

Minutes of the Community Residents' Association Forum meeting held on Wednesday 16th February 2022.

Present: Adam Shanley and Alan Doig (City of Durham Parish Council) Richard Hornby and Carole Lattin (Gilesgate Residents Association), Kirk Lester (St. Nicolas Community Forum), Alan Hayton and Desmond Ward (Whinney Hill Community Group), Roz Layton (Elvet Residents Association), David Rosser (Sheraton Park Residents Association), Mike Costello (Distressed Residents in the Viaduct Area) and John Ashby (Durham University Residents Forum).

Alan Doig in the **Chair**

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Simon Priestley (Crossgate Community Partnership) and Robin Humphrey (Sidegate Residents Association).

2. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the Forum meeting held on 21st July 2021.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2021 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings, subject to the following amendments:

- The sentence "*the Forum Convener noted that student related late night noise and anti-social behaviour has been identified as a key issue for the Parish Council's Community Residents Association Forum*" be amended to "*the Forum Convener noted that **the longstanding problems of** student related late night noise and anti-social behaviour has been identified as a key issue for the Parish Council's Community Residents Association Forum*".
- "*Whinney Hill Residents Group*" be amended to "*Whinney Hill **Community** Group*"
- Under the AOB item, "*none received*" be amended to "*In light of the Forum Convener needing to leave the meeting early. The meeting was closed at this point.*"

Mike Costello supported the first amendment, advising that these issues had been going on for 30 years without resolution causing huge distress and undermining physical and mental health.

3. Consideration of the joint response from DCC/ Durham University/ Durham Police on the noise and ASB consultation paper

All Groups represented at the meeting expressed their serious disappointment, anger and frustration at the joint response DCC/ Durham University/ Durham Police to the noise and ASB consultation paper and how dismissive they appeared to be to the genuine and legitimate concerns of Durham City residents.

The Convener particularly highlighted that the issues of the community trigger, the role of landlords in addressing ASB problems and the issue of ownership of the ASB issue had been entirely disregarded in the joint response.

Des Ward agreed with this and said the response was extremely disappointing and failed to address the key issues highlighted in the consultation paper.

Alan Hayton highlighted the response report produced by Alan Doig and John Ashby following the joint response letter issued by DCC, Police and Durham University and expressed his disappointment, which was echoed by other forum members, at the high number of issues highlighted red i.e. not addressed in the joint response. Alan advised that the joint response avoided the main issues and failed to address the specific and unique needs of the City which were primarily due to the ever increasing number of Durham University students who take up temporary residence within the City and the lack of enthusiasm by our elected representatives to challenge the Durham University's dominance of the City.

Alan also highlighted that DH1 – often referred to in reports from organisations – is a massive area and the ASB issues in the City which are concentrated in specific hotspot areas were just as important and frequent as other areas of the County. Reference was made to the police crime figures for Durham City over the past three years regarding ASB and they showed that they were comparable with other areas of the County which would appear to disprove the claim made by the police that Durham City had significantly lower levels of ASB compared to other parts of the County.

Mike Costello expressed his disappointment at the joint response and advised that this had been going on for many years without resolution.

Richard Hornby advised that he felt that there is an issue with how incidents are reported and expressed his hope that the number of CPWs issued (as one example) could be reported with a more geographically-specific zone to see which areas of the City really needed attention.

John Ashby said he felt the response was entirely unacceptable because it ignored so many of the positive suggestions for improving the present situation. He advised that, by way of a positive approach to resolve these issues, DURF member responses had supported the reinstatement of Rebecca and Kay as the City's PCSOs – two fantastic PCSOs who resolved issues for residents.

Adam Shanley highlighted the need for a consistent, knowledgeable, empowered, Neighbourhood Inspector. It was agreed that seven in four years is clearly unacceptable.

Roz Layton described the response as a masterpiece of evasive drafting and highlighted that the University's SLA with Durham Police – totally £30,000 for a Police Constable – was established years ago and the number of students in the City has massively increased since then. The present provision is simply insufficient for the City. It was also commented upon the fact that if Durham University could boast of £600m+ to develop their resources in the City then £30,000 for a Police Constable was insufficient by comparison.

