

Kendal Town Council

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



Minutes of a meeting of the Management Committee held on Monday, 8 January 2024, at 7.30 p.m., in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal.

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

Also present: Cllr S Blunden was also in attendance at the meeting, however, whilst taking part in debate, did not vote on any of the items, as not a Member of the Committee. In addition, one member of the public was present for part of the meeting.

Officers in attendance: Chris Bagshaw (Town Clerk) and Inge Booth (Democratic Services Assistant).

M50/2023 Apologies

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Cllr A Finch.

M51/2023 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were raised under this item.

M52/2023 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

There were no excluded items on the agenda.

M53/2023 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved: To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Management Committee held on 6 November 2023 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them as a true record.

M54/2023 Minute Action Sheet

Members considered a report on actions taken by officers on resolutions or recommendations made at previous meetings. The Town Clerk explained that there remained a number of outstanding actions as a result of the current staffing situation. He hoped that the next edition of the Newsletter would be out by end February/early March.

Attention was drawn to the need to remove from the sheet items which had already been actioned, for example Item 32 (Council Open Space Land Acquisitions). With reference to Item 31 (Community Governance Review), the need to diarise when action was required was stressed. With this in mind, it was suggested that a working group of the Planning Committee should be established in order to consider proposals for new boundaries and ward sizes, with some new developments having had a massive impact on figures; this working group could be opened up to any Member who might wish to

join. In addition, referring to Item 3 (Council Activity Report) and actions to improve the Council's Website, the Town Clerk explained that this had been put on hold, also as a result of the current staffing situation. It was, therefore, suggested that a working group of the Management Committee should be established in order to find out what Members hoped to see, and the Town Clerk further suggested that Members might draw his attention to good examples.

Resolved: To remove those items which have been actioned from the report.

Resolved: To diarise when actions are required in relation to Item 31 (Community Governance Review) and to request the Planning Committee to set up a working group, open to all Members who wish to take part, to consider proposals for new boundaries and ward sizes.

Resolved: With reference to Item 3 (Council Activity Report) and actions to improve the Council's Website, to establish a working group of the Management Committee to find out what Members hope to see, with any good examples to be drawn to the attention of the Town Clerk.

Resolved: To note the report.

M55/2023 Council Activity Report

The Town Clerk presented a report on progress made across the various actions the Council was involved in. He explained that the document was a work in progress and that he intended to carry out more work in its development in order to make clear what work was being carried out in relation to each area of the Council Plan.

Attention was drawn to the potential for the Culture and Communities Committee to take on the lead role in relation to "Thriving Towns" which, it was felt, was at the heart of the work carried out by that Committee. In addition, the potential for the improved Website to enable users to click through items and see the story of work being carried out in each area was suggested.

The Chair thanked the Town Clerk for his work to date in this area and looked forward to being able to start to measure how the aspirations of the Council Plan were being achieved.

Resolved: To note the report.

M56/2023 Budget 2023-24

The Committee reviewed the expenditure against budget in the current year, with the Town Clerk advising that the Council was doing well in meeting its predictions. He referred to slight changes in staffing arrangements which meant that the predictions on staff gross pay were down. In addition, he drew attention to the Newsletter having missed its deadline and to the potential for the premises rent review to result in a rebate. He also explained that he was currently seeking clarification from Westmorland and Furness Council with regard to footway lighting which may have implications on the budget.

The Town Clerk responded to a number of queries raised by Members, providing reasons as to why money had not yet been spent on large projects, the reason for which in some cases was due to the current staffing situation and in others due to colleagues at Westmorland and Furness Council currently being unable to deliver in some areas. The potential for the Council running the risk of underspending the budget was stressed and it was suggested that this issue should be examined by the Audit Committee, with the Chair of that Committee working together with the Town Clerk prior to its next meeting. The Town Clerk explained that most of the relevant projects were already held in reserves where the money would remain until spent or until the Council decided otherwise. Members expressed support for the proposal for the Audit Committee to examine reserves. In addition, it was suggested that where money remained unspent in 2024/25, then Council should be asked to give

consideration to the matter.

