

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED
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Minutes of the meeting of the Mayoralty and Heritage Committee held on Monday, 16 December 2024, at 7.40 p.m. in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal.

Cllr J Brook	Apologies	Cllr J Cornthwaite (Chair)	Present
Cllr J Dunlop	Apologies	Cllr D Rathbone	Present
Cllr C Russell	Present	Cllr M Severn	Present (part)
Cllr R Sutton (Vice-Chair)	Present	Cllr G Tirvengadam	Apologies

In attendance: Chris Bagshaw (Town Clerk), Inge Booth (Democratic Services Assistant), and Simon Unsworth (Heritage Officer).

Also present: Three members of the public.

Note – Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chair drew the Committee’s attention to the recent death of Paul Grout, Chair of Kendal Civic Society, who had been a major contributor to the Town. Members paid silent tribute to his memory.

Public Participation

Rob David and Judith Anstee addressed the Committee, having prepared a ‘Concerned Citizen’s Statement’ in relation to Kendal Museum.

Ms Anstee referred to concerned citizens of Kendal with regard to museum provision in the Town. The Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry, known as MOLLI, had been closed to the public now for nearly five years and, there seemed to be no plan its re-opening at present. Ms Anstee provided the history behind MOLLI which had opened in 1971, with her father having been its first curator and instrumental in its inception and development. At the time, MOLLI had been at the cutting edge, and this had been reflected in its winning of the first Museum of the Year award in 1973. Over the years, members of the public, farmers and industrialists had been immensely generous with their donations to the Museum and it had built up a real reputation in the museum world. This was also reflected in its popularity with the public who visited the Museum in droves.

Mr David explained that when he had come to Kendal as a young teacher in 1975, he had quickly found the MOLLI collection and the enthusiastic and knowledgeable John keen to welcome visitors and in particular school groups. He explained how MOLLI had formed part of the curriculum for his school and student groups. John had encouraged children to use the huge printing press to learn how to print like Caxton and in the early 1980s he enabled Queen Katharine School children to star in a home-made video production based on a day in the life of a Kendal family using the reconstructed parlour, kitchen and bedroom at MOLLI as film sets. MOLLI had been fantastic teaching resource and Mr David worried that this was being denied to the present generation of teachers and children.

Ms Anstee drew attention to the fact that Mary Burkett had told the Westmorland Gazette in 2012 that ‘People were anxious to give, not sell us, items, and in return we promised to treasure them forever’. Lakeland Arts Trust, Ms Anstee felt, had broken this contract through its prolonged closure of the museum.

Mr David pointed out that there were many heritage groups increasingly concerned about Kendalians' inability to access their history at MOLLI, and opportunities to enhance Kendal's history offering were being missed. For example, Kendal Oral History Group had some 400 recordings of Kendalians describing their lives in the past. Many of these elderly people lived in houses with rooms similar to the reconstructed rooms at MOLLI. Mr David felt it would be good if these voices could be heard in these rooms but that was impossible while the Museum remained closed to the public. Similar frustrations apply to county-wide groups. Lancaster University's Regional Heritage Centre would publish in 2025 the Victoria County History volume for Kirkby Lonsdale and the 14 parishes around it, and was embarking on a similar volume for Furness using the Dock Museum, Barrow Archives, Morecambe Bay Partnership and a substantial grant from the CWAAS. For the moment Kendal and its adjacent parishes had been put on the back burner because it was so difficult to access the museums as well as Kendal Archive Centre.

Ms Anstee stressed the concern about the continuing (and developing) lack of access to the places responsible for looking after Kendal's past. As a first step to once again giving Kendalians access to their past, the concerned residents wholeheartedly endorsed an idea that Cllr Russell had suggested to them – a book to be called 'Kendal in 100 objects', and they suggested that this brilliant way of promoting Kendal's museum collections should be supplemented by making available at least some of the 100 objects in appropriate pop up venues around the town. This would remind Kendalians of what existed and increase the clamour for a proper long-term solution to Kendal's museums, with the most obvious solution being to combine MOLLI with the Town Museum. The now, largely unused, County Hall would be a brilliant location for such a museum of Kendal's heritage assets given that the archives were already located there. There were so many possibilities, which, with imagination and vision, could provide people both locally and in the region with full and exciting access to their history and heritage whilst significantly enhancing Kendal's heritage reputation and its attraction as a tourist stopover. It was hoped that representatives at every level of government would consider the future of Kendal's museums a priority and seek the views of members of the public and also the many heritage and history groups and societies which the town was fortunate to have.

