraton Park Residents Association), Mike Costello (Distressed Residents in the Viaduct Area), Kirk Leister (St. Nicholas Community Forum), Mr John Ashby, Mr John Lowe (Side Residents Association) and Walia Kani (Durham University Residents Forum).

**Also present:** Inspector Dave Clarke (Durham Police) and PC Michael Ashurst (Durham Police).

### **1. Welcome and apologies**

Apologies were received from Roz Layton (Elvet Residents Association).

### **2. Election of Officers**

Alan Doig was elected as Convener of the Forum, proposed by David Rosser and seconded by Simon Priestley.

Roz Layton was elected as Deputy Convener of the Forum, proposed by Alan Doig and seconded by Simon Priestley.

Adam Shanley was elected as Secretary of the Forum, proposed by Simon Priestley and seconded by Richard Hornby.

### **3. Approval of the draft minutes of the Forum meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

In approving the minutes, Alan Hayton proposed that the Forum develops a mechanism by which the minutes can be approved before being presented at a Full Council meeting. The Secretary advised that he would seek to have these circulated for comments/amendments prior to the next Full Council meeting where they would be presented.

Alan Hayton also advised that he felt that the views of the Forum did not appear to be given any due consideration when looking at the Full Council minutes and he felt that the views of the Forum on particular issues should be highlighted at meetings and minuted accordingly.

### **4. Consideration of the Terms of Reference for this Forum**

The Convener reminded Members that there is a need for the Forum to review its Terms of Reference each year and this usually took place in April at the annual meeting of the Forum.

The Convener reminded Members that the existing Terms of Reference for the Forum had been pre-circulated in advance of the meeting. The Convener also advised that the changes made and circulated were amendments he had made to the Terms of Reference. The Convener reminded Members that this is the Forum whereby any comments of changes to the Terms of Reference may be made and agreed.

Alan Hayton and Des Ward advised that the amendments to the Terms of Reference had been circulated without any reference at all to who had made the changes. Alan Hayton also objected to Forum Members not having been asked in advance for their own amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Des Ward advised that he felt that Councillors should not be involved in this Forum and any Parish Councillors attending these meetings should be asked to leave. Des Ward advised that he felt that this went against the principle of the Forum and objected to Councillors attending the meetings. Des advised that he felt that Parish Councillors have their own political agendas which could get in the way of issues being progressed.

Des Ward and Alan Hayton asked for an audit of the Parish Clerk's emails in the run-up to the establishment of the Forum so that the original reasons for establishing the Forum could be considered.

Mike Costello advised that he felt that more was achieved for the community on DURF without Councillor attendance at those meetings.

Alan Doig advised that he would be content to leave the Forum and allow for this to become a meeting of all of the parish's Residents Associations only without anyone from the Parish Council involved. Des Ward objected to this statement by the Convener.

The Secretary highlighted that this Forum is an opportunity for Members to discuss the Terms of Reference for the Forum and to agree these in this Forum and proposed that a vote take place following the discussion to agree the newly drafted Terms of Reference. Alan Hayton and Des Ward advised that they were opposed to a vote on this in this meeting as Associations had not had the opportunity to discuss the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Fiona Adamson advised that she felt having Councillors attending this meeting was important so that they could listen to the views of residents on particular issues. Fiona also advised that she would struggle to justify calling a meeting of her own Residents Association simply to look at the Terms of Reference of the Forum; a matter which some residents may consider to be quite trivial.

Simon Priestley and Dave Rosser also advised that they supported Councillors attending the Forum meetings.

Richard Hornby advised that he felt that this was an issue for the individual Residents Association to nominate their chosen representative. Richard advised that, if the chosen representative so happened to also be a Parish Councillor, then this was fine but the Councillor was attending the meeting as a resident representing their individual Association.

Carole Lattin highlighted that she had been nominated by Gilesgate Residents Association to represent them on this Forum and she therefore felt entirely justified to attend these meetings.

The Secretary highlighted that Carole is an extremely proactive Councillor along with 14 colleagues for the community and that he felt that having Carole and Alan attend the meetings had not hampered any projects in any way, indeed quite the contrary.

The Secretary also advised that a decision on whether to allow Parish Councillors to attend the Forum was fundamental to the ongoing running of the Forum. The Secretary

also objected as an employee of the Council to the idea that he would be the link between residents' associations and the forum.

The Secretary advised that he is simply an administrator of the Parish Council not the spokesperson or decision-maker and that he felt that these meetings were becoming increasingly hostile; something which runs the risk of becoming a HR matter for the Parish Council as an employer if he is to be left alone to defend any decisions.

This statement was supported by Kirk Leister who said that he did not feel that Parish Councillors attending the meeting but with a different hat on caused any issues at all.

The Convener proposed that a decision on the Terms of Reference be deferred until a special meeting in June could take place where these could be properly considered. The Convener asked all attendees to take the Terms of Reference to their respective Associations and come forward with any proposed changes for the next meeting.

