

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED
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Minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on Monday, 5 September 2022, at 7.35 p.m., in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal.

Cllr A Blackman	Present	Cllr E Hennessy	Present
Cllr S Coleman (Chair)	Present	Cllr S Long	Apologies
Cllr J Dunlop	Present	Cllr D Rathbone	Present
Cllr D Evans	Present	Cllr C Russell	Present
Cllr A Finch	Apologies	Cllr G Tirvengadam (Vice Chair)	Apologies
Cllr H Ladhams	Present		

Also present: Cllr G Archibald acting as substitute for Cllr A Finch.

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

M26/2022 Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted and accepted from Councillors A Finch, S Long and G Tirvengadam.

M27/2022 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were raised.

M28/2022 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

The Committee considered whether to exclude the press and the public from any items related to a commercially confidential matter.

Resolved: It be noted that these appear later on the agenda and will be dealt with at that point.

M29/2022 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

A Member expressed disappointment with regard to Minute No.M23/2022 (Employment and Staffing Matters) which, it was felt, bore little relevance to what was discussed at the meeting, and raised concern that the Council was in danger of sugar coating and purging diversity. The Member further raised the fact that he could not recollect discussion or voting taking place with regard to Resolution (2)(b).

Whilst the need for the minutes to better reflect discussion leading to a different resolution to that recommended within the original report was acknowledged, the majority of Members recalled discussion and voting in relation to Resolution (2)(b).

It was, therefore, suggested for an additional paragraph to be inserted between paragraphs one and two of the preamble, to read, "However, there were profound concerns expressed which, it was felt, outweighed the strength of the proposed recommendations."

Resolved: Subject to inclusion of the amendment raised above, to receive and accept the minutes of the previous meeting of the Management Committee held on 4 July 2022 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them as a true record.

M30/2022 Flood Relief Scheme Working Group

Members were asked to consider a request from the Chair of the Planning Committee that its Flood Relief Scheme Working Group be authorised to organise a familiarisation trip to Pilkingtons in St. Helen's, where the glass screens for the Flood Scheme were being built. The Group was proposing to hire a self-drive mini bus to visit the factory on 5 October. The bus for a party of 12 would cost in the region of £250 including fuel and it was being suggested that this may come from the "Other Expenses" budget line in the Management Budget.

The need to ensure that the trip was of benefit to residents was stressed. The importance of the Council being able to liaise with Pilkingtons and strengthen relationships with the Company and the outcome of being able to provide clear feedback to the residents and increase public awareness was raised.

The Chair asked the Cllr D Rathbone to liaise with the Town Clerk with regard to an appropriate press release.

Resolved:

(1) to authorise the Flood Relief Scheme Working Group to organise a familiarisation trip to Pilkingtons in St. Helens, the cost of £250 come from the "Other Expenses" budget line in the Management Budget; and

(2) Cllr D Rathbone to liaise with the town Clerk with regard to an appropriate press release.

M31/2022 Local Government Reorganisation Working Group

A number of discrepancies were raised in relation to attendance at the meeting, namely:-

- Cllr A Blackman had not been present at the meeting, although a Member of the Group.
- Cllr G Archibald had not been present at the meeting, not being a Member of the Group.
- Cllr D Rathbone, although not shown in the list at all, had not been present having submitted his apologies.

A question was raised with regard to the next steps, and the Chair explained that a better vision of what Kendal Town Council should be doing was required. This would also feed into Committee Structures and Staffing. Although this fact was acknowledged, the swift need for an appropriate process by which the Town Council could formulate this vision was raised.

Attention was drawn to Item No.10 on the Agenda with regard to a Council Forward Plan and Structure which would address this matter.

Resolved: To receive the notes of the meeting of the Local Government Reorganisation Working Group held on 5 July 2022.

M32/2022 Office Accommodation

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update on the refurbishment of Kendal Town Hall and South Lakeland House. Town Council staff had now moved into the new offices in the Kendal Business Hub. However, there was as yet no telephone connection, officers were currently unable to print across the network, and there were problems regarding toilet and kitchen arrangements and drainage issues. Despite this, staff were enjoying the air conditioning and a smart and clean space and the Town Clerk was pleased to inform the Committee that telephone and fibre connections should be installed by the end of this week.

The Town Clerk informed Members that although a cleaner had been going to be provided for the office, this was now not the case. This, he felt, was somewhat strange in view of the fact that a cleaner cleaned the outer atrium on a daily basis. He noted though that no space had been provided within the office for cleaning materials. He further drew attention to the fact that, although promised, Town Council staff had not been allowed access through the District Council offices into the Town Hall due to GDP Regulations. This would prove to be unpleasant during winter. He pointed out that many of these decisions had been imposed without negotiation and had also been officer led.

