

Minutes of a Meeting of Cockermouth Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Cockermouth on Wednesday 20 September 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor J Laidlow (Mayor)  
Councillor I Burns  
Councillor S Barnes  
Councillor M Bowman  
Councillor C Bell  
Councillor C Bridgman  
Councillor D Malloy  
Councillor G Telford  
Councillor J Samson  
Councillor H Tucker  
Councillor R Watson

An apology for absence was received from Councillor H Beanland

**99 Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the last meeting held on 16 August 2023 be signed as a correct record.

**100 Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the last Special Planning meeting held on 7 September 2023 be signed as a correct record.

**101 Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Tucker declared that she was a substitute member of the Planning Committee of Cumberland Council.

**102 Mayors Announcements**

The Mayor had attended the following events since the last meeting:-

Aspatria Civic Service  
Wigton Civic Service

**103 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**104 Planning Applications**

HOU/2023/0152

Proposed first floor extension, porch and rear single storey extension and associated alterations (re-submission of HOU/2022/0187)

12 Holmewood Avenue

Recommended - approval

#### **105 Finance**

Resolved – (a) That payments in the amount of £18,623.98 be authorised.

#### **106 Risk Assessment**

Resolved – That the contents of the insurable risk management assessment be agreed.

#### **107 Insurance**

Resolved – That the contents of the policy schedule be agreed.

#### **108 LGR Newsletters**

Councillor Malloy stated that the newsletters once again did not contain any Cockermouth schemes. He asked Councillor Tucker if she had received any feedback relating to the two actions she took away at the last meeting relating to more Cockermouth content in the Newsletters and the future of the Wilkinsons Store. Councillor Malloy stated that two more stores had closed in the Town this week.

Councillor Tucker stated that she had spoken to the Business and Investment Team about Wilkinson's but was unable to speak publicly about the various options they were pursuing due to the information being commercially sensitive. She promised to keep prodding and poking the team responsible for newsletter content.

Councillor Malloy expressed his dissatisfaction regarding Cumberland's On line App. He had tried 5 times to report the weeds/ragwort on Gote Brow only to receive a response which said that the land belonged to Allerdale. He further stated that we had a major event in Cockermouth over the weekend and Cockermouth looked like the weed capital of Cumbria.

He asked Councillor Tucker what the policy was to eradicate weeds in public areas. She said that she did not know and suggested he contact the Assistant Director.

Councillor Malloy complained about the sporadic bin collection. The information provided on Cumberland's website was not what was happening in reality. Electors were trying to log on to Cumberland's App but were unable to complain about bins. He enquired if Cumberland Councillors were lobbying to sort this issue?

Councillor Tucker stated that there were IT issues surrounding the app and that she was lobbying to resolve the matter.

Councillor Burns stated that the grass collectors had only emptied three avenues and left notices on bins stating that they were too heavy to be emptied. She had chased Charles Holmes but had not received a reply.

Councillor Watson stated that the situation was improving following the strike.

Councillor Tucker reiterated that she would keep lobbying to resolve the matter.

Agreed – That the content of the 11, 20, 25 August & 3 & 8 September 2023 Cumberland Council newsletters be noted.

### **109 Improving Town Paths**

Those present considered a letter from an elector regarding improvements being made to hollows the path between Waterloo Street and the back of the Trout Hotel following the very sad demise of her husband.

Councillor Bowman stated that the letter, dated August 14, had been addressed to her and two other councillors personally but had not been brought to their attention until the meeting.

Councillor Burns asked who owned the land/path in question?

The Town Clerk recommended that the Civic Trust be approached regarding ownership as they had carried out works on the path in recent years.

Resolved – That Councillor Bowman speak to the Civic Trust and reply to the letter.

### **110 Grants for the planting and care of trees, hedges and orchard**

The Tree Council is inviting applications through the Branching Out Fund. Through the fund, schools, community groups, parish and town councils and tree warden networks within the UK will be able to apply for grants of between £250 and £2,500 to get communities and young people up to the age of 21 involved in planting and caring for trees, hedges and orchards.

Funding will cover the cost of trees, hedges and orchards; reasonable costs of non-plastic protection and supports as well as peat-free compost and/or soil improvers.

The closing date for applications has been extended to 3 December 2023.

Resolved – That an application for non-plastic protection and supports as well as peat free compost and soil improvers be made to the Branching Out Fund in conjunction with the trees being planted in item 17.

### **111 Clerks Report**

Those present considered the content of the Clerk's report.

Councillor Malloy stated that the new planters looked exceptional and that costs should be obtained and funding sought to replace the old concrete beds.

Resolved - That the costs and funding be explored.