Resolved: The Audit Committee be requested to examine reserves at its next meeting, with the Chair of that Committee to meet with the Town Clerk in the meantime.

Resolved: To note the report.

M57/2023 Budget 2024-25

The Town Clerk presented the report which had been included on the agenda. The Council had agreed a Draft Budget at its meeting in December. This could now be set alongside the Council Tax Base figure published on 22 December to calculate the actual Band D rates from which bills were calculated.

The agreed budget was shown, as set out below, along with a table showing how the Council Tax base of 10933.36 affected bills (also shown below). The previous year's (2023-24) Tax base had been 10785.7 (10730.14 in 2022-23).

Because the Council Tax Base had grown, a 9 per cent increase in the Council Tax produced a 10.5 per cent increase in Precepted income.

DRAFT Revenue Budget 2024-2025

Committee	Item	23-24 Budget	Prob spend	From other sources	24-25	Change
Allotments	Water	1,800	1,800		1,950	8%
	Rent	950	1,040		1,050	11%
	Pest Control	3,000	3,000		3,200	7%
	Maintenance	8,800	8,800		9,000	2%
Bloom	Displays	26,500	26,500		30,000	13%
	Projects and Grants	8,500	6,000		6,000	-29%
Culture & Community	Community Grants	43,000	43,000		43,000	0%
	Festival Grants	25,000	25,000		23,000	-8%
	Christmas Lighting	18,000	18,000		30,000	67%
	Lights infrastructure	3,000	4,726		5,000	6%
	Electricity	850	850		1,100	29%
	Switch on	4,500	8,470		10,000	18%
	Bunting	1,250	1,100		1,500	20%
	Coronation	10,000	6,032		-	-100%
	Cultural initiatives	-	-		5,000	

Committee	Item	23-24 Budget	Prob spend	From other sources	24-25	Change
Environment	Infrastructure Maintenance	3,700	3,700		5,000	-41%
	Footway lighting	4,200	4,200		5,000	19%
	Waste Bin servicing	3,000	2,650		3,250	8%
	Project Birdcage	-	-	5,000		
	Project Biodiversity Grants	-	-	-	10,000	
	Project Wildflower planting				6,400	
	Footpath enhancements	-	-	50,000		
	Project Easy Travel	-	-	50,000		
	Project Pumprack	-	-	50,000		
Management	Premises Rent and services	16,872	16,872		17,000	1%
	Premises Equipment	2,678	2,678		2,778	4%
	Premises Alarms	1,850	1,850		1,850	0%
	Premises PPE	100	100		1,000	900%
	IT Support	6,854	6,854		7,050	3%
	IT Website	1,250	1,250		1,500	20%
	IT Equipment/software	5,879	5,879		7,400	26%
	IT other	17	605		750	137%
	Newsletter	12,500	12,500		13,000	4%
	insurance	5,386	5,387		5,400	0%
	HR	2,930	4,000		4,500	13%
	Audit	2,800	2,800		3,800	36%
	Vouchers and Payroll	884	720		720	-19%
	Other	530	100		100	-81%
	Printing & Stationery	2,100	2,100		2,100	0%
	Equipment	1,000	1,000		1,000	0%
	Photocopier	1,398	1,398		1,500	7%
	General inc repairs	2,902	500		500	-83%
	Subscriptions	3,000	2,896		3,000	0%
	Vehicle fuel	1,250	1,000		1,200	-4%
	Vehicle Repairs	2,500	2,100		2,600	4%
	Insurance/tax/MOT	1,300	1,300		1,300	0%
	Staffing	278,000	280,000		310,700	12%

