

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED

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Minutes of a meeting of the Culture and Communities Committee held on Monday, 18 February 2024, at 7.40 p.m., in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal.

Cllr L Edwards	Present	Cllr M Helme (Vice-Chair)	Present
Cllr H Ladhams (Chair)	Present	Cllr S Long	Present
Cllr C Russell	Present	Cllr K Simpson	Present
Cllr R Sutton	Present	Cllr P Thornton	Present

In attendance: Town Clerk (Chris Bagshaw) and Democratic Services Assistant (Inge Booth) and two members of the public.

Public Participation

In relation to Agenda Item No.10(d) (Community Grant Applications – Stricklandgate House) Jill Salmon, the Centre Manager, joined by David Sykes, Trustee, provided a short presentation on their project, **‘Stricklandgate House 4 sustainable heritage – where heritage meets the day-to-day’**. The project was to ensure a long-term sustainable future for Stricklandgate House which had been established in 1993 and which was home to 16 tenant charities, a workplace for circa 115 employees and 26 volunteers and, in addition, 15 Independent Counsellors and 15 from other charities providing counselling services. Stricklandgate House provided offices, conference and meeting rooms for charity and community use, with circa 15,000 per year people accessing the services provided. Stricklandgate House was a Grade II listed Georgian Town House, a former home, Kendal's first bank, museum and former council offices.

The project was being developed in order to provide resilience for services provided by and through Stricklandgate House, to address accommodation needs, engage community in understanding and valuing heritage, engage community in delivering net zero, to demonstrate a sustainably managed listed heritage building and to enable asset based community development. There were two main parts to the project. Firstly, Stricklandgate House had been working with architects to develop a concept design for revealing and conserving the heritage features of the house and to re model the modern annexe. Secondly, the project was to engage the broadest range of people with the heritage of Stricklandgate House and its influence in Kendal and Westmorland.

Details of how the project would be funded were provided, the whole project cost estimated to be in the region of £4.75m, with the development phase costing around £300,000, for which the National Lottery Heritage Fund had invited Stricklandgate House to make an application for funding. Westmorland and Furness Council had approved a £25,000 contribution towards the Development Phase and the Town Council's support for £5,000 towards the Development Phase was now being sought. Together, this £30,000 would provide the required match for Development Phase Lottery Funding. It was felt that the Town Council's support would be invaluable, not just in finance, but in the purpose, influence and connections the Council had to see improvements in the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the town and residents.

CC13/2023 Apologies

The Town Clerk drew attention to the fact that, whilst Cllr R Edwards' name appeared on the Membership of the Committee on the front sheet of the agenda, she had previously resigned and was no longer a Member of the Committee. One vacancy, therefore, remained.

There were no apologies for absence, all Members being present.

CC14/2023 Declarations of Interest

Cllr L Edwards declared an interest in Agenda Item No.9(c) (Festival Grant Applications – Kendal Pride) and Cllr C Russell declared an interest in Agenda Item No.10(d) (Community Grant Applications – Stricklandgate House) as outlined below at Minutes Nos.CC22/2023 and CC23/2023 respectively.

CC15/2023 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

There were no excluded items on the agenda.

CC16/2023 Community Grant Applications – (d) Stricklandgate House

Note – Cllr C Russell declared an interest in this item of business by virtue of the fact that he was a Trustee of Stricklandgate House and left the Council Chamber during the discussion.

The Chair moved discussion on this item up the agenda in order to provide the representatives from Stricklandgate House the opportunity to answer questions raised by Members. The Town Clerk referred to Agenda Item No.6(b) (Budget Monitoring – Grants Awarded to Date 2023-24), drawing attention to the current over subscription on grants.

The representatives provided responses to Members' queries, explaining that there would be an approximate increase in conference space of 70%, elaborating on the role of the Project Officer which the Town Council's funding would support in financing and reiterating the need for match-funding.

The Chair suggested at this point that the Committee return to the agenda and, under the items relating to applications for funding, for all the grants to be looked at en bloc prior to decisions to being made in relation to individual awards.

CC17/2023 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved: To receive and accept the minutes of the meeting of the Culture and Communities Committee held on 30 October 2023 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a true record.

