

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED
www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk



Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Highways Committee held on Monday, 11 September 2023, at 7.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal.

Cllr G Archibald (Vice-Chair)	Present	Cllr S Blunden	Apologies
Cllr D Brown	Present	Cllr J Cornthwaite	Apologies
Cllr M Helme	Present	Cllr E Hennessy (Chair)	Present
Cllr S Long	Apologies	Cllr C Russell	Apologies
Cllr K Simpson	Present		

In attendance: Town Clerk (Chris Bagshaw), Projects Officer (Anne-Marie Sanderson), Development Manager (Helen Watson-Moriarty) and Dan Hinton (Natural Kendal).

Also present: Mr Dan Hinton (Natural Kendal), Ros Taylor (as m.o.p.)

E30/2023 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs S Blunden J Cornthwaite, S Long and C Russell.

E31/2023 Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were raised at this point

E32/2023 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

No issues were considered for exclusion.

E33/2023 Verbal Reports from Outside Bodies – Natural Kendal

Dan Hinton, representing Natural Kendal CIC (NK), addressed the Committee regarding a potential collaboration project at Vicarage Drive open space, an area recently acquired by the Town Council. Mr Hinton explained that Natural Kendal was a group of like-minded people taking voluntary action to improve biodiversity in Kendal and its surrounding green corridors. One of their projects was to work with schools, charities and other groups to create a Kendal Conservation Education Park (KCEP). So far this approach had been tried at Hallgarth, with the Round Hills Project, involving the local school, residents' groups and Cumbria Wildlife Trust. NK had identified the Vicarage Drive land as being a good fit for a subsequent project, involving Dean Gibson, Vicarage Park and Ghyllside primary schools. The idea would be to connect all stakeholders associated to the land, to plan an environmental strategy that will audit the ecology and manage the site to promote biodiversity and local usage. The residents' group and schools will work in collaboration with Natural Kendal CIC, other volunteer groups such as Kendal Conservation Volunteers and organisations where necessary such as Cumbria Wildlife Trust. The local residents and schools will provide a work force complete the long-term works.

NK is seeking Kendal Town Council permission to develop the project on the site.

It was noted that both the Chair (Cllr Hennessy) and the Vice Chair of the Committee (Cllr Archibald) were also members of NK, though not trustees of the CIC. The extent of their interest was not considered to be sufficient to exclude them from the meeting at this stage.

It was noted that one of the Town Council's aims in acquiring the land at Vicarage Drive was to ensure that the landownership was not a barrier to improving the connecting path between Echo Barn Hill and Vicarage Drive. Mr Hinton assured the Committee that the NK scheme would be fully complementary to this aspiration.

Resolved: that Mr Hinton liaise with Town Council officers to work up a formal proposal for consideration at its next meeting, and that officers brief members of the Council's Management Committee to ensure that any resulting project was properly in line with the Council's wider strategic plans. If the consent of the Full Council was required, this could be considered at its meeting in December.

E34/2023 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved: To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 July 2023 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a true record.

E35/2023 Minute Action Sheet

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

Resolved: To note the report.

E36/2023 Project Update Report

The Development Manager presented a report including an update of ongoing projects and Members were offered the opportunity to ask questions.

The Climate Hub in the former URC hall on Highgate was progressing. A CIC including the owner, SLACC and others was being initiated and negotiations on the terms of a lease were being considered. An application to the Shared Prosperity Fund has been submitted and the outcome was awaited. It was anticipated that the Committee's next meeting would receive sufficient information for them to release the agreed funding (£10,000 pa allocated from the Development Fund for three years). Access to the site from Garth Heads was planned. A site visit for members could be arranged.

Cllr Helme drew the Committee's attention to her registered interest that is not pecuniary in the Outside-In charity, then reported that they were also talking to the owner of the building about a potential relocation of their facility.

Noting that he had had a pecuniary interest in the Solar guide, due to being a property owner installing a scheme, Cllr Archibald drew the Committee's attention to the outcome of discrepancy in the advice offered by planning authority officers about permitted developments in a Conservation Area. He understood this issue had now been resolved and amended advice was now being offered by CAfS to potential solar installers.

The Development Manager reported that a photo opportunity with the Mayor was being planned for a Kirkbie Green, to celebrate a £500 Biodiversity grant.

She reported that she and the Town Clerk had recently met with W&FC officers and the relevant cabinet member to smooth the way to delivering a number of other projects. These included the Rights of Way team, for public footpaths around Vicarage Drive, and the Open Spaces team for other connecting ways.

Cllr Archibald requested a copy of the agreed path priority list.

