

Minutes of a meeting of Cockermouth Town Council held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Cockermouth, on Wednesday 21st October 2026 at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor Stephen Barnes
Councillor Catherine Bell
Councillor Isabel Burns
Councillor David Malloy
Councillor Alan Smith
Councillor Richard Watson

Councillor Howard Beanland
Councillor Chris Bridgman
Councillor Julie Laidlow (Mayor)
Councillor James Samson
Councillor Gillian Telford

Mrs Jane Ollerenshaw – Town Clerk
Mrs Amy Jeffrey – Assistant Town Clerk

Members of the Public:5

19:00 Meeting Opened.

118/26 Apologies. Apologies received from Cllr Bowman.

119/26 To approve the minutes of the Cockermouth Town Council Meeting of 16th September 2026. Resolved to approve the minutes.

120/26 To receive the minutes of the Twinning Committee Meeting of 26th August 2026. Resolved to note as received.

121/26 Declaration of Interests. There were no declarations of interest.

122/26 Exclusion of Press & Public. Resolved the press, public and staff would be excluded from Item 23, as it related to staff appraisals and pay reviews.

123/26 Mayor's Announcements. The Mayor reported that her Civic Service had been held at St Joseph's Church and thanked all councillors and dignitaries who attended. She also reported that she and her Consort, Cllr Burns, had attended the Mayor of Workington's Civic Service.

124/26 Reports from Cumberland Councillors. Cllr Semple had submitted his apologies for absence and provided a written report, which was noted as follows:

- **Kirkgate.** Cllr Semple reported that the Senior Manager had assured him that signage, including metric measurements, was on order and would be installed by Christmas. Length restrictions were also discussed in relation to their inclusion in Sat Nav mapping systems via the central digital database.
- **Trees on Main Street.** Cllr Semple reported that he had been assured that the trees on Main Street would be pollarded to enable the Christmas lights to be installed. A press release would also be issued.
- **The Sidings.** Cllr Semple reported that he would be attending the planning meeting as a Committee Member in relation to The Sidings.

- **C123 Bus.** Cllr Semple reported that he would be attending the Highways Board meeting and would provide a further update on changes to the C123 bus service.

Cllr Malloy raised concerns that the Christmas lights could not be installed in the trees until the pollarding had been completed and asked the Clerk to seek confirmation of a date for the works.

125/26 Guest Speakers. None present.

126/26 Public Participation. In relation to Item 13, a Member of the Public thanked Cockermouth Town Council for initiating the process and the Community Led Plan Working Group for the work undertaken to date, also acknowledging the contributions of all those involved.

127/26 Planning.

- **LBC/2026/0038. Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **HOU/2026/0139. Resolved** to recommend approval.

128/26 Planning Decisions Under Delegated Authority. The Council noted the schedule of planning decisions made under delegated authority.

129/26 Clerk's Report. The Clerk's report had been circulated.

- **Isel Road Play Area.** The Clerk reported that the unit had been ordered and that a timescale for the commencement of the works was awaited. She also expressed her thanks to the Lakes to Sea Community Panel for its support.
- **CERG.** The Clerk reported that Cockermouth Emergency Response Group, who received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2022, was seeking a suitable location to display the award and had approached the Town Council with a request for it to be displayed in the Town Hall. Cllr Malloy suggested that local shops could be invited to display the award in their windows for a few weeks before it was placed in the Town Hall. The Clerk also suggested promoting items displayed in the Town Hall through the Council's social media channels. **Resolved** that CERG be informed of the suggestion to display the award in local shop windows, and that the Town Council would be happy to display the award in the Town Hall thereafter.
- **Harris Park Extension Path.** The Clerk reported that the tender process had closed and issued instructions to Councillors regarding the sealed tender envelopes.
- **Advance Grant Requests.** The Clerk reported that advance grant requests totalling £15,500 had been received for the 2027/28 financial year.
- **Public Toilets.** The Clerk reported that an initial budget estimate of £100,000 had been received for the full refurbishment of the Main Street Toilets, including improved accessibility, a Changing Places facility and baby-changing facilities.
- **Noticeboard.** The Clerk reported that an invitation to quote for the installation of the noticeboard had been circulated. If no quotations were received by the end of the month, Cumberland Council would be asked to provide its preferred contractor list.

130/26 Reports and Requests from Working Groups.

Climate Emergency Group.

- **Waste Collection Services.** A representative from Cumberland Council responsible for waste collection services attended the Group's previous meeting. The Group raised concerns regarding enforcement without education, noting that residents should be informed of the reasons why their bins would not be collected. Concerns were also raised regarding the condition of the recycling bins in Sullart Street Car Park. Overall, the meeting was considered positive.
- **Greyrigg.** The Group wished to progress plans for planting fruit trees in a suitable, non-controversial area of Greyrigg and realigning the path. The Clerk would contact the contractor to seek further information regarding the potential provision and planting of fruit trees.
- **Station Street Trees.** The Group requested a formal update regarding the replacement of the trees. The Clerk would contact Cllr Tucker again to seek an update.
- **Draft Mapping Report.** The Council considered the draft mapping report and agreed to the areas of land identified. This would enable the company to apply for grant funding on the Council's behalf to support the preparation of a Woodland Management Plan.

Community Led Plan Group.

