

Minutes of a meeting of Cockermouth Town Council held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Cockermouth, on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor Stephen Barnes

Councillor Catherine Bell

Councillor Isabel Burns

Councillor David Malloy (Mayor)

Councillor Alan Smith

Councillor Richard Watson

Councillor Howard Beanland

Councillor Chris Bridgman

Councillor Julie Laidlow

Councillor James Samson

Councillor Gillian Telford

Mrs Jane Ollerenshaw – Town Clerk

Mrs Amy Jeffrey – Assistant

Miss Kirstie Goodger – Assistant

Members of the Public: 7

19:00 meeting opened.

**190/25 Apologies** Cllr Bowman had submitted apologies.

**191/25 To approve the minutes of the Cockermouth Town Council Meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Resolved** to approve the minutes.

**192/25 To receive the minutes of the Staffing Committee Meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> October 2025. Resolved** to note received.

**193/25 Declaration of interests.**

Cllr Bridgman declared an interest in item 15 due to being a trustee of Cockermouth Live!

**194/25 Exclusion of Press & Public. Resolved** to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of item 28, due to staffing matters being discussed.

**195/25 Mayor's Announcements.**

Cllr Malloy reported that he had attended the Mayor of Workington's Civic Service and Cockermouth Switch-On Day, where he presented a band member with an achievement award for 75 years of service and thanked those who assisted on the day. He also attended the Enthronement of the Bishop of Carlisle, the Hospice at Home Light Up a Life Service, Christmas shop window judging with the Chamber of Trade, his own Civic Service, the RABI Carol Service at Mitchells, the presentation of prizes to the Children's Competition winners and attended Hames Hall, Dalton Court and Kirklands Care Homes with the Cockermouth Mechanics Band, where he presented a further achievement award to another band member for 75 years of service.

**196/25 Reports from Cumberland Councillors.** Cllr Semple had sent his apologies.

**197/25 Guest Speakers.** None present.

**198/25 Public Participation.** Two members of the public raised concerns regarding the cost of quotes for the Mayoral Chain, including its display and insurance.

Compliments were also given on the Christmas lights outside of the Town Hall and thanks were expressed to Cllr Malloy for the awards he presented to the band members. Cllr Malloy confirmed that the matter of the Mayoral Chain would be discussed later in the agenda.

A further member of the public commented that the current seating arrangements were more beneficial to the public and expressed a hope that they would continue.

#### **199/25 Planning**

- **CAT/2025/0045 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **LBC/2025/0035 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **FUL/2025/0195 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **CAT/2025/0046 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **FUL/2025/0198 Resolved** to recommend approval.

**200/25 Planning Decisions Under Delegated Authority.** Noted as received.

**201/25 Clerk's Report.** The Clerk's report had been circulated.

- **Hampshire Trust Bank.** The investment had been increased, as a result of an increase to the FSCS limit.
- **Funding Requests.** Two advance funding requests were received in accordance with the policy, however, only one completed application was received for consideration. A further application was submitted without prior notice and without taking our previous advice, and in line with the policy of one application per financial year, it would not be considered at this meeting.
- **Annual Play Area Inspections.** Reports had been received, with most issues assessed as low risk. Some issues were categorised as medium risk and would be addressed as soon as possible.
- **Wordsworth House.** The Manager for North and West Lakes National Trust had advised that further contact would be made in the New Year regarding next steps and potential Town Council involvement. An invitation to attend a future meeting would be extended.
- **Day Services.** A request had been received regarding the installation of a canopy over the downstairs entrance. The council had no objections, so the Clerk would advise them that they would need to make their own investigations and/or application for planning permission if required.
- **Card Reader.** A SumUp card reader had been purchased and linked to the Mayor's Charity Account.
- **Ward Boundaries.** The Boundary Commission is undertaking further reviews of ward boundaries, which has placed the planned parish review in

Cumberland on hold.

- **Linking Lives.** In response to the Council's letter of congratulations, a letter of thanks was received acknowledging Cllr Malloy, Cllr Telford and the rest of the Council.

#### **202/25 Climate Emergency Group.**

- **Isel Road.** Cllr Barnes explained that group had recently met with a representative from The Coppice Co-op. The consensus was that a full ecological survey should be conducted before any further steps are taken. It was proposed that the Council consider allocating funds for this survey. Cllr Bridgman mentioned that the representative had also provided the group with a contact from Cumbria Woodlands, who could offer additional guidance. A detailed survey could cost around £1,500, although there is a potential scheme available to conduct it for free, which may become available in the New Year. The optimal time for the survey would be in May or June and this will be explored further. Cllr Barnes also noted that the area with the swings is currently not very user-friendly and suggested that improvements could be considered.
- **Greyrigg/Caldecote Survey.** Cllr Bridgman reported that the recent survey had received a lot of feedback and suggestions and that a full analysis would be brought back to Council. Cllr Barnes thanked those involved in conducting, drafting and circulating the survey.

**203/25 Community Led Plan.** Cllr Bridgman confirmed that work was underway to engage with the schools in the New Year. Primary schools would be invited to develop their vision for the town followed by a secondary school session led by the School Council, with outcomes to be considered at the public visioning day on 21<sup>st</sup> March.

**204/25 Grant request from Cockermouth Live! for inclusion in the 2026/2027 budget. Resolved** to approve a grant of £2,500 for the 2026/2027 financial year.

**205/25 Grant request from Cockermouth Amateur Dramatic Society for inclusion in the 2025/2026 budget. Resolved** to approve a grant of £500.

**206/25 Ground Maintenance Contracts.** The Town Clerk provided a brief overview of the quotations received. After discussion, Cllr Smith proposed that both contractors be asked to submit revised quotations and an environmental impact statement for consideration in January. **Resolved** that the Clerk contact both contractors accordingly.

**207/25 Mayoral Chain of Office.** Following discussion, Cllr Watson proposed that the Mayoral Chain be left as it is and treated as a historic artifact. At the request of Cllr Bridgman, there was a recorded vote. In favour: Cllrs Beanland, Bridgman, Samson, Telford and Watson. Against: Cllrs Barnes, Bell, Burns, Laidlow, Malloy, Smith.

Cllr Laidlow proposed that a quotation be obtained for the replacement of the four oldest links, with the removed links to be framed alongside the Mayoral photographs. **Resolved** that the Clerk obtain a quotation for the removal and replacement of the four links.

**208/25 Isel Road Works.** Cllr Laidlow asked the Clerk for her recommendations regarding the works. The Clerk suggested Quote B for pollarding the tree, as they appeared the most experienced and Quote A for the ground underneath the swings and the entrance, as the quote would provide a better finish. Cllr Malloy suggested accepting the Clerk's recommendations. Cllr Bridgman commented that, as improvements are being considered across the site, it may be preferable to prioritise the other work and postpone a decision on the ground underneath the swings. **Resolved** that the Clerk proceed with the recommended quotations, excluding the ground underneath the swings.

**209/25 Call for Sites.** Concerns were raised regarding the suitability of Lorton Road – Strawberry How to Grasmoor House for development. **Resolved** that this area be removed from the list of proposed sites.

**210/25 Fairfield View Footpath.** The Clerk confirmed that she had written to Councillor Tucker but had not received a response. Cllr Smith proposed that the Council write to the Chief Executive and Leader of Cumberland Council, asking for their help in getting a reply, as no response had come from the Cumberland Councillor. Cllr Smith also suggested inviting an officer to a Town Council meeting to clarify the ownership of the footpath. **Resolved** that the Clerk write to both the Chief Executive and Leader of Cumberland Council.

**211/25 Draft Budget 2026/27.** The Clerk explained the proposed amendments to version one of the draft budget. Cllr Malloy reminded Councillors to submit their final suggestions by the next meeting.

**212/25 Seating Arrangements.** Cllr Watson stated that he thought the new seating arrangements were better for the public and suggested continuing to extend the arrangement. Cllr Telford proposed making it permanent. Cllr Barnes expressed that the arrangement was unsuitable and that a more permanent solution providing space for everyone should be considered. Cllr Burns proposed extending the trial for another 3 months while a new solution is explored during that time. **Resolved** to extend the arrangement for a further 3 months.

**213/25 Staffing Committee.** Cllr Smith proposed that the Staffing Committee be dissolved as he believed it was no longer effective and that staffing matters should be handled by the full Council. Cllr Telford highlighted that the Committee had established important formal processes such as appraisals, training and pay reviews, which previously did not happen. Cllr Beanland raised concerns about the management of the Clerk through the full Council, noting that the current system provided line management through the Chair of the Staffing Committee who is elected for a four-year term. Cllr Watson noted that decisions made by the Staffing Committee had to be

revisited by the full Council, causing delays in decision-making. **Resolved** that the Staffing Committee be dissolved and that the Mayor would assume the role of Line Manager.

**214/25 Payments for Approval. Resolved** to approve the payments.

**215/25 Pre-approved Payments. Resolved** to note the schedule of payments.

**216/25 Councillor Matters.**

- Cllr Smith suggested that a letter be sent to Cumberland Council, noting that it is now December and the trees on Main Street are still in need of pruning. Cllr Barnes added that consideration be given to re-establishing the trees on Station Street. Cllr Watson reported that he had been informed by Cllr Tucker that there is nothing in the budget for the replacement of the trees, although alternative funding sources are being explored.

Staff other than the Clerk and public left the meeting.

**217/25 Staffing Committee Recommendation. Resolved** to approve the recommendation to a staffing restructure from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2026, and the advertisement to be posted for the new vacancy before Christmas

**218/25 Date of next meeting.**

Confirmed as Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026.

21:19 meeting closed.