

Minutes of a meeting of Cockermouth Town Council held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Cockermouth, on Wednesday 15th July 2026 at 6.00pm

Present:

Councillor Stephen Barnes (Deputy Mayor)	Councillor Catherine Bell
Councillor Marion Bowman	Councillor Chris Bridgman
Councillor Isabel Burns	Councillor James Samson
Councillor Alan Smith	Councillor Gillian Telford
Councillor Richard Watson	

Mrs Jane Ollerenshaw – Town Clerk
Mrs Amy Jeffrey – Assistant Town Clerk
Miss Jo-Anne Wood – Events and Facilities Support

Members of the Public: 8

In the absence of Cllr Laidlow, Cllr Barnes chaired the meeting.

18:00 Meeting Opened.

050/26 Apologies. Apologies received from Cllrs Beanland, Laidlow and Malloy.

051/26 To approve the minutes of the Cockermouth Town Council Meeting of 17th June 2026. Resolved to approve the minutes.

052/26 Declaration of Interests. There were no Declarations of Interest.

053/26 Exclusion of Press & Public. No items required the exclusion of the Press and Public.

054/26 Mayor's Announcements. The Deputy Mayor reported that he, together with Cllr Burns and Cllr Laidlow, had attended the Fashion Show at Mayfield School. He commented that it was a wonderful event and praised the organisers for its success.

Cllr Barnes reported that he had attended the Laureates Residents' Meeting with Cllr Telford and welcomed the attendance of the local MP.

055/26 Reports from Cumberland Councillors. Councillor Semple had submitted apologies.

056/26 Guest Speakers. None present.

057/26 Public Participation. A question had been received from a member of the public:

"Are the anomalies in the record keeping prior to 2024 now open to scrutiny and, if so, can I determine whether the laptop allegedly bought during Covid to enable Cllr Laidlow to 'ZOOM' is the property of the Council or the Councillor?"

The Town Clerk advised that there were no anomalies in the Council's record keeping prior to 2024. The Clerk explained that a procedural error in the administration of the Mayor's Allowance between April 2013 and March 2022 had been identified by the internal auditor and subsequently corrected. The Council adopted a revised method of administering the allowance from April 2022, followed by the introduction of a Mayor's Allowance Policy in April 2024. As any purchases made during the Covid period would have been funded through the Mayor's lump sum allowance, which is treated as personal income, any such items would be the property of the Mayor rather than the Council.

058/26 Planning

- **HOU/2026/0090 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **FUL/2026/0091 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **FUL/2026/0087 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **ADV/2026/0005 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **FUL/2025/0205 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **LBC/20256/0001 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **FUL/2026/0093 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **HOU/2026/0100 Resolved** to recommend approval.

059/26 Planning Decisions Under Delegated Authority. Resolved to note the schedule as received

060/26 Clerk's Report. The Clerk's report had been circulated.

- **Bunting.** Bunting had been erected ahead of Cockermouth Live! and would remain in place for the Tour of Britain and Taste Cumbria.
- **Bitterbeck Toilets.** The toilets had been vandalised. Permission from Cumberland Council to install CCTV was still pending.
- **Bus Reform Survey.** The Clerk invited nominations to complete the survey on behalf of the Council. **Resolved** that the Clerk complete the survey, with assistance from Cllr Barnes if required.
- **Harris Park Extension.** The Clerk reported that the estimated project costs exceeded the tender threshold. Councillors discussed opportunities to enhance the scheme, including additional landscaping and seeking guidance from the Woodland Trust.
- **Grant Funding.** The Assistant Clerk had submitted funding applications to Lakes to Sea and the National Lottery for the Isel Road Play Area. An application had also been submitted to Metalcraft for crowd control barriers. Rather than providing grant funding, Metalcraft had kindly offered to purchase the barriers directly on the Council's behalf.
- **Noticeboard.** Following a site meeting with Cumberland Highways Officers, concerns were raised that the gap between the support legs could present a hazard to visually impaired pedestrians. A revised two-bay, double-sided noticeboard had been submitted for approval.
- **Tree Management Plan.** A request for a copy of the Tree Management Plan had been made, but no response had been received.
- **Replacement Trees – Station Street.** The Clerk had obtained a quotation to reinstate the Station Street trees, which was significantly lower than the

estimate previously provided by Cumberland Cllr Tucker. The quotation would be forwarded to Cumberland Council for consideration.