The Town Clerk referred to communication difficulties around previous and current discussions, misunderstandings and disagreements, as a result of people being unable to recall what had been said and officers from both authorities having left their employment. He expressed his disappointment in seemingly being unable to make headway with colleagues at South Lakeland District Council.

A query having been raised as to whether Members could help to achieve a satisfactory result, the Town Clerk said that some kind of intervention by Members in an attempt for an amicable resolution would be gratefully received. The Chair suggested, therefore, that the Town Clerk should draw up an appropriate email to him so that he could take up the matter with the District Council.

Resolved:

- (1) to note the verbal update; and
- (2) the Town Clerk to draw up an appropriate email to the Chair of the Management Committee so that he can take up the matter with South Lakeland District Council.

M33/2022 Report on the Work Programme

The Town Clerk presented the current Work Programme to enable the Committee to consider progress made across the various actions in which the Council was involved.

Management Committee

Council Plan and Governance - still marked as red, were due to be discussed later on in the Agenda.

Staffing - remained under review.

IT Laptops – Staff all now had up-to-date laptops. The Town Clerk, however, explained that the Council's current Adobe software required to pack committee agendas, was no longer supported, and that a subscription model was now required, which would be at a cost of £280 from the IT Budget.

Resolved: To approve purchase of the Adobe subscription model, at a cost of £280 from the IT Budget.

IT Telephony – This remained an issue, and the Town Clerk explained the need to ensure that all staff were allocated with telephones and numbers. He intended to find a solution by the end of the month.

Property Acquisitions of Land – The Town Clerk hoped that this would be resolved by the end of September. It was suggested that discussion on this matter should take place in Part Two of the meeting.

Resolved: To continue discussion on this matter following exclusion of the press and public.

Environment and Highways

The Town Clerk informed Members under this heading, prior to the meeting of the Environment and Highways Committee scheduled to be held on 12 September 2022, of an opportunity to seek funding from the Centre for Sustainable Energy towards the costs of innovative affordable warmth initiatives. Cllr E Hennessy, Chair of the Environment and Highways Committee, asked for the item to be included within the agenda pack for the next meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) to accede to the request to submit an expression of interest to the Centre for Sustainable Energy Affordability Fund; and
- (2) the item be brought forward for consideration at the next meeting of the Environment and Highways Committee.

Mayoralty and Arts

Cllr A Blackman, under this heading, informed the Committee about gifts given to the Mayor during his recent visit to Rinteln, a large wooden plaque depicting the 30 year anniversary of the twinning and a signed certificate to re-affirm the twinning. He referred to the forthcoming visit to Kendal by representatives from Rinteln and its Mayor and the need to obtain suitable gifts in return. Cllr Blackman provided details on arrangements for the visit, suggesting that the Kendal's gifts be presented during the welcome reception. He proposed to the committee that, inspired by the Platinum Jubilee stone on Aynam Road, a piece of local stone inscribed with the two town's crests and commemorating the 30 years' twinning, be commissioned, at a cost of approximately £200.

Resolved: To approve the commissioning of a piece of local stone, as described above, at a cost of approximately £200.

Cllr Blackman further informed Members that he had been in contact with the German Consulate in Edinburgh which had offered a grant of up to £750 which would be put towards a gazebo, to include information about the Consulate on the side. He had also invited a

representative of the Consulate to attend on one of the days of the visit by Rinteln, and questioned protocols for the occasion. The Town Clerk undertook to ensure that this was suitably addressed. He further undertook to ensure that an appropriate re-affirmation certificate was produced, in consultation with the Mayor. Cllr Blackman asked that Town Council Members be requested to support the weekend by attending both the reception and the fish and chip supper on the Saturday evening. The Town Clerk stressed the need to ensure that everything was well co-ordinated and the Mayor drew attention to the need for formality as experienced by him in Rinteln. The Town Clerk, therefore, suggested that himself, Cllrs Rathbone and Blackman and the Events Officer meet to draw up a plan.

Members thanked Cllr Blackman and his team for their work.

Resolved:

- (1) the Town Clerk to look into protocols;
- (2) the Town Clerk to make arrangements for the production of an appropriate re-affirmation certificate;
- (3) the Town Clerk to write to all Members seeking support for the weekend by attending both the reception and the fish and chip supper; and
- (4) the Town Clerk to arrange a meeting for himself, Cllrs Rathbone and Blackman and the Events Officer to draw up plans for the visit.

Resolved: To note the contents of the report on the Work Programme.