Committee	Item	23-24 Budget	Prob spend	From other sources	24-25	Change
	Staffing Training	2,000	2,000		3,000	50%
	Elections Ward	-	-		-	
	Elections Fund	30,000	30,000		10,000	-67%
	Futures Manager	10,000	10,000		10,800	8%
	Futures Vision	5,500	5,500		5,000	-9%
	Kendal Vision support	-	-	30,000		
	Diversity	150	150			0%
Mayoralty & Heritage	Mayoral Allowance	5,524	5,000		5,000	-9%
	Mayoral Travel	800	500		800	0%
	Mayor Making	2,200	2,200		2,500	14%
	Torchlight	1,730	1,730		2,000	16%
	Remembrance	300	300		350	17%
	Pictures and others	100	100		250	150%
	Functions	3,170	3,170		4,000	26%
	Twinning	1,500	1,500		1,500	0%
	Exhibition	1,000	1,000		1,000	0%
	Museum	2,000	2,000		2,000	0%
	Visit Kendal	16,600				
	Kirkland Banners		1,500		1,600	7%
	VK leaflets		8,280		9,000	9%
	VK Website		2,500		3,000	20%
	VK Content Coordinator		6,770		7,250	7%
Planning	Flood	20,000	20,000		20,000	0%
	Neighbourhood Planning	-	-		2,500	
	Training	-	-		2,500	
Total		623,624	622,807	185,000	684,248	9.7%
Income	W&F Support Grant	33,046			33,000	
	Allotment Rents	23,500			24,200	
	23/24 Precept	567,997		Proposed precept	627,637	10.5%
	Revenue total	624,543			684,837	

How this affects Council Tax Payers in Kendal civil parish

Numbers refer to the parish element of Council Tax bills.

Council Tax Band	Council Tax in 22-23	Proposed Council Tax 23-24	Percentage increase	Equivalent in pence per week
Band A	35.11	38.27	9.0%	6
Band B	40.96	44.65	9.0%	7
Band C	46.81	51.03	9.0%	8
Band D	52.66	57.41	9.0%	9
Band E	64.36	70.16	9.0%	11
Band F	70.22	76.54	9.0%	12

The Town Clerk referred to the increase in the Council Tax base from 10730 to 10785 resulting in a 9 per cent increase in the Council Tax producing a 10.5 per cent increase in Precepted income. He pointed out that there was an opportunity for larger organisations to increase this figure.

Discussion took place during which the Town Clerk confirmed that the staffing budget had been examined in relation to staffing costs as a result of the proposed new structure (see Minute No.M62/2023 below), and that this was likely to be in the region of £16,000 light should the full potential of the review be realised. Members acknowledged that an increase of 10.5 per cent would gain an extra £5,000 and it was suggested, therefore, that the Budget Working Group to look into this potential option. The Town Clerk pointed out that to match the maximum amount proposed by the staffing restructure, there would be a need for a 12.5 per cent increase in Council Tax.

Resolved: The Budget Working Group to reconsider the budget in the light of the proposed staffing changes prior to consideration by Council on 5 February 2024 of the 2024/25 Budget.

M58/2023 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Town Clerk reported that Kendal Town Council received Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments from the local Planning Authority (now Westmorland and Furness Council). The original South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) advice note appended to the report explained where the money came from and what it could be spent on. Also appended to the report were the Criteria set by Kendal Town Council in 2017 for considering CIL allocations.

At the Council's budget meeting in December, it had been noted that some spending proposals could not be met from revenue (i.e. Council Tax) funding, and should be met from elsewhere. The only unallocated reserves currently available were from the Community Infrastructure Levy. The next CIL receipt would be in April 2024.

The Committee was being asked to match the proposed expenditure/allocation to the available income, reducing the allocation to projects, where appropriate, to balance the budget.

The following details were included within the report:

CIL Receipts to date

£246,948.91

CIL Allocations and Expenditure to date

A breakdown of expenditure/allocation is appended to this report.