The Chair reported that the 20mph map of Kendal was close to being finalised but was not yet in the public domain. A policy had now been agreed with W&FC on 20mph across the unitary area, but he was unclear how this funding formula would work specifically in Kendal's circumstances. The roll out map could be shared with members of the committee who wished to see it.

A query was raised about the learning from the various wildflower schemes planted so far. The Project Officer reported that the current supplier methodology was proving expensive and any future projects may utilise plant stock grown by Kendal Conservation Volunteers. There was some discussion about maintenance of the existing sites and it was noted that this was properly a discussion for Kendal in Bloom.

The Development Manager reported that Kendal signage at Oxenholme station now awaited the outcome of a further site meeting with Avanti Trains.

She reported that W&FC colleagues were supportive of a Pump Track for Kendal but not in the location suggested by the Castle. The demand for a site would be added to the list of factors considered in the new Council's asset review.

The Project officer distributed copies of the newly printed leaflets for the Serpentine Wood Nature Trail and Alphabet Trail, which were very warmly received by members. It was suggested that further trails elsewhere could be developed in a similar style, and that the new leaflets should be highlighted in the Council's newsletter.

The Development Manager reported that the concept of the Mintsfeet Sports and Nature Hub would also be a factor considered in W&FC's asset review, with regards to the use of the old Highways Depot. It was suggested that this project could moved along in the meantime by drawing together members who had an active interest to identify the key elements and how they could be delivered. A working group was proposed of Cllrs Cornthwaite, Dunlop and Archibald.

Resolved: To note the report with the following actions:

1. To recirculate copies of the footpath priority list to members.
2. To present the 20mph scheme for Kendal to members of the Full Council, if possible at their next meeting.
3. To invite Cllrs Cornthwaite and Dunlop to join Cllr Archibald in a Task and Finish Group to draw up next stage plans for the Sport and Nature Hub at Mintsfeet.

E37/2023 Environment and Highways Budget 2023/24 and Development Budget 2023/24

The Committee considered a report on the Environment and Highways Budget and the Development Budget for the current year. The Development Manager proposed a number of minor heading amendments, along with proposals to close two Development Fund projects and return the earmarked funding to the Council's General Reserve. Members concurred with the completion of the Solar Made Easy project, and agreed that its remaining earmarked funds should be returned to the General Reserve. The Ivy Screening proposal,

however provoked some discussion on the reasons for the apparent failure of the planting on Longpool and the evident success of the In Bloom floral displays on Windermere Road. It was suggested that the funding remain earmarked until the outcome of the In Bloom Committee's research into sustainable planting is known. At this point the funding could be vired to a new planting scheme, if required, put towards improvements to the existing ivy screening, or returned to the General Fund if neither outcome is feasible.

Resolved: To note the report and confirm the minor changes to nomenclature.

Resolved: To close the Solar Made Easy project and return unspent funds to the Council's General Fund.

Resolved: To retain the earmarked funds for Ivy Screening, pending consideration of subsequent plans for planting from the Kendal in Bloom Committee, and further research into the poor condition of the Longpool ivy planting.

E38/2023 Environment Budget 2024-25

The Committee was asked to consider any forward plans for the next Budget year (2024/25). It was noted that expenditure should be required for further work on footpath improvements, and this should start be in the region of £50,000, so as to ensure an acceleration of the process, in conjunction with Westmorland and Furness Council. Other areas which should be funded in the next budget included the provision of bus shelters (including appropriate seating), improvements to signage on active travel routes, a consideration of accessibility on active travel routes and more wildflowers and bee corridors. It was noted that many of these issues required partnership working with Westmorland and Furness officers and members, and it was hoped that this would be forthcoming.

Resolved: To note these budget aims and reflect them in budget proposals being drawn up for the next meeting.

E39/2023 Pesticides Policy

The Development Manager reported that the Committee, at its last meeting, had considered a paper regarding the use of pesticides. Officers had been tasked with confirming Kendal Town Council's current use of pesticides and drafting a policy statement accordingly to potentially enable a positive dialogue with Westmorland and Furness Council regarding their use of pesticides, which included the use of glyphosate-based herbicides on pavements and in parks.

Additionally, officers had been asked to provide examples of other councils which had ceased to use pesticides for weed control, and alternative methods adopted. Details of their findings were provided within the report.

Officers were recommending approval for the following Kendal Town Council Pesticides Policy statement:

As of 2018 the Town Council stopped using pesticides on empty allotment plots, at the bus station and at various step locations. The Council continued to utilise a small amount for the maintenance of the Cumberland Triangle on Longpool to manage the weeds.

