

**The City of Durham Trust**  
(Registered charity number 502132)

**MINUTES** of the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Trust in Elvet Riverside ER140, New Elvet on  
Tuesday 31 October 2023 commencing at 19.00.

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

John Lowe (Chair) welcomed attendees (in person and via Zoom) to the Trust's 2023 AGM in Elvet Riverside ER140 and pointed out the emergency exits/facilities. Apologies were received from Dr Anne Allen (WHS Senior Manager), Prof. Maggie Tallerman, Dr S J Hannahs, Kevin Cummings, Dr Malcolm Reed, David & Catharina Miller, Anne Bothwell, Carole Lattin, Sue Childs (Vice-Chair), The Very Revd Michael Sadgrove (Emeritus Dean of Durham/Patron) and Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (Patron).

**2. MINUTES OF THE 80<sup>th</sup> AGM (1 October 2022)**

The Minutes, previously approved by Trustees, were noted.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

The Chair said he will address matters in his remarks. There were no matters arising from the floor.

**4. PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTS OF THE TRUST for the period ended 7 April 2023**

Honorary Treasurer, Francis Pritchard drew attention to items from the Trust's accounts (detailed in the Annual Review), including that the Trust's assets are slightly greater than the previous year. He noted that an insurance payout for water damaged publications will be included in the 2023/24 accounts. He informed attendees that Trustees had moved funds from the current account to a savings account with Virgin Money but, as Virgin Money is closing their Durham branch, Trustees agreed to move these funds to a savings account with Newcastle Building Society (who are retaining a branch in the city). The end of year balance was £15.8k which leaves the accounts in a healthy position. The Chair thanked Francis.

**5. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Francis, also the Honorary Secretary, reported that membership numbers are steady at: 8 Honorary; 143 Individual; 94 Joint and 41 Life members (a total of 286 memberships). The Trust has acquired a new membership system whereby you can join and pay online (via PayPal or credit/debit card), which went live this week. We hope this will help increase membership. The Chair thanked Francis for taking on both these officer roles and combining the tasks so economically.

**6. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES**

The Chair explained that CIO rules state that one third of Trustees must retire each year but they are eligible for re-election. The retiring Trustees, John Ashby, Sue Childs, Prof. Tim Clark and Michael Hurlow, were proposed and re-elected by consensus. There were no new nominations from the floor. The Chair explained that we can have up to 20 Trustees according to our Constitution (currently there are eleven), so if anyone is interested in becoming a Trustee or proposing someone else, please get in touch with him via [chair@durhamcity.org](mailto:chair@durhamcity.org). He said it is a pleasure for him to lead this team of skilled and dedicated Trustees and he thanked them for their continued service. He thanked Jan Hutchinson for producing the Trust's Minutes and other documents. The Chair reminded members that the Trustees are selected by Trust members but Trustees choose their Chair in accordance with our Constitution. So, the Chair for the coming year will be decided at the next Trustees' meeting in November.

**7. APPOINTMENT OF THE HONORARY OFFICERS OF THE TRUST**

As there were no other nominations put forward for the honorary officer roles, the Chair proposed Francis Pritchard be re-elected as both Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer. The motion was carried by acclaim and the Chair thanked him. The Chair also thanked Prof. Tim Clark for producing the magnificent Bulletins and Annual Reports, but noted that he will be stepping down from this role shortly. Anyone interested in writing articles for the Trust should contact us on [chair@durhamcity.org](mailto:chair@durhamcity.org).

**8. CHAIR'S REMARKS**

The Chair thanked all for their attendance/contributions this evening and Trustees for their splendid work over the last year. He announced that the Trust's Architectural Award for 2022 goes to the owners (Debbie Hill & John Carter) of 173 Gilesgate, a listed building to which they have added a modern extension. The award is covered in detail in the Annual Review. Debbie and John have kindly offered to hold an Open Day in the spring, so the plaque will be formally unveiled then. We will let members

know details of the event. On highlights of the past year, the Chair drew members' attention to the excellent reports in the Annual Review. Spare copies are available at front of the room this evening.