David Rosser advised that SPRA considered the joint response very poor, albeit the levels of ASB are low in Sheraton Park thanks to the earlier efforts of residents. Thanks to the efforts of Ian Macdonald at Ustinov College the incidents of ASB associated with the College are virtually non-existent.

Kirk expressed his disappointment that there appeared to be no resolution to the transient noise issue in the City and asked for the Parish Council's Pin Point scheme to be promoted again.

Adam asked for the Forum's support in encouraging residents to report issues via 101 and insisting on a case number. Members of the Forum highlighted some negative experiences of calling 101. Mike Costello advised that it is imperative that call response times are shortened (often residents are on hold for over ten minutes) and the need for dropped calls data when callers give up.

Mike Costello also highlighted the need to resolve the "don't contact for transient noise" and "must phone at the time" culture.

The meeting agreed that there is a need to reinstate police addressing all issues.

It was widely agreed there was often a dismissive response to CRT by students.

Des Ward expressed the concern that Police were misusing CRT in that all calls involving students were passed over to CRT even when the reported ASB issue was on the street and of police responsibility.

Drawing the discussion to a list of proactive steps, the meeting agreed that:

They should call for the reinstatement of Rebecca and Kay as the PCSOs for Durham City.

Request an enhanced CRT service with proactive patrols taking place across the hotspot areas of the City.

To raise these issues with Joy Allen and Andrea Patterson at the Parish Council's Full Council meeting next week and press for solutions.

Richard Hornby advised that the University's Marketing team is looking into carrying out some promotion of calling 101 and he would report back on this.

John Ashby highlighted that DURF is meeting with the new Vice-Chancellor on 7th March and the next ordinary DURF meeting is set to take place on 10th March, where these issues would be discussed.

4. University booking of Clayport Library Digital Media Suite

Alan Hayton expressed his concerns having learnt that the University has acquired 30 non-bookable study spaces in the digital media suite of Clayport library.

Alan advised that the library is one of the few public facilities left in the City for local residents who are paying Council tax and expressed his annoyance that this had been done without any public consultation and in fact no-one appeared to have any knowledge of it. Alan advised that many local residents – particularly those without internet access and in need of these services, e.g. to apply for jobs online etc – could be denied these important services and that it was totally wrong for Durham University to be able to secure these public facilities.

David Rosser, along with all of the other forum members, echoed these concerns.

The Forum **agreed** to raise this issue with the Parish Council at Thursday's meeting as a matter of concern as it was totally unacceptable for Durham University to commandeer our public services for their own needs in this way.

The meeting agreed the University needs to manage its own expansion and should not be allowed to remove even more services from permanent residents, e.g. housing, shops, professional services (solicitors etc.).

5. Update on plans for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations

Adam advised that planning was well underway for the celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend between 2nd – 5th June.

Adam advised that the Parish Council is hoping to arrange a City picnic in the market place on Sunday 5th June.

Adam also advised that the Parish Council is hoping to arrange a "Clean for the Queen" City-wide litter pick towards the end of May this year and he hoped as many residents as possible could get involved with this.

Richard Hornby reported that Carrville and Belmont Residents Association are also organising a large (ticketed) event for Jubilee weekend.

6. AOB

Adam Shanley reported that the University is currently carrying out a review of its SLA with DCC for an enhanced Neighbourhood Warden service.

Adam also highlighted the Parish Council's concerns at the lack of reporting taking place at present as part of the SLA and Alan Doig advised that the University and the Parish Council would be carrying out a joint review of their SLAs for an enhanced Neighbourhood Warden service for the City. The point was also raised as to what operational control the Parish Council had over the Neighbourhood Wardens we are paying for. Residents are not happy with the service presently provided and if the Parish Council are to pay for extra wardens, then residents would like to see their concerns addressed.

Richard Hornby advised that GRA has responded to the University's request for information relating to the enhanced warden service and also noted that a lack of communication with the team was a significant issue.

Mike Costello advised that he felt that the service provided at present was totally unacceptable.

7. Dates of future meetings in April 2022, July 2022, October 2022.

There being no further business, the Convener thanked all members for their attendance and contribution and closed the meeting.

Signed,



Forum Convener