

Minutes of a meeting of Cockermouth Town Council held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Cockermouth, on Wednesday 18th March 2026 at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor Stephen Barnes

Councillor Marion Bowman

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 Town Clerk

Karl Melville – Guest Speaker, Cumberland Council

Members of the Public: 9

19:00 Meeting Opened.

271/25 Apologies. Cllr Bell had submitted apologies.

272/25 To approve the minutes of the Cockermouth Town Council Meeting of 18th February 2026. Resolved to approve the minutes.

273/25 To receive the minutes of the Twinning Committee Meeting of 14th January 2026. Resolved to note as received.

274/25 Declaration of Interests.

Cllr Smith declared an interest in Item 23, as he is a member of the Chamber of Trade. Cllr Malloy declared an interest in Item 20, as the funding request was submitted by one of his chosen charities for his mayoral year.

275/25 Exclusion of Press & Public. No items required the exclusion of the press and public.

276/25 Mayor's Announcements.

Cllr Malloy reported that he had attended the Mayfield School Art Exhibition and commented positively on the event.

277/25 Reports from Cumberland Councillors.

Cllr Semple had submitted apologies.

278/25 Guest Speakers. The Mayor welcomed Mr Karl Melville of Cumberland Council, who provided an update on the Lorton Street roadworks.

Cllr Malloy raised concerns regarding emergency vehicle access and the lack of consultation, noting Lorton Street's importance as a main route in Cockermouth.

Mr Melville stated that a public drop-in session had been held, however, Councillors advised that they were unaware of this. He confirmed that emergency services, residents and the Town Council had been notified in advance, with over £3,000 spent on correspondence. Councillors reported that notifications were received after works had commenced, which the Clerk confirmed had also been the case for the Town Hall.

Concerns regarding emergency access on Kirkgate were reiterated. Mr Melville advised that traffic would move to allow access, Cllr Malloy disagreed, citing the narrow road and parked vehicles.

Cllr Laidlow raised a concern regarding a pothole on the bottom of Windmill Lane and concerns regarding damage done in Marketplace. Mr Melville confirmed these would be assessed following completion of the works.

Mr Melville advised that Lorton Street is expected to reopen by Easter, potentially with traffic lights in place.

Cllr Smith reiterated concerns regarding Kirkgate and the continued use of parking bays whilst traffic lights are in place.

279/25 Public Participation. No questions had been received.

280/25 Planning

- **HOU/2026/0029 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **FUL/2026/0018 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **HOU/2026/0031 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **CON/2026/0017 Resolved** to recommend approval.
- **HOU/2026/0037 Resolved** to recommend approval.

281/25 Planning Decisions Under Delegated Authority. Resolved to note the schedule as received.

282/25 Clerk's Report. The Clerk's report had been circulated.

- **Website.** The Clerk reported that website accessibility has improved to 98% compliance with government standards. A link to supporting documents has also been added, allowing the public to access relevant papers in advance of Town Council meetings.
- **St Helen's Street Allotments.** Castles and Coasts have advised that further works are required to stabilise the bank. The works are expected to begin in June and continue for approximately 11 weeks. During this period, the car park will be closed and allotment holders will be notified in advance.
- **Andy's Man Club.** The Clerk confirmed that the charity will use the Parlour from 23rd March while the room remains unoccupied. This has been offered free of charge.

283/25 Climate Emergency Group. A report was presented to the Council.

- **Flood Risk.** Cllr Barnes proposed that Cumberland Council be approached to request an updated Flood Risk Assessment for the town and to seek information on measures being taken to retain water on the fells rather than allowing it to reach the streets. It was suggested that the Environment Agency may be a more appropriate body to contact regarding this matter. **Resolved** that a letter be sent to the Environment Agency.
- **EV Charging Points.** The Community Chaplain had made contact to confirm support for the installation of electric vehicle charging points in local church car parks. Taxi ranks on the Main Street were also identified as potential locations. **Resolved** that the Clerk write to Cumberland Council to include these additional suggestions.
- **Repair Café.** Cllr Barnes requested that the Council formally acknowledge the contribution of the Repair Café to the community. **Resolved** that a letter of thanks be sent.

284/25 Community Led Plan. Cllr Malloy suggested that the item be deferred due to discrepancies in the expenditure, which could not be approved at this time and that the Clerk, Cllr Malloy and Cllr Bridgman meet to resolve the matter.

Cllr Bridgman reported that the school's engagement session had gone very well.

