

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED
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Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Highways Committee held on Monday, 15 May 2023, at 7.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal.

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

* Arrived at 8.05 p.m. at the commencement of discussion on Agenda Item No.11 (Oxenholme Signage Proposal). Cllr G Archibald (Vice-Chair) took the Chair from the start of the meeting until discussion on Agenda Item No.12 (Biodiversity Grant Application) commenced, at which point Cllr Hennessy took over the Chair.

In attendance: Democratic Services Assistant (Inge Booth), Projects Officer (Anne-Marie Sanderson), Development and Delivery Manager (Helen Watson-Moriarty) and one member of the public (Chris Rowley from South Lakes Action on Climate Change).

Note – In the absence of Cllr E Hennessy (Chair), Cllr G Archibald, Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

E1/2023 Apologies

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Cllr M Helme.

E2/2023 Declarations of Interest

Cllr C Russell declared an interest in any discussion which might arise in relation to Stricklandgate House by virtue of the fact that he was a Trustee of the Organisation.

E3/2023 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

No issues were considered for exclusion.

E4/2023 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved: To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 March 2023 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a true record.

E5/2023 Minute Action Sheet

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

E52/2022 (Project Update Report)

- Discussion on the matter of the handrail at Fountain Brow had not yet taken place and it was suggested that this item should be carried forward.
- The handrail at Sepulchre Lane had now been painted and this item could be removed from the Action Sheet.
- Fellside Forum did not wish for the Stoney Lane handrail to be painted and so this item could now be removed from the Action Sheet.
- It was reported that the wildflowers at Kendal Green were starting to sprout and that the project had been well received by residents, as well as the collaborative nature of the planting.

E63/2022 (Presentation from Clean River Kent Campaign)

- It was confirmed that a grant had now been paid to the Clean River Kent Campaign.

E65/2022 (Minute Action Sheet)

- The Development and Delivery Manager explained that the question of the possibility of wildflowers at Yeats Close remained outstanding and that she would bring this up with the Chair.

E67/2022 (Project Update Report)

- In response to a query as to whether the money had been released to the Climate Hub, the Development and Delivery Manager advised that this had not been transferred at this point.

Resolved: To update the report along the lines outline above.

Resolved: The Development and Delivery Manager to bring up the matter of the possibility of wildflowers at Yeats Close with the Chair.

Resolved: To receive the report.

E6/2023 Verbal Reports from Outside Bodies

No verbal reports were brought forward for consideration.

E7/2023 Project Update Report

The Committee was presented with an update of ongoing projects and Members were offered the opportunity to ask questions.

The Development and Delivery Manager referred to the development of a Climate Hub and Café at Stricklandgate House, explaining that the money had not yet been released as both parties wished first to finalise the costings associated with the project.

With regard to the Dark Skies Campaign, the Development and Delivery Manager explained that the question as to who would carry out the work of Kendal Town Council's light assets had yet to be resolved prior to a proposal being made to the Committee.

The Development and Delivery Manager referred to the Windermere Road Railings Improvements and advised that a meeting was scheduled to take place on 22 May between Kendal Town Council and Westmorland and Furness officers with regard to the way forward, the work not having been transferred into the new Council as expected. Members were keen for Ward Members to be invited to the meeting.

A suggestion was raised to reach out to Westmorland and Furness with regard to the Bowling Fell Improvement Project.

Also raised was the need for clarification around Stricklandgate House and Waste into Wellbeing's positions in relation to the Climate Hub to be provided at the next meeting of the Committee, following a joint meeting between the Town Council and relevant partners, confirmation having been provided that the funding had not yet been transferred.

The question of why the water fountain refill project did not appear within the list of items was raised. The Development and Delivery Manager confirmed that this was the case because new infrastructure projects would be allocated via CIL funding moving forward.

Resolved: Ward Members to be invited to the meeting regarding Windermere Road Railings on 22 May 2023.

Resolved: Bowling Fell improvements to be addressed and progressed with Westmorland and Furness officers.

Resolved: A proposal on the Dark Skies Campaign to be progressed and brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved: Clarification around Stricklandgate House and Waste into Wellbeing's positions in relation to the Climate Hub to be brought to the next meeting of the Committee, following a joint meeting between the Town Council and relevant partners.

Resolved: To note the report.