The Chair thanked Ms Anstee and Mr David for their contribution.

MH27/2024 Apologies

Resolved: To receive and accept apologies for absence from Cllrs Brook, Dunlop and Tirvengadam.

MH28/2024 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were raised under this item.

MH29/2024 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

There were no excluded items on the agenda.

MH30/2024 Minutes from the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2024, at Minute No.MH25/2024, referred incorrectly to the mayor equivalent of Killarney having been invited to Mintfest. This had been altered in the copy due to be signed by the Chairman to Kendal Mountain Festival.

Resolved: To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Mayoralty and Heritage Committee held on 23 September 2024 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a true record.

MH31/2024 Museum Provision

The Committee was provided with verbal reports on progress in the development of a Museum for Kendal. Concurrent initiatives were reported on by both Cllr Russell and the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk reported that Westmorland and Furness Council was convening a meeting of the old Kendal Museum Liaison Group with representation from Kendal College, Westmorland and Furness Council and Kendal Museum Trust Committee (i.e. the Town Council). The Town Clerk advised that he would be attending the first scoping meeting and would come back to say whether the Town Council required future representation. He pointed out that Cllr E Hennessy already represented Westmorland and Furness Council on the group.

Cllr Russell drew the Committee's attention to major concerns in terms of Kendal's museum provision. He stressed the need for the Town Council to represent the people of Kendal and to ensure the museums met the needs of the community with recognition of the Town's heritage which currently did not exist. There was a need, he felt, for Kendal Town Council to lead a discussion with Westmorland and Furness Council in an attempt to move forward, and to open up to other stakeholders, Kendal College and Lakeland Arts Trust. Cllr Russell hoped that strong relationships could be built with these organisations to support them in what they were doing.

Cllr Russell hoped that a Friends of Kendal's Heritage Group could be established to compliment the well-established historic societies of Kendal and Cumbria, and to have an activist and forward-looking role, caring for contemporary issues, concerns and opportunities regarding Kendal's heritage. He hoped that the Town Council could get behind the group as they worked with partners on a way forward for Kendal's museum provision.

Cllr Russell suggested that a book and photography exhibition of all the Kendal collections – Kendal in a Hundred Objects – could be a great resource for a public awakening of the significance of the Town, with emphasis on the engagement of children.

Rob David, who had spoken during public participation, endorsed all said by Cllr Russell, and stressed the need for something to happen quickly and to raise the profile of what Kendal had forgotten existed.

Members expressed support for the initiative, also concerned at the over-long closure of MOLLI and, in particular, the cohort of children that had already missed out on being able to see the collection. The need to seek a statement of intent from Lakeland Arts on what was planned for that Museum moving forward was raised. Also raised was the need to consider the bigger picture, including those artefacts held by both Kendal Museum and within the Town Hall.

The Town Clerk pointed out that the Mayoralty and Heritage Committee had always recognised the fact that there was a shortfall in museum provision in Kendal. He drew attention to the potential for use of social media and the possibility of Kendal's History in 100 Tik Toks. The Town Clerk further pointed out that the Town Council could support and help to facilitate a Friends of Kendal's Heritage Group if it so wished. He explained that the Exhibitions budget could be used in relation to Museum Provision and that it could, if necessary, be increased. He confirmed that the Town Council could write to Lakeland Arts to find out what the organisation's plans were. In addition, he stressed the need for publicity through the Members of both Kendal Town Council and Westmorland and Furness Council and, in addition, for Town Councillors to lobby Westmorland and Furness Councillors. Cllr Severn, who was Chair of Westmorland and Furness Council, undertook to approach their Culture and Communities Portfolio Holder.

The Heritage Officer added his support for the establishment of a Friends of Kendal's Heritage Group. The Town Clerk suggested that the Heritage Officer could be part of the conversation and that his role might thus be developed.

Resolved: The Town Council to establish and convene a meeting of a Friends of Kendal's Heritage Group early in 2025 under the auspices of the Mayor of Kendal.

MH32/2024 Minute Action Sheet

The Committee considered a report on actions taken by officers on resolutions or recommendations made at previous meetings. He explained that there had as yet been no progress in relation to Item Ref. No.23 regarding the Heritage Collection Risk Assessment, however, a meeting had been arranged to meet with Westmorland and Furness Council colleagues to discuss heritage and storing thereof within the Town Hall.