CC18/2023 Minute Action Sheet

Resolved: To note the actions taken by officers on resolutions or recommendations made at previous meetings of the Culture and Communities Committee.

CC19/2023 Budget Monitoring 2023/24

(a) The Committee considered its budget monitoring report for 2023/24 as at 31 January 2024. The Town Clerk drew attention to a slight overspend on Christmas Lights and to the fact that the Christmas Electricity Bill, expected to be in the region of £850, had not yet been received or paid.

Resolved: To receive and note the report.

(b) The report included details on the allocations to grant recipients to date. £3,204 remained in the current Community Grants budget and £6,953 in the current Festival Grants budget. Attention was drawn to the fact that, if the total amount of money applied for exceeded the in-year budget, then grants could be awarded from the following year's budget. This allocation would then be reported to the next meeting of the Committee at which grants were considered as expenditure in that financial year. The Budget allocations for 2024-25 were £43,000 (Community Grants) and £23,000 (Festivals).

Resolved: To receive and note the report.

CC20/2023 Christmas Lighting 2024

(a) The Committee considered a report on the preparations for the Christmas lighting display and switch-on in 2024.

The electrical infrastructure had been showing signs of aged wear and tear recently. The vast majority of the equipment had been in use for over 20 years, since Kendal Town Council had first taken over the management of the Christmas lights. In addition, there had been some storm damage which was compromising the safety of some of the equipment. Details of these issues together with what was required to address them were contained within the report, around power supply points and timers, problematic power supplies and storm damage.

In short, the following were considered to be essential:

- To supply 11 power supply points and replace timers - £1,990.
- Test and certify 11 power supply points - £1,265.
- Specific location anchor point testing, to include replacement of catenary wires - £995.
- Replace defective catenary wires - £95 per wire.

Those items considered to be optional were:

- Move supply from Town Hall - £1,260.
- Lower supply from height and replace with new weatherproof supply box - £1,080.

All work was to be carried out by a NAPIT, HERS registered electrical contractor with full insurance cover.

The Committee was being asked to consider the infrastructure repairs/upgrades and to make a decision on whether to undertake the work. The Town Clerk drew attention to the Christmas Lights Budget, pointing out that no money remained in the current year. In addition, he explained that the £5,000 remaining in the current Christmas Lights and Festivals Infrastructure and Maintenance Budget was not sufficient to cover the costs outlined within the report. He drew attention, however, to the 2024/25 Christmas Lights Budget of £30,000 from which, he said, money could be borrowed.

Member supported moving forward with the essential repairs, with the optional items being re-visited at a later date.

Resolved: To approve moving forward with the essential repairs outlined within the report and, if necessary, to vire any additional sum required from elsewhere in due course.

(b) The Committee was further informed that the Christmas Lights contract with the current supplier would come to an end in July 2024. This provides the Council with the opportunity to review the scheme.

Details of the current position were provided. Kendal currently owned all the equipment and this model had been in place for approximately 20 years. Although owning the equipment might save with ongoing annual costs, it did present some problems around responsibility for all the ongoing repair costs and call-out charges for failed equipment throughout the season, the ad hoc purchasing of additional motifs, etc., resulting in an uncoordinated display and, due to the high cost of replacing equipment, the display becoming rather quickly dated.

The Council Services Officer had met with three different suppliers to discuss how to improve the scheme in Kendal.

It was, therefore, being proposed to phase out the equipment owned by the Council, resulting in the hiring of the complete scheme by the end of the contract period. The benefit of hiring a scheme was that it could be changed/updated regularly, it eradicated repair and call-out costs and it kept the scheme looking fresh and coordinated.

Due to the expanse of the scheme, it was felt wise to have a three-year plan concentrating on specific areas, with the first year to concentrate on the main area through the centre of Town (Kirkland through to Stricklandgate).

Details around Years 1, 2 and 3 suggestions were provided within the report.

The Town Clerk sought the Committee's endorsement of the approach outlined.