As of August 2023, the Town Council no longer owns pesticides and is developing an alternative weeding solution for the Cumberland Triangle, potentially by planting Thyme densely in the cracks between paving to out-compete weeds.

All Japanese knotweed incidents are usually referred to Westmorland and Furness Council. If Japanese knotweed is discovered on any land owned by Kendal Town Council, we will consult Westmorland and Furness Council and follow their advice to address it appropriately.

Pesticide use by allotment tenants is currently allowed however it is discouraged. Tenancy agreements could be changed to ban pesticide use in the future if led and agreed by the Allotment committee.

Resolved: To approve the Kendal Town Council Pesticides Policy statement as outlined above.

The Committee was further being asked to consider sharing the above statement with Westmorland and Furness Council to initiate discussions regarding best practice.

Resolved: To share the statement above with Westmorland and Furness Council to initiate discussions regarding best practice.

In addition, the Committee was being asked to consider approval of £150 biodiversity funding to plant creeping thyme at the Cumberland Triangle. Members also expressed concern about the state of Somervell Garden, which, it was noted, should be referred to the Kendal in Bloom Committee for attention.

Resolved: To approve £150 biodiversity funding to plant creeping thyme at the Cumberland Triangle.

E39/2023 Dark Skies

The Projects Officer reported that Dark Skies Cumbria, a Friends of the Lake District initiative, had selected Kendal as one of the project's pilot communities. Dark Skies Cumbria aimed to reduce light pollution for the benefit of human health and wellbeing, for nocturnal wildlife, and to save energy, money, and greenhouse gas emissions. This could be achieved by replacing unsuitable lighting with more efficient, targeted lighting of an appropriate colour spectrum.

The Town Council had previously supported the Dark Skies initiative by contributing to new dark skies compliant lighting on Cliff Terrace as well as via an awareness-raising "Switch Off" as part of the 2022 Christmas Lights Switch On event. Features in the Town Council's Newsletter had highlighted the Cliff Terrace lighting and a case study of lighting installed by Belmont residents.

The Council had previously allocated £5,000 towards supporting Dark Skies initiatives in Kendal. The Town Council owned 30 footway lights, many of which required modernisation to become Dark Skies compliant.

An additional £500 had been contributed by Dark Skies Cumbria towards this initiative.

The Committee was asked to consider approval for the following Dark Skies improvements to lights owned by Kendal Town Council:

Supply, installation and associated project management costs to replace five heritage lamp heads at Cliff Brow, Stoney Lane, New Inn Yard, Gulf's Lane and Woolpack Yard with dark sky compliant lighting. Total cost: £5,491 (£5,000 from Dark Skies (biodiversity) budget plus £500 contribution from Dark Skies Cumbria).

Resolved: To approve the Dark Skies improvements to lights owned by Kendal Town Council, namely: Supply, installation and associated project management costs to replace five heritage lamp heads at Cliff Brow, Stoney Lane, New Inn Yard, Gulf's Lane and Woolpack Yard with dark sky compliant lighting, at a total cost of £5,491 (£5,000 from Dark Skies (biodiversity) budget plus £500 contribution from Dark Skies Cumbria).

The Committee was further asked to consider approval for complementary improvements to restore two heritage lighting columns on Stoney Lane and Cliff Brow at a cost of £590 from the Infrastructure Maintenance budget (£2,196 currently available).

Resolved: To approve complementary improvements to restore two heritage lighting columns on Stoney Lane and Cliff Brow at a cost of £590 from the Infrastructure Maintenance budget.

E40/2023 Bowling Fell

The Development Manager reported that Members had previously allocated £7,000 towards improvements at Bowling Fell. Due to Local Government Reorganisation, former South Lakeland District Council officers had been unable to meet and discuss potential improvements when the funding had first been allocated. A meeting had now taken place, and the suggestions below had been supported by Westmorland and Furness Council Officers.

It was recommended that the Committee consider approval for the following improvements, up to the allocated amount of £7,000:

- install handrail on the steep steps that lead up to Bowling Fell from Garth Heads;
- install signage on the accessible step entrances from Garth Heads; and
- install an interpretation panel, in keeping with Kendal Castle interpretation, to describe the heritage of the area.

Members were supportive of the proposals, but it was suggested that a further request for funding should follow in due course to assist in the improvement of access to the top of the motte, around the monument.

Resolved: To approve the following improvements, up to the allocated amount of £7,000, as follows:

- install handrail on the steep steps that lead up to Bowling Fell from Garth Heads;
- install signage on the accessible step entrances from Garth Heads; and
- install an interpretation panel, in keeping with Kendal Castle interpretation, to describe the heritage of the area.

The meeting closed at 8.56pm.