The Chair noted that at the time of the AGM last year, we were on the verge of a public inquiry into the Sniperley Park housing developments, but the developers withdrew in the face of strong opposition from DCC, the Trust and other objectors (eg the Parish Council (PC), WRRAG and CPRE). Sadly, it is déjà vu time again as the developers have submitted further appeals to the Inspectorate due to non-determination by DCC. We are in touch with DCC, the Parish Council (PC), WRRAG and CPRE about the appeals, with a preliminary meeting with the Inspector due on 20 November. If the appeals continue to a public inquiry, then this would start on 30 January 2024 - we will keep members informed. The Trust's main focus is to ensure that DCC keeps its resolve to demand that the developers conform to the requirements of the approved Masterplan (and conditions in the County Durham Plan (CDP)), as such a large development will have huge impact on the infrastructure of our city.

The Chair reminded attendees that last year marked our 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, with many events held that members may have attended. He said the highlight for him was the Day Conference held at the Pemberton Rooms, when a variety of speakers shared different "*Perspectives on Durham's World Heritage Site (WHS)*" (proceedings can be viewed on the Trust's YouTube channel). After the talks there were visits to parts of the WHS with expert guides. A splendid and well-attended event. Another venture to mark the anniversary was to co-publish (with the PC) *The Durham City Seven Hills Trail* leaflet, which has been immensely successful and reprinted already. Trust member David Miller, who produced the guide, has since pioneered a second leaflet, *The Durham City Heritage Trail*, also co-produced with the PC and equally popular, with some organisations requesting bulk supplies for events/welcome packs. Copies are free and there are some available to pick up at the front of the room this evening (also available from Durham Town Hall).

The Chair emphasised the importance of the Trust's close, mutually supportive relationship with the PC, especially on planning matters, which are the main bulk of the Trust's activities. Trustees carefully consider DCC's weekly lists of applications to decide which need further scrutiny. In 2022 we scrutinised 304 applications, submitted 95 objections, 14 letters of support and 15 letters of comments/suggested improvements. There is widespread concern about the number of applications seeking to convert family homes into HMOs, usually for the student market. In a sea change recently four such applications were refused at planning committee, despite being recommended for approval by the officers. A major factor in convincing committee members to reject the applications was that local residents turned up in force and made their well-founded opposition with great dignity and restraint. And it is notable that committee members expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with the CDP policies governing such decisions. The CDP is due a review in 2025, so Trustees are already sharing ideas with the PC on improvements to the existing policies, which the Trust was heavily involved in formulating.

Talking about public involvement in planning reminded the Chair about the quote on the back cover of Thomas Sharp's *Cathedral City* headed "*A Note to the Man in the Street*" which concludes: "*The thing we all have to realise is that planning in a democracy must either be something in the nature of a national pursuit, or nothing at all. For in a democracy government and local authorities can make the really important moves only under the pressure of public opinion.*" Today's news on the government's U-turn on the rail ticket office closures illustrates the power of public opinion! So, the Chair made no apologies for repeating this quote and for asking members to all recruit one more member to ensure the Trust's voice can be heard louder.

## 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business raised but two points from Trustees. John Ashby agreed that CDP Policy 16 has been under stress recently, so the more people we can gather to review it the better. Residents are getting upset in areas of the city that have not yet reached the 10% level, so we need ideas on how better to manage the issue. Richard Hird noted that an important thing that Trustees have been doing is trying to ensure that accurate information is used in the planning processes by seeking to correct misinformation quoted in the local press. The Chair thanked all attendees for their attention and drew the AGM business to a close at 19.40.

After the formal agenda, the Chair welcomed and introduced Prof. Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor and Warden of Durham University, who presented an illustrated talk about the relationship between the City and the University. The talk "*The Built Life of a University in its City: Durham University Now and in the Future*" was very well received. Following some questions from the floor, a vote of thanks was given by John Ashby and Karen was given a copy of a Trust publication, *In the Steps of the Masters: Durham in Paintings*, signed by the author Douglas Pocock.