The Committee discussed the matter at some length, drawing particular attention to how well appreciated the Christmas Lights were by residents and to the need for an ambitious project. The Town Clerk answered a number of queries raised by Members, also suggesting that a lot more work needed to be carried out in relation to the suggestions. It was pointed out that next Christmas was not far off and that there was an urgent need for a total project costing over three years for the various options, prior to April 2024. The Town Clerk suggested, therefore, that a small working group be established to examine the costs and to seek the most appropriate model for recommendation to the Committee. Also suggested was the need to involve Kendal BID.

Resolved: To establish a working group made up of Cllrs M Helme, H Ladhams and P Thornton, to examine the costs of the proposals outlined within the report and to seek the most appropriate model for recommendation to the Committee.

CC21/2023 Grants and Funding Criteria

The Committee was asked to review the current Grants and Funding Criteria. The Council currently offered grants under four headings, two of which were budget lines under the Culture and Communities Committee.

Currently the criteria for awarding a grant were fairly simple. Applicants had to be:

- Not for profit.
- Serving Kendal and its people.
- Able to show how they are combating discrimination (they should have an equalities policy).
- Able to show how they are contributing to Net Zero and combatting the causes of Climate Change or supporting nature recovery.
- Able to show that they have governance arrangements in place (by showing they have a constitution), and that the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults has been a consideration.
- Able to show they have a bank account.

For smaller grants, particularly Festivals, the Council had exercised a modicum of discretion in order to assist start-ups which struggled with capacity. This had included, without prejudice and on a case by case basis, waiving the requirement for a constitution or three signatories. Currently, all grants over £5,000 had to be approved by Full Council. Grant forms had last been last overhauled in 2022.

Attention was drawn to the fact that any changes proposed to the funding criteria at this meeting would apply to subsequent meetings, providing all applicants had been made aware of the changes. Those applications to be presented to this meeting would be considered under the current criteria.

It was pointed out that, with the Culture and Communities Committee being a new committee, there was need to seriously review the criteria, particularly bearing in mind the priorities of the new Plan for Kendal. Attention was, though, drawn to the fact that this was not a large grant awarding body and that the current criteria were simple and perfectly suitable for a diverse range of people within the community. It was also acknowledged, however, that a refresh of the criteria was required, especially in relation to applications for small sums from individuals. Also to be borne in mind was the need to re-consider regular applicants who had come to expect funding from the Town Council but who may not necessarily meet the criteria. The need to ensure that those organisations serving the community of Kendal were supported was felt to be of paramount importance. To this end, it was suggested that a working group be formed to give full consideration to the criteria and to report back to the Committee prior to the outcome being reported within the minutes to and being received by Full Council prior to implementation. The Town Clerk also drew attention to those recipients of funding which the Council had powers to support, for example the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Kendal Museum. He suggested that these types of organisations should be removed from the lottery of grant applications and provided instead with a dedicated budget heading.

Resolved: To form a working group of Cllrs L Edwards, H Ladhams, C Russell and K Simpson, to give full consideration to the Town Council's Grants Criteria and to report back to Committee prior to the outcome being reported within the minutes and being received by Full Council prior to implementation.

CC22/2023 Festival Grant Applications

Note – Cllr L Edwards, having previously declared an interest under Minute No.CC14/2023 above by virtue of her involvement in Kendal Pride, left the Council Chamber during voting on the amounts to be awarded to each organisation. Cllr R Sutton, under this item, declared interests by virtue of his involvement in relation to Kendal Community Theatre, Kendal Walking Festival and Kendal Unity Festival, and also left the Council Chamber during voting on the amounts to be awarded to each organisation.

The Committee first gave full consideration to each of the applications prior to making decisions on figures in relation to festival grant funding, as follows:

(a) *Lakes International Comic Art Festival - £2,000*

The grant, if approved, would be used to support provision of full day outreach workshops in four primary schools in Kendal.

Resolved: Not to offer a grant.

(b) *Kendal Community Theatre - £250*

The grant, if approved, would be used to support in covering publicity with regard to raising awareness of May Fest across Kendal.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £250.

(c) *Kendal Pride - £4,500*

The grant, if approved, would be put towards Kendal Pride 2024.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £3,500.