£76,637

Available CIL for Current Allocation

£170,311.91

Proposals from Current Budget

Project	Value	Current Council Plan alignment
Kendal Vision support	£30,000	Priority 2 and 3
Project Birdcage	£5,000	Priority 2
Project Footpath improvements	£50,000	Priority 1 and 5
Project Easy Travel	£50,000	Priority 1 and 5
Project Pumptrack	£50,000	Priority 4 and 5
Total	£185,000	

In addition to these Budget proposals, the September Committee meeting had deferred consideration of £55,750 worth of projects, because there had been at that time insufficient information, or the projects could be funded from elsewhere. It was likely that some of these proposals may return in the future with sufficient information for the Committee to make further allocations of CIL, should further funding become available.

Current estimates for footpath renovation at Mintsfeet were around £90,000 for around 620 linear metres of path.

Details of expenditure to date were also provided within the report.

Discussion took place on the proposed allocation of £50,000 for the Pumptrack project. It was noted that this project was unlikely to be realised in either this year or the next, as it required planning, costing, etc. It was, therefore, suggested that this proposal could be reduced to £35,000 in order to meet the £170,000 amount of CIL funding currently available.

Discussion turned to the birdcage on Finkle Street and the importance of addressing this eyesore within the Town. It was felt that a cross-committee working group dedicated to this task was required, to liaise with Westmorland and Furness Council and other relevant organisations, and to report back to the Management Committee. Attention was drawn to the fact that Kendal BID were interested in becoming involved. Attention was further drawn to a number of other areas of the Town which required improvements. Further raised was the need to open up membership of the working group to all Members of the Council.

Resolved: To approve the proposals for CIL funding as set out within the report, subject to a reduction in the amount proposed for the Pumptrack project from £50,000 to £35,000, with a mind to increase this figure in the future should more CIL funding become available.

Resolved: To email all Members of the Council inviting them to form part of a working group, including involvement from Westmorland and Furness Council and other relevant organisations, to address the issue of the birdcage on Finkle Street and other areas requiring improvements within the Town.

M59/2023 Civility and Respect

Members were presented with the Civility and Respect December 2023 Newsletter. In addition, the Town Clerk reported that a number of policies and procedures had now been developed in order to provide guidance on relationships between councillors and staff and between councillors themselves. These would require formal adoption in due course.

Attention was drawn to a self-audit document in relation to Civility and Respect which had been too lengthy to complete at a formal Council meeting and for the need to this to be filled in. It was suggested, therefore, that this document be brought before the Audit Committee in order for that group to consider a gap analysis, although it was also acknowledged that this may take time due to current staffing shortages.

Resolved: To bring the Civility and Respect self-audit document to a future meeting of the Audit Committee.

Resolved: To receive the Civility and Respect December 2023 Newsletter.

M60/2023 Community Emergency Plan Coordinator

The Town Clerk presented a report informing Members that, for several years prior to 2022, the Town Council had supported the work of Kendal Community Emergency Plan Group. This group was a product of the challenges presented by severe flooding in 2015, which had created severe stresses on community resilience, particularly across the flooded and near-flooded areas of the Town.

The Town Council had funded a post of plan coordinator, and had acted as fund-holder and de facto line management. The role had proved particularly effective during the Covid period. However, in the post-Covid period, the Town Council had relinquished its role as fund-holder, establishing the Planning Group as a standalone community organisation, the existing coordinator had stood down, and central Government had become concerned that some of the lessons learned after 2015 were in danger of being lost to communities.

As a result, Cumbria County Council had established Cumbria innovative Flood Resilience (CiFR), with support from Natural England and the Environment Agency. This project was now overseen by Cumbria Community Foundation, and provided funding for communities like Kendal to develop community flood response measures. Community flood response plans meshed below the statutory 'blue-light' and principal authority plans to ensure the whole community was resilient in the challenge of extreme flood events. The fund would pay up to £12,500 per annum for at least three years for the Council to develop an effective and innovative community emergency response mechanism. Subsequent funding would probably need to come from the Town Council, though support may also be available from the principal authority.

