

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Cockermouth Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Cockermouth on Wednesday 17 May 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor A Semple (Mayor)  
Councillor S Barnes  
Councillor Beanland  
Councillor Bowman  
Councillor Bell  
Councillor Burns  
Councillor Bridgeman  
Councillor J Laidlow  
Councillor D Malloy  
Councillor Telford  
Councillor Tucker  
Councillor R Watson

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Samson

Also Present: 9 members of the public & 1 member of the press

Prior to the start of the meeting the Mayor, Councillor Andy Semple outlined the highlights of his year of office. He gave special thanks to his wife Helen, his fellow Councillors and staff who had supported him during his Mayoral year.

He announced that he had raised £1804.90 for Hospice at Home.

He also took the opportunity to welcome and congratulate all those newly elected.

## **1 Election of Town Mayor/Chairman**

The Mayor invited nominations for the position of Town Mayor/Chairman for 2019/20.

Councillor Burns moved Julie Laidlow. This was seconded by councillor Watson

Only one nomination was proposed and seconded and on being put to the vote it was:-

Resolved – That Councillor Julie Laidlow be elected Town Mayor/Chairman in 2023/24.

Councillor Andrew Semple then handed over the Chain of Office to Councillor Julie Laidlow.

The new Mayor then read out and signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took over the Chair. The Mayor thanked Councillor Andrew Semple and his

wife Helen for all their hard work during their Mayoral year. She also thanked fellow councillors for their nomination.

Councillor Laidlow announced that her partner, Desie Savage would be her consort.

The Mayor announced that that her charities would be Europe Prize Scholarship Fund and Cumbria Cerebral Palsy.

## **2 Election of Deputy Town Mayor/Vice Chairman**

The Mayor invited nominations for the position of Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman.

Only one nomination was received and seconded and on being put to the vote it was:-

Resolved – That Councillor Richard Watson be elected as the Deputy Town Mayor/Vice Chairman of the Council for 2023/24.

The Mayor then presented the Deputy Mayor's badge to the Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman.

The new Deputy Mayor then read out and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked councillors for their nomination.

## **3 Declaration of Interest**

None.

## **4 Minutes**

Resolved – That the Mayor be authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the ordinary meeting of Cockermouth Town Council held on 19 April 2023.

## **5 Minutes**

Resolved – That the Mayor be authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the special planning meeting held on 3 May 2023.

## **6 Public Participation**

No members of the public wished to speak in accordance with the public participation scheme.

## **8a Planning Matters**

**Reference: FUL/2023/0102**

Refurbishment of existing warehouse and office block including expanding existing use class B2 to include Class E (gii & iii only) to align with planning permission FUL/2021/0198

Thermoforce Ltd, Wakefield Road

Recommend - Approval

**8b Application for Tree Works**

Councillor Beanland and Councillor Watson had inspected the trees and expressed concern regarding the felling of T6. T6 was found to be of normal vitality and in moderately good condition although ivy had grown up the trunk and lateral branches had failed in the past. They suggested that the tree be retained subject to the removal of the ivy and acknowledged that some lower branch work may be required.

Recommended – That the various tree works relating to WTPO/2023/0009 be approved subject to the retention of T6.

**9a Schedule of Payments**

Resolved – That the schedule of payments in the sum of £14,032.93 be formally approved for payment.

**9b Internal Auditors Report**

Agreed – That the contents of the year end report by our Internal Auditor be noted.

**9c Audit Commission Return for the Year ended 2022/23**

Resolved – (a) That Section 1 of the annual return relating to the Annual Governance Statement be formally certified, and the accounts approved and duly signed by the Clerk/RFO and the Chairman.

(b) That section 2 of the Annual Return relating to the Accounting Statements be also formally approved and signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

(c) That it be noted that Section 4 of the Annual Return has been duly completed by our internal auditor.

(d) That it be noted that the required notice concerning the appointment of date for the exercise of elector's rights will be displayed.

(e) That it be noted that the Clerk will send the documentation required by the external auditor as soon as practicable prior to the 30 June 2022.

#### **9d The General Power of Competence**

Resolved – That Cockermouth Town Council confirms that it meets the conditions of eligibility outlined in The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2021.

### **10 Correspondence**

#### **10a Newsletter from Cumberland Council**

Agreed – That the contents of the newsletters dated 6 April 2023 & 14 April 2023 be noted.

### **11 Clerks Report**

Agreed – That the contents of the Clerk's report be noted.

### **12 Task Groups & Outside Bodies**

Councillor Watson stated that in his opinion the Climate Change Action Group should be disbanded and that Climate Emergency Action be added as a standing item to future Council agendas. This view was supported.

Resolved – a) That the Climate Change Action Group be disbanded & its duties be incorporated into those of Council.

b) That Councillor Samson be nominated to represent the Town Council on the Metalcraft Community Fund.

### **13 Christmas Lights Contract**

The current contractor has been erecting/maintaining and dismantling the Christmas lights in Cockermouth since 2010.

A competitive tendering exercise was carried out in 2015.

Cumbria Coal were awarded a 4 year contract for the erection/maintenance of the Christmas lights in Cockermouth in June 2019. This contract came to an end on 9 May 2023.

The contractor had intimated that he would be willing to continue erecting the lights for a further 4 years on similar terms plus inflation.

Those present considered the following factors when deciding whether to renew the contract or go out to competitive tender:-

- The length of time which had passed since the last tendering exercise
- The contract price currently £19,990.25
- His proven track record
- His understanding of our needs and objectives
- His understanding of electrical safety
- His robust risk management
- Lights are erected and taken down in a timely manner
- Faults are identified and fixed in a timely manner
- No call out charges
- Lights are stored away neatly and carefully for the next season
- His willingness to suggest improvements
- Improvements to the display being carried out at cost
- His repair of the festoon which reduces replacement costs
- The importance to the town of the Christmas Lights
- The need to minimize risk as there was insufficient time for the new Council to prepare and complete a successful tender process.

The rate of inflation used and the date the rate of inflation was applied were also discussed.

Resolved – That Cumbria Coal be awarded the Christmas Lights contract for a further 4 years (the term of this Council) without competitive tender on the following terms:

Year 1 - £19,990.25 plus CPI January 2024

Year 2 – Year 1 total plus CPI January 2025

Year 3 – Year 2 total plus CPI January 2026

Year 4 – Year 3 total plus CPI January 2027

#### **14 3m Grass Verge**

Councillor Watson suggested that a 3m wide uncut grass verge be left in the Towers Lane Play Area (except entrance) and around the fruit trees in Harris Park Extension to allow grasses/flowers to grow for pollinators.

This idea was supported.

Resolved – That a 3m wide uncut grass verge be left in the Towers Lane Play Area (except entrance) and around the fruit trees in Harris Park Extension to allow grasses/flowers to grow for pollinators.

Resolved –

That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be removed for the following item of business due to legal advice being discussed.

### **15 Counsel's Opinion**

Resolved – That Counsel's opinion regarding the use of the Memorial gardens for events be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.57 pm