(d) *Kendal Walking Festival - £3,226*

The grant, if approved, would be put towards Kendal Walking Festival 2024.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £1,200.

(e) *Kendal Unity Festival - £3,000*

The grant, if approved, would be put towards costs, including venue hire, volunteer training, etc.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £2,000 over a two year period, subject to receipt of further information and fuller dialogue.

CC23/2023 Community Grant Applications

Note – Cllr C Russell, having previously declared an interest under Minute No.CC14/2023 above by virtue of being a Trustee of Stricklandgate House, left the Council Chamber during discussion and voting on this item.

The Committee first gave full consideration to each of the applications prior to making decisions on figures in relation to community grant funding, as follows:

(a) *Kendal Choral Society - £500*

The grant, if approved, would be put towards the purchase of purpose-built staging.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £500.

(b) *Kendal Schools cycle maintenance and skills workshop - £2,160*

The grant, if approved, would be used to fund trial workshops in partnership with four Kendal schools.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £1,900.

(c) *North West Air Ambulance - £5,000*

The grant, if approved, would be put towards the ongoing costs of the Charity's consultant doctors.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £2,056.

(d) *Stricklandgate House - £5,000*

The grant, if approved, would contribute to financing the role of Project Development Officer.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £5,000.

(e) *Westmorland Orchestra - £2,740*

The grant, if approved, would be used to pay professional fees for conductor and leader, and soloist's fees, for its first concert on 24 March 2024.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £2,740.

CC24/2023 Community Resilience

The Town Clerk provided a brief verbal report on the Community Resilience Planning project being run by Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT). He referred mainly to the Town Council's bid to the Cumbria Community Foundation for £2,000 to £3,000 and explained how the Town Council would employ a Community Resilience Officer.

Raised was the need to continue to develop voluntary work, it being pointed out that those volunteers who had come forward in relation to emergency work were keen also to become involved in festival work, thus creating an essential community network along the lines of a council for voluntary services. It was also suggested that this role should be office based in order for the postholder to be able to more easily network and so that the Town Council could also learn from the postholder.

Resolved: To note the verbal report.

Note – At 9.30 p.m., in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders No.3 Meetings Generally x, a meeting shall not exceed a period of 2 hours, the Committee voted to continue the meeting.

CC25/2023 Town Partnerships

The Committee was presented with an update on the activities of Kendal Business Improvement District (BID) and Kendal Futures with regards to the development of a Calendar of Events and other matters relating to the promotion of the Town. Details of those events of which the Council had been notified so far this year were provided.

Resolved: To note the report and Calendar of Events.

Also raised under this item was the issue of the repairs required to the Birdcage, potential involvement by Kendal BID and Kendal Futures, and the need for community engagement through a partner organisation, for example, Kendal Civic Society. The Town Clerk pointed out that this issue fell within the remit of the Environment Committee. It was, however, suggested that the Culture and Communities Committee's role should be realigned, with the Birdcage and Markets potentially being more suitable to its thriving communities and business aspirations. The Town Clerk suggested that this proposal should be put before the Management Committee.

Resolved: To ask the Management Committee to consider moving both the issue of the Birdcage and Markets into the remit of the Culture and Communities Committee.

This led to discussion on Kendal Market and the potential for the Town Council to take on lead position on this aspect, with it having a more direct focus on the Town. Proposed was the potential for Cllrs S Long and C Russell to represent the Town Council in relation to the Market. The need for the Committee to focus its attention on the best way forward for both the indoor and outdoor markets was stressed, particularly with Cllrs H Ladhams and P Thornton being part of the Town Team. The need for this to be included as an item on a future agenda was also raised. The Town Clerk explained that membership of the Town Team was a decision for the Management Committee to decide on. Attention was drawn to the fact that a meeting was due to be held by the Town Team with regard to the Market and Westmorland and Furness Council's new vision for the Market. Following this, that vision could be brought before the Culture and Communities Committee for discussion. Members, were, however, keen for involvement by the entire Committee at that meeting.

Resolved: To seek for all Members of the Culture and Communities Committee to be invited to the Town Team meeting relating to Westmorland and Furness' vision for the Market.

The meeting closed at 9.50 p.m.