M34/2022 Budget 2022-23

The Committee considered a report on the current year spend to July 2022, for the Committee's area of budget. He drew attention to projected overspend on the staffing budget, also referring to the fact that the outcome of the pay deal was not yet known.

Concern was raised with regard to the IT Budget and additions to the list and the Town Clerk was asked if he was confident that there would not be too much overspend on this Budget. The Town Clerk suggested a figure of around £2,300.

Resolved: To note the report.

M35/2022 Council Plan and Structure

Members were asked to give consideration to the Council's position and necessary actions to develop a Forward Plan and any implications for the structure of the Council and its committees.

The Town Clerk raised the importance the Town Council contributing to the leadership of the Town. He drew attention to the current social challenges and pointed out that the future was not going to become easier for anyone. The Chair drew attention to the need for the Council to have a vision setting out its purpose, with an appropriate structure for delivery behind it. Members acknowledged the work which had been carried out by the Environment and Highways Committee in terms of the Council's environmental agenda, however, drew attention to the need for the Council to address poverty and hardship, acting as a voice for the vulnerable to influence others. It was felt that consideration needed to be given to how the Council's plans evolved to address the current situation. It was felt that the plans needed to be embedded in everything that the Council did and that the Council's direction of travel and values needed to be demonstrated therein.

The Chair pointed out that the Liberal Democrat Group being the largest on the Council needed to ensure that all of its Members were supportive of what it wanted to achieve as a group and then work together with the Town Clerk to look at the Council's committee structure and then staff structure to see what was required to deliver the vision. He suggested that it was up to himself to lead in this process and acknowledged that this would not be a quick process.

Attention was drawn to the fact that there were things that could be done in the short term, without a cost, for example making warm facilities available, applying for grants, etc., as well as active encouragement. The potential lack of staff resources to carry out this extra work was acknowledged, however, it was pointed out that the Town Council could at least approach the District Council to enquire what was being done in this regard. In addition, in order to demonstrate that the Town Council was doing something, it was suggested that opportunities should be actively sought and publicised.

A Member having raised the fact that there was likely to be an increase in the Town Council's rent of offices in South Lakeland House, the Town Clerk informed Members that he was currently in discussion with the District Council in this regard; it was unlikely to change during this budget period. He further informed Members that the Council already carried out work in relation to warm homes and travel and pointed out the need to promote what already existed, also referring to the need for officers to finesse Town Council communication strategy.

It was suggested that this type of information should be included within the next edition of the Newsletter, including information, for example, of contact details for warm spaces such as the District Council building. Attention was also drawn to Stricklandgate House and the need to make the third sector in Kendal more vibrant.

Resolved: To note the actions to date and await further detail as political discussions unfolded.

M36/2022 Items for the Next Newsletter

The Town Clerk sought items for inclusion within the next edition of the Council's Newsletter which was due out at the end of October 2022. A number of items were suggested. Cllr E Hennessy suggested that space may be required for an item on the 20mph speed limit but that the Environment and Highways Committee may submit this independently.

Resolved: To make arrangements for the following items to be included within the next edition of the Council's Newsletter:-

- (1) a focus on services available to help during this cost of living crisis;
- (2) 20mph speed limit;
- (3) an article on the Natural Kendal initiative and what is being done to boost nature; and
- (4) Christmas Lights Switch on/off.

Part Two

The next items were considered following a resolution to exclude the Press and Public, due to the confidential or commercial sensitivity.

M37/2022 Report on the Work Programme

Further to Minute M33/2022 above, the Town Clerk provided a detailed verbal update on property matters and the acquisition of strategic land, advising Members that it was hoped to resolve this matter in due course.

Resolved: To note the verbal update.

M38/2022 Employment and Staffing Matters

Further to M23/2022, the Committee gave consideration to a report from the Town Clerk on the changes to the Staffing Structure implemented since the last meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed the changes of Admin Services Assistant to Events Officer and Mayor's Attendant to Heritage Officer. He informed the Committee that the change from Mayor's Attendant to Heritage Officer had been cost neutral. There had, however, been a cost in relation to the change of Admin Services Officer to Events Officer, details of which the Town Clerk provided. He asked the Committee to note the changes and further asked Members to consider backdating the Event Officer's award to 1 April 2022. A member sought clarification on the calculations of the financial impact, and the Clerk agreed to share the details before the next meeting.

Members acknowledged the fact that the postholder had, in fact, been carrying out this role for some time.

Resolved:

- (1) to note the report; and
- (2) the Event Officer's award be backdated to 1 April 2022.

The meeting closed at 9.20 p.m.