## **5. Update on the Service Level Agreement between Durham Police and the City of Durham Parish Council**

The Convener welcomed Dave Clarke and PC Michael Ashurst to the meeting and thanked them for their work in the City.

Dave began by confirming that the two additional officers as part of the Operation Lentil project in the City began in early April and they were already a visible presence around the City and its surrounding residential areas.

Dave advised that he was aware that the additional officers had already dealt with a number of incidents since commencing and having the additional resource for the City meant that issues were being dealt with much quicker than they were prior to the Operation.

Dave took the opportunity to thank the Parish Council and local residents for their ongoing support with this Operation and time will tell what difference this makes for the City in addition to the work already being done by the Parish Council and others on the Safety Hub.

The Secretary highlighted the exceptional amount of work which Dave Clarke has put into this Operation and his ongoing work to make the City a safer and more pleasant place for residents.

All Forum Members thanked Dave Clarke and his team for their work and agreed that this additional visible presence was really having a positive impact on the City.

Forum Members highlighted that the big issue in the City at present is the issue of nuisance begging and expressed their disappointment that DCC had not pursued a PSPO against begging in the City centre. Dave Clarke advised that he and his team are currently looking to build up an evidence base to go back to DCC on this to try once more for a PSPO.

The Forum unanimously **agreed** to draft a letter of support for such a PSPO in the City and to send this in to DCC at the earliest opportunity.

In relation to Operation Lentil, Dave advised that he and the Secretary would soon be conducting interviews for a new Safer Streets Co-ordinator role; funded by the PCC's

office as part of the SLA and he hoped to have someone in post full-time in the near future.

The Convener thanked Dave Clarke for such a positive update. Having received a round of applause from Forum Members, Dave Clarke and Michael Ashurst left the meeting.

## **6. Discussion on proposed report on a) additional HMO licensing and b) the impact of Durham University on the parish area**

The Secretary reminded Members that, further to previous discussions and correspondence on the BRE report on Durham University, he and John Ashby were able to meet with BRE representatives on 1st March 2023.

The Secretary reminded Members that he had asked BRE to focus on providing the Forum with a separate cost and scoping document for two areas:

1. A report setting out a justification for the introduction of an additional HMO licensing scheme for Durham City; and
2. A report which focused on the information we have agreed and which is set out in the attached document kindly produced by Alan Hayton for us.

In the case of number 1, the Secretary advised that BRE have now advised that they no longer offer this service since their last report in 2012 for the County Council but offered an alternative service which focused more on housing stock modelling, etc. The Secretary advised that the Forum has concluded in writing that this would not be appropriate for our needs.

Since that meeting therefore, the Secretary advised that he has reached out to over 10 local authorities across the country who have successfully adopted an additional HMO licensing scheme and asked if they have used the services of an external consultant to produce the report justifying their own schemes. A number of whom recommended the same Housing Sector Market Research consultancy and the Secretary advised that he had reached out to this consultancy firm to enquire about the costs for a report but again this company does not offer this service.

The Secretary also highlighted that he has reached out to the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils, the County Durham Association of Local Councils, the Institute for Licensing and private contractors to locate someone to carry out a business case for this; all of which had been to no avail.

In relation to the larger report detailed above at point 2, the Secretary highlighted that BRE advised that such a report would carry a significant workload, hourly-rated consultancy fees, boots on the ground for surveys, etc. and the likely costs for this would be well into the £100ks - far beyond the means of the Parish Council. It is therefore regretful that the Forum will not be able to proceed with this proposal at this time.

John Ashby highlighted that a compulsory, self-financing private landlords' registration scheme is/was DURF's top priority in the Issues and Actions Register. This arose from a well-received presentation of the Sheffield 'SNUG' scheme at DURF's national conference in 2016. John advised that both the Parish Council and DURF have sought the introduction of such a scheme in Durham.

John highlighted that the purpose of the scheme would be: (i) give better protection for student, (ii) require external maintenance of the property, and (iii) require management of nuisance e.g. noise from early morning parties, wheelie bins and parking.

John advised that DCC officers committed in February 2022 to putting together a business case, including the role of the housing officer(s) involved in such inspections, and what funding would be required to recruit such officers. However, there has been no further progress as the County Council officers have subsequently felt unable to commit to working on a draft business case unless and until other agencies, notably the University, have committed to some funding for these additional officer resources.

John advised that he is aware that the local MP and Jeremy Cook (Durham University) are soon to meet with landlords and letting agents in the City and that Jeremy is presently pushing for the national Selective Licensing Scheme to be amended to recognise the special situation in University cities.

John recommended that the Forum should welcome such a proposal as well as the University pressing for a resumption of the County Council's work, currently suspended, on the business case for a licensing scheme for Durham City like the Sheffield SNUG scheme, with estimates of staffing requirements and costs.

This was unanimously **agreed** by Forum Members.

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

Signed,

**Forum Convener**