The Heritage Officer referred to Item Ref. No.14 regarding retention of the remaining items from the K-Shoe Heritage Centre and explained that storage space had been booked locally. He further explained that he was seeking assistance in moving the items. The Heritage Officer also drew attention to Item Ref. No.21 regarding Kendal and the International Slave Trade Trail, advising the Committee that there had been no take up during Black History Month. Two trails had, however, been successful during Kendal Mountain Festival. The Heritage Officer intended to continue to offer the trails during forthcoming festivals, also pointing out that he had made a number of alterations to the leaflet.

Resolved: To note the report.

MH33/2024 Review of Spend against Budget 2024/25

The Committee considered its budget monitoring report as at 9 December 2024. The Town Clerk reported that £12,000 of the £19,000 Mayoralty and Heritage Committee budget had been spent to date.

Resolved: To note the budget monitoring report as at 9 December 2024.

MH34/2024 Proposed Budget 2025/26

The Committee was asked to consider its expenditure aims for the next financial year. Expenditure had to be in keeping with the aims of the Council Plan. Due to scheduling issues, the Committee had not submitted a proposed budget to the Budget Working Group in November, so the Working Group had considered an indicative budget instead. The budget shown below contained the same overall totals as the indicative budget considered by the Group, but some of the individual budgets had been adjusted in the light of more accurate outturn data.

The Mayoral allowances had been formally split to clarify the practice that seems to have been long-standing.

Torchlight reception costs had been reduced in line with the costs savings made to the event this year and last.

Additional budget had been allocated to Remembrance, to allow for traffic management costs, should Cumbria Police decline to manage the road closure for the parade.

Commemoration of the 450th anniversary of the Town Council and the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War had been allocated budget from the Culture and Communities Committee. An additional £2,000 had been proposed in the Miscellaneous Function and Expenditure line, to cover the proposed purchase of a flag and the installation of a flagpole.

Item	2024-25	Proposed 25-26	Change
Mayoral Allowance	5,000	3,500	0*
Deputy Mayoral Allowance	*	1,500	0*
Mayoral Travel	800	800	0
Mayor Making	2,500	2,600	4%
Torchlight Reception	2,000	1,500	(25%)
Remembrance	350	1,600	457%
Pictures & others	250	250	0
Misc Functions and expenditure	4,000	6,000	50%
Twinning	1,500	1,500	0
Exhibitions and Tours	1,000	1,000	0
Museum	2,000	2,000	0
Total	19,400	22,250	14.7%
Arts & Heritage Reserve	13,687	14,234	4%

Attention was drawn to the fact that the Arts and Heritage Reserve was the product of sales from the Collection. Revenue from sales had to be spent on the Collection.

Discussion took place around Remembrance and Mayor's Sunday and traffic management costs, and the need to consider what to do should Cumbria Police decline to manage the road closure for the parade moving forward, particularly with the forthcoming anniversaries in 2025. The Heritage Officer informed the Committee that he had arranged a meeting with representatives of the Royal British Legion and the Church, to take place on 14 January 2025, to look into the matter. The Town Clerk confirmed that the figures outlined were sufficient and further drew attention to the budget set aside by the Culture and Communities Committee with regard to the 450th Anniversary of the Town Council's Charter.

Resolved: To recommend the proposed budget requirements for the next financial year, as attached to the report and outlined above, for consideration by the Management Committee prior to presentation to Full Council.

MH35/2024 Anniversaries in 2025

The 450th Anniversary of the Town Council's Charter and the 80th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War would fall in 2025. The Committee would be forming a working group together with members of the Culture and Communities Committee to establish an appropriate programme of events.

The Heritage Officer reported that the Royal British Legion, whilst they had central plans, had made no decision as yet at local level. He would be meeting with the Legion on 14 January when this matter would be discussed. He would also be convening the working group on the same day, with no external input.

Cllr Russell took the opportunity to refer to the 500th anniversary in 2025 of Kirkbie Kendal School which he felt should also be celebrated. The Chair explained that this, along with a number of other forthcoming anniversaries, was something that he had suggested may be recognised through incorporation within the 2025 Torchlight procession.

Resolved: To note the actions made and required for the two principal anniversaries in 2025.

MH36/2024 Inter-Faith Groups

It was reported that there were a number of inter-faith initiatives in Kendal, which the Mayor or Deputy Mayor had usually been able to support and occasionally host. The Deputy Mayor had asked whether the Council should be doing more to recognise these initiatives and what that might entail. This could include passing the issue to the Culture and Communities Committee for further consideration.

