

# Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED  
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## Minutes of a meeting of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee on Monday, 17 April 2023, at 7.35p.m. in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal.

Cllr S Coleman	Apologies	Cllr J Dunlop (Chair)	Apologies
Cllr L Edwards	Present	Cllr D Evans	Present
Cllr M Helme	Present	Cllr C Russell	Present
Cllr D Rathbone (Vice-Chair)	Present	Vacancy	

**In attendance:** Chris Bagshaw (Town Clerk) and Inge Booth (Democratic Services Assistant)

### AGC43/2022 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs S Coleman and J Dunlop.

### AGC44/2022 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were raised under this item.

### AGC45/2022 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

No issues were considered for exclusion.

### AGC46/2022 Minutes of the Last Meeting

**Resolved:** To receive the minutes of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee held on 20 March 2023 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a true record.

### AGC47/2022 Minute Action Sheet

Members considered a report on actions taken by officers on resolutions or recommendations made at previous meetings.

*AGC37/2022 (2022/23 Budget Monitoring)* – Under this minute had been raised the need to consider how familiarising councillors with the Council's financial management processes might best be achieved. Attention was now drawn to the need to be more precise with regard to training for councillors on the budget process, it being suggested that at least one Member of each of the other committees needed to receive training in this area. In response to a query, the Town Clerk advised that Steve Parkinson was available to carry out appropriate training through CALC. It was suggested that CALC's standard online training, which focussed on budget and financial processes at a cost of around £35 per person, would be useful for all Members in the first instance and that all councillors should be encouraged to do this. It was felt, however, that those Members wishing to become chairs or vice-chairs of committees should need to have undertaken this training. Consideration should then be given to more specialist, bespoke training.

*AGC36/2022 (Audit, Grants and Charities Overview of Policies and Actions)* – Reference was made to the timetable for financial planning and monitoring which had been recommended to Full Council on 3 April 2023 and the need for absolute clarity on timings in relation to the budgetary process. The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that Council had already voted on and approved the timetable, however, Members stressed the need for its contents to be reiterated, either by attaching the document to an email to all Members or through the chairs or vice-chairs of individual committees.

*AGC38/2022 (Grants Funding)* – It was questioned whether the grants offered under this minute had been accepted, and the Town Clerk responded, explaining the situation. Whilst some grants had been offered, others had not; he was due shortly to meet with the Events Officer in this regard. It was noted that the due date was w/c 10 April 2023 and suggested that this be altered instead to 18 April.

**Resolved:** To seek to encourage all Members to undertake CALC's standard online training on budget and financial processes at a cost of around £35 per person, with all aspiring committee chairs and vice-chairs having to undertake the training.

**Resolved:** Consideration to be given to more specialist, bespoke training.

**Resolved:** The contents of the timetable in relation to the budgetary process to be reiterated by attaching the document to an email to all Members and through the chairs or vice-chairs of individual committees.

**Resolved:** The due date in relation to AGC38/2022 be altered to 18 April 2023.

**Resolved:** To note the report.

#### **AGC48/2022 Audit Grants and Charities Overview of Policies and Actions**

It was raised that this item had been already been covered. Attention was drawn, however, to the need for greater knowledge of the charities which existed within Kendal, to provide an overview of all of those who may wish to apply for grants, as well as improved methods of publicising the Town Council's grants process. The Town Clerk acknowledged that a piece of work was required in this regard, although pointed out that the matter may not fall within the remit of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee moving forward. Some concern was raised in relation to the amount of grant funding available and in relation to the potential increase in work. Strong support was expressed for the need to improve publicity and make it easier for organisations to apply for funding.

**Resolved:** To look into methods by which to improve publicity and the process of applying for grant funding.

**Resolved:** To note the report.

#### **AGC49/2022 2022/23 Budget Monitoring**

The Committee considered a report on the Council's budget and expenditure for the fourth quarter, to the end of March 2023.

The Town Clerk responded to a query regarding the two budget headings relating to Kendal Futures & Visit Kendal and Visit Kendal/Promoting Kendal, explaining that one paid for the website and the other for the inputter. He suggested that Nominal Code 300 should simply refer to Kendal Futures and undertook to look into this.

The Town Clerk further provided an explanation with regard to the inclusion of two sets of budget figures within the agenda and as to why the totals shown at the end of each were slightly different. The totals at the end of the second document were as close as possible to being the year end figures although not yet including any accruals. The first set showed figures in relation to the fourth quarter, with cost centres divided into groups.

Members considered the report at some length. Discussion took place with regard to nominal codes, some of which, the Town Clerk explained, were perhaps too specific. Raised was the need to consider ways in which to improve the nominal codes, including a method by which to include several projects under one individual code, attention being drawn, for example, to the vast amount of codes relating to public realm and enhancements.

The Town Clerk explained how officers were still trying to find their way around the new finance system. He stressed the need in future for attention to be paid to the bottom line and the important question of whether more money had been spent than should be. He stressed, however, that the system had delivered improvements in accounting and highlighted the importance of now ensuring that clear, concise and trustworthy information was provided to councillors moving forward, with regular reports being presented to individual committees. A query was raised regarding details in relation to, for example, staffing costs and the larger and smaller elements thereof, those smaller elements being of less interest to Members. The Town Clerk suggested that this needed further review. He drew attention as an example to figures in relation to national insurance contributions which had never been presented to Council and explained his intention to revisit these types of areas and fill out some detail. Development Fund headings were now treated as earmarked funds, as they were seldom spent within year.

Members welcomed the opportunity now to look at the budget in detail and to consider how the Council's priorities could be delivered.

The Committee discussed how to gain an idea of how staff time was spent across the five priorities. The Town Clerk cautioned against including recharges within the budget, drawing attention to the complications of the process of recharging. He stressed that it was a management function to decide on how work was divided amongst staff. It was the role of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee to examine service delivery and check if there were enough staff to carry out the work. Members raised the need to consider the delivery of a whole range of different priorities and the need to ensure that the Council had the resources to manage staff appropriately. It was suggested that the Management Committee should be asked to consider the detail in relation to this matter.

**Resolved:** To look into the matter of nominal codes for Kendal Futures.

**Resolved:** To consider ways in which to improve nominal codes.

**Resolved:** To review the area of the larger and smaller elements relating to, for example, staffing costs, with a view to filling out detail.

**Resolved:** To note the report.

## **AGC50/2022 Financial Regulations**

At AGC50/2022, the Committee had resolved to submit proposed new Financial Regulations to Full Council, including a commentary on the proposed amendments. It was now reported that Full Council had subsequently referred the document back to the Committee, with the intention that the Committee make a completed recommendation, without a running commentary, to the next meeting of Full Council.

Members welcomed the updated document which now included the proposed changes and felt that it provided a good training resources for those Members who wished to take further responsibility in their roles as councillors. It was suggested that the document might be included in the Members' Induction Pack and given to those Members aspiring to become committee chairs or vice-chairs.

**Resolved:** To recommend the draft Financial Regulations to Full Council for adoption.

The meeting closed at 8.32 p.m.