E8/2023 Environment and Highways Budget 2023/24 and Development Budget 2023/24

The Committee considered a report on the Environment and Highways budget for the current year. The Development and Delivery Manager explained that whereas the allocated budget for new infrastructure in previous years had shown a figure of £3,500, 2023/24 showed a figure of nil, as funding of these initiatives would now be via the Community Infrastructure Levy. The budget for infrastructure maintenance would continue as before, with an allocation of £3,700.

With regard to the ongoing action plan development budget, the Development and Delivery Manager reported that this had been updated in terms of biodiversity grants so that it was clear what had been spent and/or allocated.

Members welcomed the report.

Resolved: To note the report.

E9/2023 New Infrastructure Proposals

The Town Council's funding approach for infrastructure projects had changed. Previously, an allocation within the Environment and Highways revenue budget had been available to fund new infrastructure projects. The 2023/24 budget reflected that funding new infrastructure initiatives would now be via the Community Infrastructure Levy and had to meet the criteria of that funding, i.e. projects that provided a community benefit above and beyond the statutory duties of local authorities. The 2023-24 budget for new infrastructure was £0. The infrastructure maintenance was £3,700 to maintain the infrastructure assets of Kendal Town Council, i.e. a number of benches, bus stops, bins and street lights as and when improvements and repairs were required.

The Committee was asked to consider a number of projects and to identify which ones it wanted to move forward via a CIL funding request. Each of the initiatives listed within the report had featured on previous project update reports as 'to be considered in next financial year', namely Rosemary Hill Handrails; Undercliff Handrail Improvements; Entry Lane Handrails; three Green finger posts around Abbot Hall park; and Blackhall Road / CAB entrance signage and public realm improvements. The list included a description of each project, and details on the cost and community benefit.

The Development and Delivery Manager, in presenting the report, drew attention to the fact that the water fountain refill project could also be considered as an initiative. She added that, once the Committee had identified which items were to be presented as a CIL funding request, they would then be considered by the Management Committee prior to a decision being made by Full Council.

In response to a query, the Development and Delivery Manager informed Members that the current CIL balance was around £30,000 but would increase when more payments were made and rise to around £150,000. With regard to timescales for submission of proposals, she suggested the sooner the better.

Suggestions regarding improvements required at Abbot Hall park were raised, namely a deficit of benches, particularly in front of the Parish Church and a lack of bins.

The need to ensure that all Members were provided an opportunity to submit proposals was stressed. It was, therefore, proposed that officers write to all Members for project suggestions at a cost of around £2,000 to £3,000 for bids for CIL funding. It was also felt that a set of criteria to demonstrate how proposals would enable residents to use outdoor spaces should be produced, providing examples for projects such as bins, benches and handrail painting, in order to keep expectations realistic. It was, however, raised that Members could, if they so wished, also suggest larger projects, such as water fountains and kick-starting the bird cage improvements.

Further discussion took place in relation to the dangerous gate at the south-east corner of the new playground at Abbot Hall park. This, it was felt, should be raised with Westmorland and Furness due to the health and safety nature of the issue.

The Development and Delivery Manager having asked whether to make formal proposals in relation to those projects outlined within the report and above, Members felt that the cost of the replacement handrails at Entry Lane was too high. They felt that the existing handrails simply needed fixing into the ground and pointed out that the Committee had already agreed to this. The importance of ensuring that all Members were given the opportunity to submit suggestions prior to consideration of submissions was reiterated. Whilst the Committee wished to seek suggestions from all Members, the previously requested projects

as outlined above would remain on the list for consideration and would not have to be re-submitted.

Resolved: Officers to produce a set of criteria for submissions of proposals for CIL funding along the lines outlined above and to write to all Members seeking proposals, the long list of proposals to be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

Resolved: Officers to write to Westmorland and Furness with regard to the dangerous gate at the south-east corner of the new playground at Abbot Hall park.

E10/2023 Infrastructure Maintenance Proposals

The Infrastructure Maintenance budget was £3,700 to maintain the infrastructure assets of Kendal Town Council, i.e. a number of benches, bus stops, bins and street lights as and when improvements and repairs were required.

The Committee was asked to consider the following projects:-

- *Finkle Street Benches Improvements* - Kendal Town Council owned the four benches on Finkle Street which were loose and damaged. It was being proposed to allocate £1,000 to fund the removal and renovation of existing four steel benches and £420 to lift and repair the paving sets in the seating area so that the improved benches could be securely attached. Additional quotes were not required as this was under £1,000 threshold. Permission had been received from Westmorland and Furness Council. These improvements would complement the new planters which would be installed as part of the Britain in Bloom competition.
- *Happy to Chat Signage* - Kendal Town Council had installed Happy to Chat signage on Kendal Town Council benches and had received positive feedback. Previous versions had been created 'in house' and were, therefore, subject to vandalism. It was being proposed to allocate £250 to install robust 'Happy to Chat' signage.

