

Minutes of the Community Residents' Association Forum meeting held on Friday 29th April 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), Desmond Ward (Whinney Hill Community Group), Roz Layton (Elvet Residents Association), John Lowe (Sidegate Residents Association) David Rosser (Sheraton Park Residents Association), Mike Costello (Distressed Residents in the Viaduct Area), John Ashby (Durham University Residents Forum) and Lucy Szablewska (member of the public).

Alan Doig in the **Chair**

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Simon Priestley (Crossgate Community Partnership)

2. Election of Forum officers:

Alan Doig was elected as Convener of the Forum. Nominated by Roz Layton and seconded by David Rosser.

Roz Layton was elected as Deputy Convener of the Forum. Nominated by Alan Doig and seconded by Carole Lattin.

Adam Shanley was elected as Secretary of the Forum. Nominated by Alan Doig and seconded by Mike Costello.

3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the Forum meeting held on 16th February 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 2022 were unanimously **agreed** as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

In agreeing the minutes, Forum Members highlighted the inadequacies of the County Council's '*doitonline*' system and felt that the system was not fit for purpose. The Forum **agreed** to make representations to the County Council about this system.

4. Discussion with Maya Polenz, Chief Officer Property at Durham Cathedral on Cathedral estates plans

The Convener welcomed Maya Polenz, Chief Officer Property at Durham Cathedral to the meeting to discuss the Cathedral's estates plans.

Maya thanked the Forum for allowing her to attend this meeting. Maya highlighted that the Cathedral owns a substantial estate, albeit the size of the estate has reduced slightly over the year.

Maya advised that, during the pandemic, the Cathedral really took the opportunity to consider a longer-term strategy for its estates, with the objective of keeping as much of this as open as possible for public use and enjoyment.

Maya advised that the Cathedral led a public consultation on this over a year ago and the riverbanks and their welfare had come back as being one of residents' top priorities in the City. Since this was highlighted to the Cathedral, Maya advised that she had been working with DCC on projects to improve the riverbanks for Durham residents;

recognising the important value they have not just in terms of landscaping around the World Heritage Site but also for their public use and enjoyment aspect.

Maya advised that DCC has also been leading on a feasibility study for projects to improve the riverbanks. Maya advised that the main parts of the river which DCC has been looking at stretches from Shincliffe to Kepier.

Maya also advised that DCC is looking to improve access to the river from residential areas.

Maya highlighted that it is important to think about the longer-term financial sustainability of the river and advised that the 3 Mill buildings are currently being reviewed to see if they can be brought back into some commercial/ public use.

The Secretary advised that the Parish Council is very keen to support projects which improve the river and confirmed that the Parish Council has agreed a budget to support projects too and is engaging with key stakeholders on this.

John Ashby advised that he felt that this is a fantastic project and all stakeholders should give this their full support.

The Convener expressed disappointment that the land at Observatory Hill was fenced off and ploughed without pre-announcement to local residents who really value access to this land. The Convener highlighted the importance of consultation with residents on the management of green spaces and expressed that he felt that communication is essential.

Lucy Szablewska highlighted that this Hill offered a phenomenal view of the Cathedral. Lucy advised that she is pleased to hear that the Cathedral is committed to balance public access, sustainable farming and nature conservation and asked how this would work in practical terms.

Maya advised that she felt that the tenant should have consulted with local residents and the Cathedral prior to blocking off the Hill. Maya advised that the tenant's plans are focused around biodiversity and regenerating the Hill.

Maya advised that the tenant is happy to allow public access to the Hill and residents need to understand that this is a farming area.

Maya also advised that it is important to the Cathedral that this land is farmed for financial sustainability purposes.

John Lowe highlighted that the Neighbourhood Plan designates this land as open green space.

John also advised that the City of Durham Trust has produced a 2-page leaflet about projects on the riverbank and he would be happy to circulate this.

Lucy asked Maya for evidence that the actions of the farmer are promoting biodiversity. Maya advised that she would look into this but the Cathedral isn't monitoring this as it is tenant farmed land.

Mike advised that the river is in a terrible state; highlighting that a motorcycle had recently been fished out of the river.

Carole Lattin highlighted that a local voluntary group – the Durham City Riverscape Community – has been formed and their aim is to do all they can to improve the river.

Carole also highlighted that the non-native invasive species along the riverbanks are having a terrible impact on the river.

The Convener thanked Maya for her presentation. At this point, Maya left the meeting.

5. City-wide litter picking event on Sunday 29th May 2022

The Secretary advised that the Parish Council is organising a city-wide litter picking event on Sunday 29th May 2022 as part of a "Clean for the Queen" campaign ahead of the Platinum Jubilee weekend. Forum Members thanked the Parish Council for their work on this and **agreed** to support this city-wide litter picking event.

6. Discussion of follow-up actions on ASB-related matters

The Convener advised that he and John Ashby have been working on the production of a "*what to do if you have a local issue in Durham*" leaflet for some time now to be distributed to all residents (both student and non-student) and he hoped that this Forum would be able to give the leaflet its support.

John Ashby advised that DURF has been very much pushing for the production and distribution of such a leaflet. John advised that the approach to dealing with anti-social noise has now been agreed by the relevant stakeholders and encouraged the Forum to give such a leaflet its support.

John highlighted that there are some slight amendments needed to this leaflet.

Des asked that calling the police be added to the column "actions you can take" under street noise/ disturbance: post 11pm.

Mike highlighted that Dave Clarke is pushing for a PSPO against noise but the County Council is refusing to adopt this. Mike stressed that it is imperative that this Forum pushes for this. Mike advised that he has been trying to get this situation resolved for the last 30 years.

John Ashby highlighted that some partners are pushing to return to the type of service which Rebecca and Kay (former PCSOs for the City) provided to residents.

John Lowe advised that he understood that the new Police Bill gave the Police greater powers to tackle noise.

Desmond Ward advised that the noise from college events last year was unbearable and asked that college contacts be added to the leaflet. Desmond advised that the colleges on the Bailey and on the Hill are a real problem.

David Rosser highlighted that Ustinov college is excellent at informing residents of events, these events are very well policed and the bar in the college is very well sound-proofed.

Richard Hornby advised that Rebecca Eves is circulating a list of upcoming college events on a regular basis.

The Convener asked that all Forum Members feed into the content of the document within a timeframe that it can be approved at the Parish Council's Full Council meeting in May/ June 2022.

All Forum Members thanked John and Alan for their work on this and **agreed** to support this leaflet.

7. AOB

None received.

8. Dates of future meetings in July 2022, October 2022, January 2023.

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

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Forum Convener
(28th July 2022)**