### **112 Climate Emergency Action**

Actions were discussed under item 17.

### **113 Footpath Survey**

Councillors Beanland, Watson, Bowman & Telford has surveyed various paths within their wards.

Councillors from All Saints and Christchurch Wards were asked to survey the paths in their wards.

Councillor Burns stated that some paths did not belong to the Town Council, the majority belonged to Cumberland Council. She asked why we were asking electors to pay twice?

Councillor Bowman stated that electors were not being asked to pay twice.

Councillor Watson explained that their condition was being surveyed. The Town Council would then decide which scheme to take forward and with whom.

Councillor Telford stated that there had been a lot of interest in the survey.

Councillor Malloy stated the Cumberland had informed us that they were going to

survey their own paths this summer and that Fix the Fells were not culpable for injury but that if we carried out works on a Cumberland owned path we would be culpable.

Councillor Bowman stated that we needed to engage with Cumberland Council regarding the findings. She asked if the Town Clerk could send the surveys.

Councillor Tucker stated that she had reported issues with the Cockermouth Cemetery path to the relevant officer twice with little success and would escalate the matter to Director level.

Resolved – That the Town Clerk sends copies of the surveys to the relevant officer within Cumberland Council.

#### **114 Proposed Partnership Venture with W Dobie**

Councillors Beanland & Tucker met Mr Dobie at the Trout Hotel on 8 September 2023 after receiving an email from Mr Dobie which stated that 'he would like to work with the Town Council on a partnership approach to help having Cockermouth look more cared for'.

Initially Mr Dobie suggested that both parties put £5000 into the partnership, this was subsequently reduced to £2500.

Councillors Beanland and Tucker asked if the Town Council agreed in principle to some form of partnership venture and if so what sum was available to put into the partnership?

Councillor Burns stated that she could not believe that the councillors had met up with a Developer, particularly as Councillor Tucker was also a substitute on Cumberland's Planning Committee. She informed those present that the Town Council's protocol had not been followed. Over 400 objections had been received to his recent planning application, public perception in planning was critical. She requested that the item be removed from the agenda.

Councillor Telford agreed with Councillor Burns.

Councillor Burns moved that the item be not discussed. This was seconded by Councillor Telford.

Councillor Burns requested a recorded vote.

Councillor Laidlow	Agreed
Councillor Barnes	Agreed

Councillor Bowman	Agreed
Councillor Bell	Agreed
Councillor Bridgman	Agreed
Councillor Malloy	Agreed
Councillor Telford	Agreed
Councillor Tucker	Agreed
Councillor Watson	Agreed
Councillor Burns	Agreed
Councillor Samson	Agreed

Resolved – That the item be not discussed.

Councillor Malloy moved that the item be not discussed and that the matter be escalated to the Leader of Cumberland Council to see if we had been compromised in any way. This was seconded by Councillor Laidlow.

Councillor Burns requested a recorded vote.

Councillor Laidlow	Agreed
Councillor Barnes	Agreed
Councillor Bowman	Disagree
Councillor Bell	Agreed
Councillor Bridgman	Disagree
Councillor Malloy	Agreed
Councillor Telford	Disagree
Councillor Tucker	Disagree
Councillor Watson	Disagree
Councillor Burns	Agreed
Councillor Samson	Disagree

Resolved – That the issue be not discussed but not escalated to the Leader of Cumberland Council.

Councillor Bowman stated that she was not aware of any protocol and requested that it be circulated to all Councillors.

### **115 DLUHC Consultation**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have issued a consultation seeking views on proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making, to make plans simpler, faster to prepare and more accessible.

The consultation seeks insight on how local plans can be made simpler to

understand and use and how local plans can be positively shaped by the views of communities about how their area should evolve.

Councillor Telford explained that although Cockermouth did not have a Neighbourhood Plan there was a dangerous clause in the consultation removing local people having a say in local issues.

Nalc's current policy position is as follows:-

The Government has said it wants to see local planning authorities reviewing their local plans every 5 years. NALC will be arguing very strongly that this is an impractical requirement that places impossible pressure on LPA's and on neighbourhood planning groups whose plans are aligned to the local plans. A review every 10 years would be demanding enough. The emphasis should be on the quality and the soundness of the plans and not on the speed with which it might be possible to produce them.

NALC will support a planning system which incorporates a significant role for local councils. It will not support any diminution of local councils' statutory right to comment on planning issues at all stages of their evolution, whether they be development planning matters or spatial planning policies.

NALC will support a soundly based planning system which represents the most reliable tool for the sustainable allocation of land and which represents the three pillars of sustainability equally i.e. social, economic and environmental factors.