285/25 Mayoral Chain of Office. A report was circulated to the Town Council. After some discussion, Cllr Watson proposed option 2, to leave the chain as is. At the request of Cllr Laidlow there was a recorded vote. In favour: Cllrs Beanland, Bridgman, Bowman, Samson, Watson. Against: Cllrs Barnes, Burns, Laidlow, Malloy, Smith. Abstentions: Cllr Telford. With the votes tied, the Mayor exercised a casting vote.

Cllr Laidlow proposed option 3. In favour: Cllrs Barnes, Burns, Laidlow, Malloy, Smith. Against: Cllrs Beanland, Bridgman, Bowman, Samson, Telford, Watson. The motion was not carried. The matter may not be reconsidered for six months.

286/25 Notice Board. A report was circulated to the Town Council. Cllr Burns urged that the Council first check with Cumberland Council whether permission would be granted for the noticeboard to be installed in Market Place. Cllr Watson proposed that the Council accept the Clerk's recommendation and negotiate with Highways before proceeding with the purchase. **Resolved** that the Clerk contact Cumberland Council regarding permission.

287/25 Annual Governance Statement 2024-25. **Resolved** that the Annual Governance Statement for 2024–25 be approved and signed, in accordance with the comments provided by the external auditor.

288/25 Annual Accounting Statement 2024-25. **Resolved** that the Annual Accounting Statement for 2024–25 be approved and signed, in accordance with the comments provided by the external auditor.

289/25 Risk Assessment. Cllr Beanland pointed out a small discrepancy between the risk assessment and the financial regulations regarding the frequency of updates to bank signatories. **Resolved** that the Clerk would revise the wording to align with the financial regulations.

290/25 Planter Relocation Request. Cllr Burns highlighted that permission would be required as Lowther Went is privately owned. She also suggested that applying for grant funding to acquire additional planters might be a better option, rather than relocating those from Main Street, as the current planters there prevent prohibited parking. **Resolved** that the Clerk would respond to the Civic Trust, informing them that they would firstly need to seek permission.

291/25 Grant request from Linking Lives for inclusion in the 2025/26 budget. **Resolved** to approve a grant of £500.

292/25 Cross in Memorial Gardens. **Resolved** that permission be granted for the cross to be planted in the Memorial Gardens during the Easter weekend.

293/25 Earmarked Budget for 2026/27. Cllr Bowman requested that the remaining budget for 2025/26, allocated for works on Greyrigg Avenue and Isel Road recreation areas, be carried forward and earmarked for further works in 2026/27. **Resolved** that the budget be earmarked accordingly.

294/25 Relocation of Map Board. **Resolved** that the relocation of the map board be approved.

295/25 Damage to Trees. Cllr Watson reported that trees on verges and housing estates are being damaged by lawn mowers clipping the trunks. He suggested that the Council consider writing to Cumberland Council, requesting that their contractors leave a 30cm circle unmown around the tree trunks as part of their maintenance regime. **Resolved** that the Clerk would write to Cumberland Council with this suggestion.

296/25 Sandwich Boards. Cllr Beanland proposed purchasing a sandwich board to direct the public to the Town Hall for events such as Town Council meetings. Cllr Burns pointed out that the Council already owns a sandwich board, so no additional purchase would be necessary. She also raised concerns about the board's placement, as it could pose a potential hazard. Cllr Malloy expressed concerns about the Council's efforts to minimize street signage, suggesting instead that the fingerpost be used. Cllr Barnes also noted the risk of the board being stolen. **Resolved** that a sandwich board would be put out for Town Council meetings by staff.

297/25 Payments for Approval. Resolved to approve the payments.

298/25 Pre-approved Payments. Resolved to note the schedule of payments.

299/25 Cumbria White-Tailed Eagle Project. Resolved that the Council supports the project and that Cllr Watson completes the questionnaire on behalf of the Town Council.

300/25 Councillor Matters.

Cllr Smith raised concerns regarding the trees on Station Street. He noted a potential surplus within the budget for environmental matters and suggested that the Town Council consider the purchase of two trees for Station Street. Cllr Smith advised that he would submit an agenda request form for consideration at the next meeting but wished to raise the matter at this stage.

Cllr Telford reported that the Town Council had recently awarded a grant to support the provision of courses, including IT skills. She confirmed that she had attended a session and found it to be well delivered.

301/25 Date of next meeting.

Confirmed as Wednesday 15th April 2026. The Annual Town Meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd April 2026.

20:47 Meeting Closed.