061/26 Reports and Requests from Working Groups.

Climate Emergency Group.

- **Trees.** Cllr Barnes highlighted the importance of trees in providing shade during periods of hot weather and reducing temperatures in urban areas. He suggested inviting the relevant Cumberland Council officer to discuss future tree management.
- **Towers Lane.** Cllr Watson reported that he had met with the Council's contractor to discuss enhancing the area for wildlife and public enjoyment. It was proposed that the meadow area be cut annually in late summer at no additional cost, with cuttings left on site. The Clerk was asked to obtain a quotation for excavation works to create the proposed vernal scrape.
- **Installation of Solar Panels on the Town Hall Roof.** Cllr Barnes reported that the proposed installation had an estimated payback period of eight years and could reduce electricity consumption by approximately 63%. Cllr Smith queried the electricity unit rate used in the quotation, and the Clerk agreed to verify this with the supplier and obtain a revised quotation if necessary. Councillors agreed that the next step would be to submit a planning application. **Resolved** that the Clerk verify the electricity unit rate with the supplier and submit a planning application in the meantime.

Community Led Plan.

- Cllr Bridgman reported that the group had attended the Family Fun Day, where several new topics were raised by members of the public. The group would also be attending Cockermouth Show on 1 August before progressing to more detailed public consultation on the identified topics.

062/26 Public Toilet Provision. Councillors discussed the importance of maintaining safe and accessible public toilets and raised concerns regarding ongoing vandalism. Cllr Bowman proposed establishing a working group. Following discussion, the Clerk suggested holding an open meeting with local organisations and interested parties to identify objectives before considering the formation of a working group. **Resolved** that an open meeting be held on a separate evening with local organisations and interested parties to discuss public toilet provision and determine the next steps.

063/26 Town Ambassador Scheme Proposal. Cllr Telford reported that she had been engaging with local groups to gauge interest in a Town Ambassador Scheme and was preparing an application form and risk assessment. She sought councillors agreement to approach potential volunteers and progress the proposal.

Councillors discussed matters relating to insurance, safeguarding, and the Council's responsibilities should the scheme be delivered by the Town Council. The Clerk advised that the Council would be responsible for risk assessments, training, DBS checks where required, and associated costs. Cllr Telford confirmed that she would instead progress the scheme independently and not on behalf of the Town Council.

064/26 Stage Hire – Christmas Light Switch On. Councillors discussed the options for stage hire for the Christmas Lights Switch On. Cllr Smith expressed the view that the event should not be scaled back, noting the benefits the event brings to the town. The Clerk advised that the additional cost could be met from other budget headings or, if necessary, from reserves. **Resolved** that the larger stage (Option 1) be approved for this year's Christmas Lights Switch On event.

065/26 Cumberland Building Society Savings Account. The Clerk advised that the savings account currently had three authorised signatories: a former member of staff, Cllr Watson and Cllr Laidlow. Councillors discussed updating the authorised signatories to reflect current staff roles and to simplify future changes following the Annual Town Council Meeting. **Resolved** that the former member of staff be removed, and the Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk be added. The incoming Mayor would be added at the next Annual Town Council Meeting and two other Councillors removed. Going forward, the Mayor would be replaced as signatory by the incoming Mayor, after the Annual Meeting.

066/26 The Vicky – Tenant Request. The Clerk advised that The Vicky is a Listed Building and the alteration would remove storage from the premises, which is already limited. Councillors agreed that further consideration should be given to alternative options. **Resolved** that the Clerk ask the tenant to reconsider the request and explore alternative solutions.

067/26 Quarterly Budget Comparison – Year to Date. The Council received and noted the Quarterly Budget Comparison.

068/26 Payments for Approval. Resolved to approve the payments.

069/26 Pre-approved Payments. Resolved to note the schedule of payments.

070/26 Councillor Matters.

Cllr Telford thanked the Town Hall staff for their assistance in organising the Laureates Meeting and providing refreshments.

Cllr Burns advised that an appeal had been launched for unwanted racing bicycles to be painted and displayed around the town ahead of the Women's Tour of Britain. Councillors noted that donations of bicycles and spray paint would be welcomed.

071/26 Date of next meeting.

Confirmed as Wednesday 19th August 2026.

19:05 Meeting Closed.