NALC is arguing for the complete removal of the whole concept of National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) which will have an effect of unjustly trumping any local or neighbourhood plan.

Councillor Telford support CALC's approach, she requested that the Town Council replies to the consultation supporting CALC's approach and that we also contact our local M.P. on the issue to insist that there be no watering down of local planning issues.

Councillor Burns stated that we had to or they would run roughshod over us.

Councillor Samson also mentioned that the system was to be digitalised to speed up the process giving less time to comment. This could disenfranchise those with no IT. He further commented about the override that National Government was reserving for itself, had the act been in place, the Council couldn't have insisted on the drainage/pond scheme on Strawberry How.

Resolved – That we reply to the consultation supporting NALC's stance and that we

write to our M.P. on the issue insisting that there be no watering down of local planning issues.

### **116 SID Deployment**

The new SID had yet to be deployed.

Those present discussed formalising arrangement to deploy the SID at the six approved locations on a monthly basis.

Resolved – That we formalise arrangements regarding deployment of our Speed Indication Device (SID)

### **117 Review of Polling Places**

Councillor Samson stated that whilst campaigning in All Saints ward this year, it had become apparent to him that the boundary between All Saints and South Lodge Ward needed to be adjusted. The new houses on Strawberry Grange adjacent to Bellbrigg now obscured the previous boundary with a few falling into South Lodge.

Cumberland Council Electoral Services were undertaking a review of ward boundaries in 2024. Councillor Samson suggested that there may be other areas of town where adjustments needed to be considered.

Resolved – a) That Councillor Samson continues his dialogue with Electoral Services.

b) That Councillors consider which other wards may be affected in a similar way and that these be discussed at our next meeting.

### **118 More Planting, Towers Lane Play Area**

Councillor Watson proposed the Town Council plant a number of small trees (rowan, hazel, birch, hawthorn etc) in the Towers Lane Play Area to enhance its appearance and provide habitat.

The trees were free of charge from the Woodland Trust. He explained that he had made a provisional booking (subject to Town Council approval) for a bundle of 105 trees. Any surplus trees could be used to plug gaps in the recently planted hedge where plants had died or where the hedge appeared a little thin. Planting would be carried out by Town Councillors with support from the newly formed Cockermouth Sustainability Group. Canes, guards etc. could be purchased using grant aid from the Branching Out Fund.



Councillor Malloy queried the use of the site for a skate park.

Councillor Watson stated that the Towers Lane Play area had been ruled out as a potential site.

Councillor Burns stated whilst she was not opposed to planting trees and liked the idea of infilling the hedge she felt that planting even more trees on Towers Lane would be overkill. She felt that other areas would benefit more i.e. Ise Road Play Area. She further stated that trees grow and needed to be looked after.

Councillor Malloy commented that he would not like to see open green areas dissected.

Councillor Watson stated that the areas chosen on the map would not dissect open space but would enhance existing planting.

Resolved – That 105 trees be planted in Towers Lane Play Area in the areas selected on the map accompanying the report with any not required there planted in the Memorial Gardens or elsewhere.

Resolved –

That under the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be removed for the following items of business due to legal issues and staffing issues being discussed

#### **119 Notice to Quit of an Allotment Holder**

Resolved – That the tenant of Plot 1B, St Helens Street be given notice to quit due to the untidy, uncultivated state of their plot.

#### **120 Maternity Cover**

Permission was sought to advertise for the post of Town Clerks Assistant during her maternity leave.

Statutory Maternity Pay of £172.48 per week can be reclaimed and will help to fund the post.

Resolved – That the post be advertised and filled as soon as practicable.

#### **121 Town Clerk Locum**

Despite two attempts to recruit a new Town Clerk no applications were received.

Councillor Bowman informed the Council that members of the recruitment sub committee had agreed with the Town Clerk that all options would be explored: the Clerk to make contact with Cumbria Association of Local Councils, National Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks regarding a locum; and the sub-committee members to speak to the Clerk's Admin Assistant about a temporary acting up role and to get feedback from the 14 people who had requested the application pack.

CALC had no-one to take on the role and NALC did not have a locum list.

SLCC did have a locum service delivered by a team of CiLCA qualified Clerks all of whom had worked within local councils. Our requirements have been circulated to that team.

The Admin Assistant had confirmed that she was not interested in an Acting Up role.

Resolved – That a Special Council Meeting be held on Thursday 28 October 2023 to discuss feedback from pack recipients, feedback from SLCC regarding a locum and to explore all other recruitment options available.

## **122 Rent Arrears**

Resolved – That the tenants notice and offer to pay off his £1099,98 rent arrears monthly over the next six months be accepted.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm