

# **CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting, held in the Durham Town Hall at 18:00pm on Thursday 23rd May 2019.**

## **1. Chair's update on the work of the Parish Council**

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Chair of the Parish Council provide an update on work carried out by the Parish Council since its formation last year as follows:

"May I take this opportunity to warmly welcome you all here this evening and thank you for coming along. I am Cllr Elizabeth Scott and I have been the Chair of the City of Durham Parish Council since its inception in May of last year.

This is a meeting of the Parish, and not of the Parish Council, which is why you only see me and Adam our Clerk out front here. Adam has been our permanent Clerk since the beginning of the year and has already proved himself to be a real asset to both the Council and to the City.

Tonight I'm going to talk a little bit about the work of the Council, give out some awards, quickly run you through our strategy for the year ahead, and then allow an opportunity for you to ask any questions that you may have or tell us what you think about us.

We have 15 council members in total coming from a range of political and social backgrounds and with a broad range of skills and experience. What we all have in common is that we have a lot of opinions and a lot to say for ourselves! In our first year this has been used as a force for good. We are unified on the things that matter most to our residents and we are working together whilst playing to our individual strengths.

I would like to run through some of the things that we have done so far and to give you a flavour of our scope and remit.

We have a planning committee Chaired by Cllr Roger Cornwell which has so far considered 432 planning applications. That committee has also been at the forefront of the campaign against the siting of the new DCC HQ on the Sands which has led us to launch a judicial review and a Crowdfunding campaign to offset the costs of the legal challenge.

Our Licensing Committee, chaired by Cllr by Liz Brown has considered all new licensing applications in our Parish, setting conditions on any new premises applications to ensure that business activities don't impact negatively on local residents.

Through the work of our Environment Committee, chaired by Cllr Victoria Ashfield, we are looking at ways that we can enhance the physical environment of the Parish area. We have entered into an agreement with Durham County Council to provide a Neighbourhood Warden service to tackle issues such as industrial and residential waste, fly tipping, dog fouling and dangerous and/or illegal car parking. The committee has also led our desire to engage young people and is busy developing a number of exciting projects with schools.

We have responded to a range of public consultations on behalf of the City including the County Durham Plan and DCC's licencing statement. We have also partnered with a number of organisations and now have Parish Council reps on various bodies such as the Durham University Task Force and the Durham Access Group and are starting to work with many more including Durham BID, Durham Students Union, Durham Constabulary, Durham University, the AAP and other local community organisations.

In addition to this we have agreed an environmental and sustainability policy as a Parish Council with the aim of being a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. We have partnered with Durham-In-Bloom this year and will be funding a floral display in the Market Place. We have set aside £15,000 as part of our budget to support local community and voluntary organisations with grant awards. We have set up the "Good Citizen Award" for the Parish to recognise individuals who have done outstanding work for our area. And we are in the process of launching an investigation into the numbers of HMOs within the Parish area as the Parish Council feels the method used by DCC is inaccurate.

All this (and more) we have done within the tight financial management of our finance committee chaired by Cllr Alan Doig, which helped us to set a budget to deliver on our priorities without raising our precept for this financial year."

## **2. City of Durham Good Citizen 2019 awards**

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Chair of the Parish Council presented the City of Durham Good Citizen 2019 awards to the Parish Council's chosen recipients as follows:

### **Jennifer Thompson**

When the St Johns Road/George Street action group – set up to protest the conversion of the NX Working man's Club into student flats – decided to become a standing community association, Jennifer Thompson, a senior university academic manager, put herself forward as the association's chair. This post she has continued to date, establishing an association – the Nevilles Cross Community Association (NXCA) - with over 150 members and a NX residents' Facebook group with three times that number. She has been instrumental in establishing working relations with the Sheraton Park Residents Association and the Merryoaks Community Association. She has overseen and managed all the activities undertaken by the NXCA and, in the discussions about a new community centre, has now become the chair of the newly-formed Lowes Barn Community Centre project. This project involves four community associations and has recently been awarded £450,000; she is actively involved in the various design and funding activities necessary to build the centre.

Jennifer has done this on a continuous basis, despite having a family and a full-time occupation. She has ensured that the NXCA has been an established, inclusive and even-handed association, willing to embrace and respond to a range of issues and activities. While not always being the visible face for what the NXCA does, she ensures that it and its finances are run properly and transparently and

has managed to steer the NXCA to becoming an established local voice. The future of the NXCA and, more importantly, the Lowes Barn community centre are down to the commitment, time and expertise of volunteers such as Jennifer.

Jennifer received her award.

### **Colin Wilkes**

Colin runs the indoor and outdoor market in Durham and has done for many years. This is a huge asset to Durham City centre and is an essential anchor to the retail offer in Durham. Colin performs a huge benefit to the local community in so much that he allows local groups such as the St Nicholas Community Forum to use the outdoor market space to have an information stall on a Saturday. Colin was also one of the driving forces behind setting up the much-acclaimed Durham Pointers who perform an extremely important function for the local community and to tourists and visitors of the City.

Building on the model of the very successful Future Business Magnets award for secondary schools in the city, Colin was also instrumental in setting up the similar competition to promote enterprise among local community groups and its follow up 'Stepping up Durham' Award which helped budding entrepreneurs further develop and market their new business ideas.

Over the years Colin has worked tirelessly to network with other stakeholders e.g. the university to promote tourism across the city and in conjunction with Crook Hall set up the coach Meet and Greet service which was later taken over by Durham Pointers.

Colin has been Chair of the local AAP Board and a member of the City Centre Promotion task and finish group. Colin has supported young people of different abilities into the world of work both individually and more generally via the Citizenship awards programme.

Colin received his award.

### **Dr Douglas Pocock**

Douglas has been the Honorary Secretary of the City of Durham Trust since 1973 and has done an awful lot for our local Parish area over the past 46 years:

Douglas was one of those who defined the extent of the World Heritage Site in 1986 and is a member of the WHS Coordinating Committee. Douglas led the teams that successfully campaigned for a Green Belt for the City at the Enquiries into the Structure Plan (mid-1990s) and Local Plan (2002-4). Douglas has played a major and beneficial role in commenting on the County Durham Plan and its predecessors in all their stages.

Douglas assiduously examines over a thousand planning applications every year for the City and its surroundings and drafts representations on relevant ones. He has written and edited many books about Durham, of which Durham Cathedral: an Architectural Appreciation (2014) continues to be updated and reprinted. He devised the concept of Durhamness used to judge proposals in our City.

Douglas received his award.

### **Dennis Jones**

Dennis Jones attended the School of Architecture at Kings College in the 1950s, working in private practice in Newcastle after graduating. After spending some time in Vancouver he returned to live in Durham in 1974, becoming a partner in various architectural practices. Dennis's work has largely focused on the conservation of historic buildings, which resulted in him holding a position as a Commissioned Architect within English Heritage. He has worked as a consultant on projects throughout Durham, including conservation work on County Durham churches and on Durham and Brancepeth Castles as well as on Durham University's colleges. Dennis is a Trustee of the City of Durham Trust and is the long-time Chairman of the Bow Trust which runs the Durham Heritage Centre and Museum in the historic Church of St Mary-le-Bow in The Bailey. The museum details the history of the City of Durham from medieval times to the present day. Without the hundreds of hours each year Dennis and his wife Jo give to the running of the museum it would simply not have survived.

Dennis received his award.