Attention was drawn to the fact that many faith communities in Kendal appreciated the presence of the Mayor or Deputy at their events. It was suggested that this matter should remain within the remit of the Mayoralty and Heritage Committee due to the experience of its Members in leadership of the Town. The Town Clerk, however, also drew attention to the remit of the Culture and Communities Committee which included community matters, pointing out that interfaith harmony was a community matter.

On reflection, Members agreed that the matter fell within the remit of both committees, with Culture and Communities taking on the action with Mayoralty and Heritage acting as the beacon.

Resolved: The issue of inter-faith initiatives to fall within the remit of both the Culture and Communities Committee and the Mayoralty and Heritage Committee, as discussed at the meeting and outlined above.

MH37/2024 Kendal Flag

It was reported that the Mayor had asked that Kendal Town Council consider erecting a flagpole somewhere visible in Kendal so that the Town Council's presence and importance to the Town and its history was highlighted. The report set out initial thought around basic options and costs.

The first thing to consider was where the flagpole might be situated. The most obvious place suggested was on the Coronation Garden – most of the traffic entering Kendal from the south went past it, and it would also be visible to people leaving to go south. Other sites suggested included the bottom of Gillinggate, somewhere in the town centre (although there was no obvious location), Chantry Garden (by Stramongate Bridge), Blackhall Road, and Aynam Road.

Landowner's consent would be required, along with any necessary planning consents. Flying a flag itself did not require consent.

The second issue was the pole itself (size, construction, etc.) and the design to have on the flag. The design seemed obvious – the Coat of Arms and motto, repeated on either side, which was included in the costs set out below. If the Council chose to have something new designed, it would include input from a professional vexillologist, and the costs of that then would vary depending on what was requested.

For the pole, the advice was to choose a minimum of 8m (26ft) with an internal pulley system. Quotes for this size were coming around £1,000, delivered, but the cost of the actual installation would need to be factored in, which could be as much as £500 or more.

There would need to be clear lines of responsibility for the flag's general cleaning, upkeep and repair, and the cost of this (either in internal staff time or in bringing in external workers / services) would need to be added to a budget line yet to be identified. It was felt reasonable to allocate around an hour every couple of months.

The Committee was asked to consider whether it would allocate Council resources to this, or whether it could achieve the general aims of raising the Council's profile through some other method. It was unlikely to qualify to be a CIL-funded project, so an allocation from the Council's general budget would be required.

The Chair felt that the installation of a flagpole and flag was warranted and Members expressed support. Some discussion took place regarding the need to consider design and logistics around raising and lowering of the flag. The Chair was keen for the installation to take place during his mayoral year. The Town Clerk drew attention to the need to first seek planning permission. Also raised was a desire to ask Westmorland and Furness to ensure that the Ukrainian flag was being flown outside the Town Hall at this time and the Chair, as Mayor, undertook to make this request.

Resolved: Subject to seeking the relevant planning permissions, to allocate resources to the erection of a flagpole at the Coronation Garden, as outlined above.

MH38/2024 Twinning

The Committee was provided with verbal reports on the activities and affairs of the Town's two twinning relationships. Members were informed of activities planned by Kendal Rugby Club and IBIS around a trip to Rinteln in 2025 which, it was felt, would bring some fresh young interest to the table. The Rinteln Twinning Association had manned a stall at the Christmas Lights Switch-on event and had also been present at the Mayor's Winter Warmer Coffee Morning.

The Town Clerk drew attention to Town Council grants available via the Rinteln Twinning Association. This funding was used mainly to support those travelling to Rinteln for events and it was suggested that both the Rugby Club and IBIS should be urged to make an application in this financial year.

Resolved: To note the verbal updates.

MH39/2024 Newsletter and Publicity

The Committee was asked to consider which items to include in press releases and items for the next edition of the Council's Newsletter. Reference was made to the fact that although 16,000 of the last edition had been printed, not all households had received a copy; this was being pursued with Royal Mail.

Resolved: To publicise the following:

- (a) an item within the Newsletter regarding museum provision in Kendal and the establishment of a Friends of Kendal Heritage Group; and
- (b) a press release in relation to the Committee's silent tribute to the memory of Paul Grout and drawing attention to a book of condolences, to be organised by officers and put at the front of the Town hall; and

The meeting closed at 9.35 p.m.