The Council considered the Group's report outlining progress to date, together with the Clerk's report identifying financial and governance concerns relating to the project. The Clerk presented three options for the way forward - to allow the Working Group to continue; to dissolve the Working Group and bring the work back in-house to the Council; or to dissolve the Working Group and discontinue the project. The Clerk recommended the second option, with the aim of protecting public funds, retaining the value of expenditure incurred to date and enabling any usable data to be salvaged and the project to continue.

The Council also considered a response from the Working Group to the Clerk's report. The Clerk read a further explanatory note to Councillors, outlining concerns relating to the Group's governance arrangements, procurement processes, financial implications and data management, including GDPR compliance. The Clerk explained the potential risks these matters presented to the Council. Cllr Bridgman, Chair of the Working Group, responded to the concerns. Cllr Smith expressed concern at the tone of the Working Group's response to the Clerk and offered support for the Clerk in carrying out her duties as Responsible Financial Officer.

Cllr Bridgman advised that the Group had been following recommendations from Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) and he had been speaking with their CEO. Further discussion took place regarding the Group's status, with it being clarified by Cllr Bridgman that the Group had its own constitution. The Clerk explained that the group could not be a working group of the Council and be a separately constituted group simultaneously. Clarification was required regarding the relationship between the Group and the Council, including the arrangements for funding already received,

which may now require a retrospective grant application if the group was an independent constituted one. The Clerk requested a copy of the Group's Constitution.

The Clerk also raised concerns regarding information collected under the Council's name and the need to ensure that data held by the Group was appropriately managed and secured. It was noted that the Group had been promoted through the Council's website and social media on the understanding that it was a Council Working Group. The Clerk was concerned that unknown data was on a shared drive accessible by non-councillor members of the Group. The Council was the Data Controller for anything collected in its name. The Clerk explained that any future sharing of personal data with a separately constituted organisation would need to be appropriately addressed.

Cllr Barnes suggested that the Group take time to consider its constitution and how it wished to proceed. Cllr Smith proposed that the Group's activities be suspended with immediate effect. Cllr Bridgman confirmed that the Group would take no further action in the interim.

Following further discussion, Cllr Barnes proposed that the data held by the Group be transferred to the Town Council and secured, and that a meeting be arranged involving the Group, the Clerk and representatives from ACT. Cllr Beanland formally proposed that the Group provide the Clerk with the data it held and that ACT be approached for advice on the options available for the Group to proceed, either in association with the Town Council or independently.

An update would be provided to the Council at its next meeting.

Resolved that the data held by the Group be transferred to the Town Council and secured; all group members to delete all CLP data from their personal devices and shared drives; Cllr Bridgman provide the Clerk with contact details for the ACT CEO so that they could discuss the current situation and agree possible ways forward.

131/26 2027 Fun Day – Revised Date. The Council considered the recommendation to change the date of the 2027 Fun Day from Saturday 12th June to Sunday 13th June, due to the availability of the funfair. **Resolved** to approve the revised date of Sunday 13th June 2027.

132/26 NALC Survey on Local Council Provision of Public Toilets. The Council considered the recommendation that the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk complete the NALC Survey on Local Council Provision of Public Toilets on behalf of the Council. **Resolved** that the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk complete the survey.

133/26 Kirkgate Traffic Regulation Orders. Cllr Beanland raised concerns regarding the clarity of the wording within the existing Traffic Regulation Order. Cllr Barnes outlined the main concerns regarding signage on Kirkgate and suggested that consideration be given to introducing an additional width and weight restriction. Cllr Barnes also suggested installing signage at the Level, advising that vehicles accessing the town centre must turn left via Gallowbarrow, with no other access to the town centre. **Resolved** to write to Cumberland Council to discuss the proposed width and weight restriction signage for Kirkgate and the installation of signage at the

Level advising that access to the town centre is via Gallowbarrow only.

134/26 Tour of Britain. The Mayor advised that the Council had made its concerns known and that no further action or correspondence would be pursued on the matter.

135/26 Budget Comparison – Year to Date. The Council reviewed the year-to-date budget comparison. Queries raised by a Cllr Beanland were clarified by the Clerk.

136/26 Draft Budget. The Clerk presented the draft budget and outlined several figures. The Clerk invited Councillors to submit any further suggestions or proposed amendments for consideration in the next draft of the budget.

137/26 Payments for Approval. Resolved to approve the payments.

138/26 Pre-approved Payments. Resolved to note the schedule of payments.

139/26 Councillor Matters. Cllr Telford raised concerns regarding the grit bin beside Harris Foot Bridge and suggested contacting Highways to request the installation of a standard litter bin nearby to prevent litter being deposited in the grit bin.

Cllr Laidlow raised concerns that contractors' staff working on the flower beds in the middle of the highway were not wearing high-visibility clothing. Cllr Laidlow emphasised that high-visibility clothing should be worn at all times, without exception.

Cllr Burns requested an update regarding the wall at the bottom of Kirkgate that had been knocked down, highlighting the length of time that had elapsed since the incident and requesting that the matter be followed up.

140/26 Staff Annual Appraisal and Pay Review. The Council received and considered the Clerk's confidential report regarding staff appraisals and recommendations for the pay review, effective from 1st April 2027. **Resolved** to approve the report and accept the recommended pay increases.

141/26 Date of next meeting.

Confirmed as Wednesday 18th November 2026.

20:47 Meeting Closed.