The Town Council would also 'get back' a significant portion of the last funding it had supplied to Kendal Community Emergency Response Group, and the new coordinator would have as a priority, the revitalising of a CERG, across the whole Town but particularly those areas in or adjacent to Flood Zones 2 or 3 (high risk of flooding).

Resolved: To approve an application to the CiFR fund to employ a new Emergency Plan Coordinator, on terms to be determined, but within the resources available, this money also to pay for equipment.

M61/2023 Speakers at Full Council

The Town Clerk asked Council to consider the role of speakers at Full Council, also drawing attention to the vast length of time which had been taken up by two speakers at the last meeting.

Members supported the need for a time limit and referred to a number of organisations which they felt should be invited to address Council moving forward.

Resolved: To invite the following organisations to address Full Council:-

- Lakeland Arts (annually);
- Brewery (annually);
- Kendal Museum;
- Environment Agency;
- United Utilities;
- South Cumbria Rivers Trust;
- Kendal Civic Society;
- Stricklandgate House;
- The Eddington.

M62/2023 Employment and Staffing Matters

(a) Prior to the meeting, Members had been provided with a number of further documents in relation to the item, namely job descriptions for the roles of Deputy Town Clerk and Administration Officer, and a copy of the powerpoint report from Meraki HR which was due to be displayed and talked through by the Town Clerk at the meeting. The agenda included a report containing recommendations from the Staffing Sub-Committee in relation to Meraki's review of the Council's staffing structure.

The Town Clerk presented both the reports from Meraki and from the Staffing Sub-Committee. As a result of the review, following the recent departure of the Development Manager, the Council would be recruiting a replacement member of staff early in the new year. Meraki was recommending that the Council recruited a new permanent full-time member of staff to function as the Deputy Town Clerk. This role would assume many of the functions of the previous Development Manager, but also take several functions from the Town Clerk/RFO, which the review had identified as points of particular pressure. The Deputy Town Clerk would serve as the Town Clerk's proper deputy in their absence, and would take up a number of line management duties, as well as ensuring a number of compliance and contractual obligations were fulfilled. The review also recommended that the Council recruited an additional part time Administrative Assistant role, to relieve a number of other pressure points staff had identified in delivering the professional services the Council had come to expect.

Separate from this process, the Council had been encouraged to apply for external funding to support a Community Emergency Plan Coordinator (see Minute No.M6/2023 above).

The Town Clerk drew Members' attention to the fact that the review and recommendations were the product of the whole staff team working together. He answered a number of questions raised by Members, who welcomed the proposals and the involvement of all staff members. The need for an additional line within the Deputy Town Clerk's job description to state that the postholder would deputise for the Town Clerk in their absence was raised.

Resolved: To approve the recommendations made by the Staffing Sub-Committee in the light of the review of the staffing structure carried out by Meraki HR, subject to the inclusion of an additional line within the Deputy Town Clerk's job description to state that the postholder will deputise for the Town Clerk in their absence.

(b) The Town Clerk reported that there were currently no staffing matters requiring the Committee's further consideration and guidance.

M63/2023 Newsletter and Publicity

The Committee was asked to consider what items discussed at the meeting to include in a press release and, in addition, items for inclusion in the next edition of the Council's Newsletter.

Some concern was expressed in relation to the fact that there had been no publication of the Newsletter since November 2023. In addition, concern was raised about the fact that it appeared that Royal Mail was not delivering the Newsletter as it should, and this required addressing as a matter of urgency. The need to find a company which was able to deliver was stressed. Members were keen for a press release to be made with regard to M58/2023 above on the Community Infrastructure Levy and the fair and equitable manner in which this was being spent on projects within Kendal.

Resolved: To seek to source a new delivery company to distribute the Kendal Town Council Newsletter.

Resolved: A press release to be made in relation to M58/2023 above on the Community Infrastructure Levy, as outlined above.

The meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.