Members welcomed the proposals.

Resolved: To allocate a figure of £1,000 to fund the removal and renovation of existing four steel benches on Finkle Street, as outlined above.

Resolved: To allocate a figure of £420 to lift and repair the paving sets in the seating area on Finkle Street, as outlined above.

Resolved: To allocate a figure of £250 to install robust 'Happy to Chat' signage, as outlined above.

E11/2023 Oxenholme Signage Proposal

The Committee was reminded of signage issues at Oxenholme Station including the lack of information regarding its proximity to Kendal and the lack of visibility regarding how to easily access Kendal.

Funding of £4,014, inclusive of Cllr Rathbone's South Lakeland District Council locality budget contribution, had been identified within the Development Fund to improve signage at the Entrance Tunnel and replace the University of Cumbria signage, if possible. Details of three signage quotes were included within the report, with Quote 1 for tunnel panels £119 each (x10) and UoC replacement £24 each (x10) being the recommended option based on costs, experience and testimonials.

Cllr Rathbone would be invited to comment on draft tunnel designs as part of the approval process.

The Committee was being asked which Members should be involved in the sign off process and Cllrs E Hennessy and C Russell indicated an interest in this.

In response to a query, the Development and Delivery Manager explained that the signage design would be based on the current Visit Kendal branding and that the quote was not for new signs but for vinyl wraps to cover the old signage.

Resolved: To approve contractor choice as outlined above and progress tunnel improvements as phase one of Oxenholme Signage improvements.

Resolved: Cllrs E Hennessy and C Russell to be involved in the sign off process.

Note – Cllr E Hennessy (Chair), having arrived at the meeting, took over the Chair.

E12/2023 Biodiversity Grant Application

It was reported that a Biodiversity Grant application had been received from the Kirkbie Green Community Group to improve the green spaces at either end of the Kirkbie Green residential area (40 homes) by increasing the biodiversity and, therefore, wildlife. The group planned to reduce grass cutting and plant wildflowers. They had already pruned shrubbery, reduced dog fouling, and enhanced current signage.

The group would need relevant permissions from Westmorland and Furness Council and Kendal Town Council officers were recommending that this informed the terms of the conditions of funding. The Group had a registered bank account, the details of which had been shared with the Clerk. The other relevant paperwork had been received. The group was also applying for a Kendal in Bloom grant for £500. Members were asked to consider awarding £500 to the group and were advised that £4,250 remained in the Biodiversity Grant budget.

In response to a query, the Development and Delivery Manager explained that although applications had not before been made to both the Environment and Highways Committee and the Kendal in Bloom Committee, she saw no problem with this. Members were keen to support the Group, provided that it could demonstrate that native plants would be used. Members suggested that, for the purpose of transparency, there was a need for an appropriate mechanism through which groups could apply to two separate committees for grants. The need to ensure that the relevant Ward Members were aware of the initiative and application for grants was stressed.

Resolved: To approve the application from the Kirkbie Green Community Group for a grant of £500 to improve the green spaces at either end of the residential area, subject to demonstration that native plants will be used.

Resolved: Officers to contact Ward Councillors in relation to the initiative and progress transfer of the grant from the Environment and Highways Committee.

Resolved: Officers to consider an appropriate and transparent mechanism through which applications for grant funding can be made to more than one Town Council committee.

E13/2023 Biodiversity Policy

The Committee was asked to consider a Biodiversity Policy which had been developed to reflect awareness of biodiversity challenges and the Council's role in meeting those challenges.

Members welcomed the Policy and it was suggested that, once it had been adopted by Full Council, a press release should be produced in order to make residents aware of the fact that the document would be taken into consideration in relation to all future decisions. In response to a suggestion to make mention of 'No Mow May' within the document, attention was drawn to the fact this was a specific action which should not form part of the document. However, it was pointed out that the Policy demonstrated a commitment by the Council to support such biodiversity initiatives. Members further sought for inclusion on all future agendas of a report from Natural Kendal.

Resolved: To recommend the Biodiversity Policy for adoption by Full Council.

Resolved: To put out a press release once the Policy is adopted by Full Council.

