

# West Rainton Parish Council – 17 May 2018

## Item 20: - Appendix 1

Graeme Keedy  
Project Officer  
West Rainton Parish Council



10 May 2018

Dear Graeme

Many thanks for your letter dated the 21 March 2018. Apologies it has taken a while to respond but it has been difficult to get the right people together over the last month. However, myself, David Taylor (Legal), Graham Wood (Regeneration) and Andrew Holtham (Assets) were able to meet on the 25 April and we discussed the issues that you raised in your letter. I have also had a subsequent meeting with Andrew to clarify some of the issues.

The response to the points that West Rainton Parish Council have raised are as follows;

- Confirmation of a formal offer from DCC outlining the package of assistance (ie. Extent of professional services and financial support) to aid the Parish Council in its decision making.

*If you are requesting formal legal advice the Council does offer this service to Parish Councils where no conflict exists but it is subject to payment of fees for the time spent.*

*The finances available toward the Jubilee Hall project are £112,000. This is potentially available for the purchase of the hall and any other associated costs.*

- The clear need for the Parish Council to fully understand the outcomes expected by DCC in relation to accountability and governance, given the contradictions highlighted in information received to date.

*Durham County Council has in the past has made it clear that it sees ownership of Jubilee Hall by West Rainton Parish Council as the preferred approach to the future of the building.*

*Having looked at the options put forward by Durham Community Action we did feel there should be a fourth option as there is nothing that suggests the Parish Council take direct responsibility for the running of the building. In some ways this would be the most straightforward approach.*

*In terms of the grant available DCC would want to see some protection of the investment so it would be advisable that the Parish Council does think about some business planning in relation to Jubilee Hall. Support for this is available through the Durham Sparks Project which I can put you in touch with. This would help to clarify how the building would be sustained over the coming years which is something DCC would like to see happen. As with all grants there would be a claw-back clause.*

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Durham Town Hall, Market Place, Durham, DH1 3NJ

*Decision making on the funding can be taken under delegated powers so there would be no need to directly involve the Cabinet members although we would keep them up to date with progress.*

- Release to the Parish Council of DCC's valuation and buildings condition report and confirmation of whether or not DCC's figures should be applied in consideration of a proposed sale.

*DCC would be happy to discuss and if appropriate share the previous valuation which was done in September 2015. However this was done for internal purposes and not in relation to the current proposed transaction. The actual report itself excludes third party usage in line with valuers professional body requirements. However Andrew is more than happy to have a face to face conversation and informally chat through what might be the best course of action depending on what the parish members feel comfortable with.*

- Confirmation of DCC's legal position

*There are no outstanding legal issues from DCCs perspective.*

*As a Parish Council you should be entitled to acquire land for the purpose of your functions.*

*If there are any other specific legal issues which are concerning you we will be happy to consider them without charge if you can identify what they are. .*

DCC officers would be more than happy to meet with members of West Rainton Parish Council. We would ask however that we have notice of the issues that you would like to discuss, just so we can ensure that the right officers are present.

Yours sincerely,

Craig Morgan  
Durham Area Action Partnership Coordinator