### **3. Parish Council Strategy 2019-20**

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Chair of the Parish Council advised the meeting that the Parish Council had recently agreed a proposed strategy for the year ahead. Hard copies were available at the meeting and this had also been published in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Scott went through all 5 areas of the Parish Council strategy as follows:

#### **Priority 1: Enhancing the wellbeing and prosperity of our parish**

- Promoting and enhancing health and wellbeing of our community
- Enhancing the green infrastructure of our Parish
- Objecting to any new development which has a negative impact on our community
- Ensuring our public spaces are safe, user-friendly and accessible for all.
- Encouraging activities which reduce carbon emissions.
- Promoting road and traffic safety
- Supporting the local allotments

## **Priority 2: Creating a Neighbourhood Plan and representing the parish on planning matters**

- Developing a shared vision for our community through the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan
- Promoting development which is affordable, sustainable and in accordance with the local needs of the Parish.
- Protecting our World Heritage Site and our Conservation Areas.
- Fighting against overdevelopment
- Responding to planning consultations through our Planning Committee
- Carrying out an investigation into the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in our Parish.

## **Priority 3: Being a voice for the city and working with key partners**

- Representing our Parish on the issues which matter most to our residents.
- Working with the local schools to support young people in our Parish.
- Working with the local Residents' Groups and other key partners.
- Providing grant support to local community and voluntary groups.
- Recognising outstanding contribution to our Parish from individuals through the "Good Citizen" Awards.
- Regular consultation with our community on key issues.

## **Priority 4: Supporting the business community and encouraging tourism**

- Promoting the image and pride of Durham as an attractive destination for tourists and visitors.
- Encourage events which have a positive impact on the local economy.
- Ensuring that temporary events have as minimal disruption on local residents as possible.
- Marketing Durham as a place to do business and encouraging green, ethical and socially-engaged business.
- Launching the Best Business Frontage Awards.
- Ensuring that all licensed premises are carrying out their activities in accordance with the four licensing objectives.

## **Priority 5: Enhancing the physical environment of our parish**

- Preserving and enhancing our physical, natural and historical environment
- Safeguarding our environment for the enjoyment of future generations.

- Developing our green spaces
- Increasing floral planting
- Partnering with Durham in Bloom
- Provide additional litter picking, weed control and street sign cleaning
- Employing a Neighbourhood Warden to counter any issues which adversely impact on our environment.

The meeting formally moved to endorse the Parish Council's proposed Strategy for the year ahead.

#### **4. Questions from members of the public**

Cllr Elizabeth Scott opened the floor for questions from members of the public.

Mr John Lowe thanked the Parish Council for their support with the neighbourhood plan and particularly wanted to thank the Clerk for his support with the regulation 14 consultation.

Mr Stuart Collinson said he objected to the new County Council Headquarters and asked if other sites could be considered for the development. Cllr E Scott advised that her preferred option for the headquarters is the existing site of Aykley Heads. Cllr R Cornwell advised that five options were considered for the siting of the new county council headquarters and advised that the Parish Council had objected to this.

Mr Tony Cowan asked what the local Member of Parliament was doing on the new County Headquarters building. Cllr R Cornwell advised that the MP had taken a neutral stance on the headquarters.

Ms Walia Kani asked if the Parish Council had received notification of being granted a judicial review into the planning decision to approve the new County headquarters. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council were still waiting to hear back on this.

Cllr R Cornwell advised that he felt that the meeting should put on record their thanks to all those who had so far donated to the Crowdfunder campaign to fund the judicial review. Miss Janet George advised that the funding page was still open for donations.

Ms Sue Childs asked what is stopping the County Council proceeding with their planning permission for the new County headquarters building. The Clerk explained that the County Council has planning permission and could start immediately however if the judicial review decides against the granting of planning permission, then everything carried out from day one on the development would be illegal.

Mr Stuart Collinson asked what the Parish Council is doing about air quality in the Parish. Cllr V Ashfield advised that she hoped that they could put a ban on diesel generators being used in the city centre and, in particular, the Market Place.

Ms Jennifer Thompson asked what was happening regarding the proposed two new relief roads. Cllr E Scott advised that they were outside the Parish area however Cllr R Cornwell advised that the Parish Council had still objected to these relief roads in their responses to the draft County Durham Local Plan.

Mr Brendan McKeon advised that he was particularly concerned about licensing in Durham City.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Doig', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Signed by Councillor Alan Doig (Chair of the Parish Council)**  
**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022**