E14/2023 Footpath Improvements

It was reported that, following the footpath audit presented to the Environment and Highways Committee on 12 September 2022, a prioritisation criteria had been agreed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. The prioritisation criteria used a numerical scoring system based on each path's proximity to schools, biodiversity improvement potential, and accessibility improvements required, resulting in a score (out of 15) for each path which would aid prioritisation. The full data was provided as an appendix to the agenda pack, and summarised within the report, as set out below:-

Kirkbarrow

- Echo Barn Hill to the Adventure / Vicarage Drive to the Adventure: score 12 (confirms previous designation as priority path)
- Vicarage Drive to Collinfield Lane: score 11 (confirms previous designation as priority path)

Hallgarth

- Kendal Green to High Mead: score 12
- Sparrowmire Lane to Prickley Fell (northern section): score 11

Sandylands

- Eastgate – Sandgate – Westgate: score 13
- Bowland Drive – Castle Park School: score 10 (biodiversity potential outweighs accessibility need)
- Sedbergh Drive – Bowland Drive: score 10 (biodiversity potential outweighs accessibility need)

Heron Hill, Rinkfield, Kendal Parks

- Canal Path to Dunmail Drive (N): score 13

Collinfield

- Michaelson Rd – Stainbank Rd: score 12
- Michaelson Rd – Collinfield Lane: score 11

The proposals contained within the report were that officers continued partnership working with Westmorland and Furness officers to facilitate the transfer of Town Council funds to progress and project manage improvements at paths previously identified as priority paths (Kirkbarrow paths as detailed above, plus Vicarage Drive to Vicar's Garth). In addition, the Committee was being asked to confirm the priority path selection to assist in these discussions.

Members thanked those officers involved for their work, however, concerns were raised with regard to the score weighting in relation to biodiversity and attention drawn to the importance of those footpaths used by children to get to school. Members were unclear as to which footpaths were being recommended for taking forward and were anxious to make progress. It was felt that the scoring in relation to biodiversity should be revisited and adjusted, and details as to what progress had already been made provided. In response to a suggestion for a database accessible by all Members showing details on progress on improvements to footpaths, the Development and Delivery Manager explained that this was not yet possible as improvement work had not yet commenced on any paths. Attention was drawn to the potential for putting a bid in to Westmorland and Furness for funding and it was pointed out that a prioritised list would assist in this aspiration. It was suggested that a reduction in the biodiversity weighting from 1 to 5 down to 1 to 3 should be used and that a list of six to eight priority paths should be brought back before the Committee so that these could be concentrated on over the next few years. It was further suggested that one path in each ward might be chosen so that residents could see their aspirations come into fruition.

During discussion, the Development and Delivery Manager drew attention to a forthcoming meeting with officers from Westmorland and Furness with regard to the Echo Barn Hill to the Adventure path. She undertook to bring forward a proposal in this regard to the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved: Officers to reduce the biodiversity weighting as outlined above and a list of the top six to eight priority paths to be brought forward for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved: Officers to develop an Adventure proposal for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

E15/2023 Citizens' Jury Recommendation Review

It was reported that Kendal Town Council had commissioned and co-ordinated Kendal's Climate Change Citizens' Jury, the first Citizens' Jury on a town level in the UK.

The Jury had created 27 recommendations based on presentations from experts to answer the question 'What should Kendal do about Climate Change?' The Town Council's progress against the recommendations was summarised within the report. The Town Council and multiple partners had committed to delivering the recommendations to honour the process and support Kendal Town Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in 2019. The Town Council had progressed many recommendations and had refocussed its budget and resources accordingly, recruiting an additional member of staff to support delivery.

The Committee was asked to consider progress on recommendations, as outlined within the report, and to establish a working group to support focused recommendation actions which were currently in progress.

Members accepted the need to establish a working group which, it was felt, should review the recommendations in relation to how close they came to assisting Kendal in achieving the target of becoming net zero by 2030. The Group, it was felt, should review and inform the next focus areas based on ability to action, affordability and influence. It was also felt that where it was believed that a recommendation could not be implemented, then this should be stated, together with justification for not doing so. It was further suggested that the Group might consider inviting the Citizens' Jury instigators, Becki Willis and Mike Berners Lee, to endorse direction at subsequent meetings and, in addition, the new Westmorland and Furness Locality Board Chair and Vice-Chair.

Resolved: To establish a working group of Members of the Committee, namely Cllrs S Blunden, E Hennessy, C Russell and K Simpson, to review the recommendations of the Citizens' Jury, as outlined above, also inviting the Citizens' Jury instigators and Chair and Vice-Chair of the Westmorland and Furness Locality Board to a subsequent meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.