

Workington Town Council

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Minutes of the meeting of Workington Town Council held at 6.30pm on Wednesday 3 February 2021 on the Zoom web platform.

C Armstrong	Present	J Hunter	Present
M Bainbridge	Present	J King	Present
L Baldry	Apologies	S Melton	Present
H Briggs	Present	B Miskelly	Present
R Briggs	Present	D Rollo	Present
B Cannon	Present	B Sansom	Present
B Dixon	Present	P Scott	Present
D Farrar	Present	S Stoddart	Present
S Fryer	Present	W Wilkinson	Present
G Glaister	Present	L Williams	Present
H Harrington	Present		
M Heaslip	Present		

In attendance: Town Clerk

Prior to the commencement of the meeting Mayor Janet King made a statement to thank NHS workers and key workers for their hard work during the COVID-19 crisis.

Public Participation

A member of the public observed the meeting but did not raise any items for discussion.

20.05. Apologies

The Council received and accepted apologies from Cllr Lillian Baldry for reasons approved by the Council under the terms of Local Government Act, 1972, s85.

20.06. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Sue Fryer declared an interest in item 6 (Princess St Day Care Centre) and item 9 (Planning Committee minutes).

Cllr Barbara Cannon declared an interest in item 11 (Culture Committee minutes).

Cllr Will Wilkinson declared an interest in item 10 (Environment Committee minutes).

20.07. Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

The Committee resolved to exclude the press and the public from item 13 (Employment Issues) on the agenda, as it pertains to an employment matter.

20.08. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Council received the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 25 November 2020. Cllr Cannon requested an amendment to clarify that she had stated a prejudicial

interest during the meeting for agenda item 7. Following the advice of the Town Clerk, Cllr Cannon had remained present during the item but did not participate in discussions.

With this amendment the Council affirmed the minutes as a true record.

Resolved: To make the amendment as requested by Cllr Cannon. With this amendment the Council affirmed the minutes as a true record.

20.09. Mayoral Announcements

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the Mayor did not have any new Mayoral Announcements.

20.10. Princess St Day Care Centre

The Town Clerk provided a report on the progress made on the Princess Street Day Care Centre. The purchase is progressing as expected. A specific sale completion date has not been provided but could be 3-5 weeks. The Town Clerk has arranged site visits for contractors to provide quotes for the required building work. A utility management company is in the process of providing a supply assessment.

Cllr Scott commented that the site visits with builders so far seemed positive, with one contractor commenting that the building work could potentially be completed by the end of March 2021.

Cllr Cannon asked for clarity about the tender process for the building work. The Town Clerk confirmed whilst a full tender had not yet been circulated, an initial specification had been sent out and would be followed by full tender documentation. The Town Clerk agreed to circulate the specification to councillors.

Cllr Heaslip questioned whether a surveyor should be making the initial building assessments, not building contractors. Cllr Scott confirmed that a structural surveyor will be brought in to provide an assessment in due course.

No further action required by the committee at this stage.

20.11. Motion from Cllr MJ Heaslip

The Town Clerk provided a report on progress made with the potential transfer of property and assets from Allerdale Borough Council to Workington Town Council.

The Town Clerk confirmed a meeting with Allerdale Borough Council has been arranged to discuss the matter further.

Cllr Scott raised whether Workington Hall should be included in the asset and property transfer. Cllr Heaslip responded that any new property or assets would need to be carefully considered. Cllr Cannon expressed concerns about the current condition of the site and potential liabilities.

No further action required by the committee at this stage.

Reports from Committees

20.12. Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Council received the draft minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 28 January 2021. The Finance and General Purposes Committee made a recommendation at the meeting that the precept should be held at its current level for 2021-22. Any underspends should be carried over to the new financial year.

Cllr Heaslip, Cllr Melton, Cllr Miskelly and Cllr Fryer expressed an objection that the 2021-22 budget was being presented as a matter arising from a committee rather than as individual agenda item.

Cllr Dixon expressed an objection to accepting the budget as she felt the council had not had sufficient time to review the figures.

The Town Clerk provided a run through of the full budget. Following this report, the Town Clerk answered questions from councillors.

It was suggested that the Capital and Revenue budgets should be separated out to improve clarity.

This was followed by discussion about reserve spending and whether it was properly represented on the budget. It was agreed these figures should be included to ensure clarity and transparency.

Some concerns were raised that the Culture budget had made reductions to the 'Cultural Groups' budget line and that this might negatively impact the town's theatres and cultural institutions, particularly after the difficulties of COVID-19. Cllr Miskelly requested the following statement was recorded in the minutes;

"Workington is a proud, diverse and cultural town. We are all proud of it. I would like it minuted that I am distressed, upset and annoyed that at this time the budget for theatres has been reduced".

The Chair of the Culture Committee responded that they did not anticipate reducing support for the theatres and that the Cultural Groups budget line was reduced because of the underspend in 2020. They planned to continue supporting theatres under the Community Grants budget line and would look favourably upon any application.

Following the objections from councillors and requests for amendments, the Town Clerk offered to revise the budget and recommended reviewing the amended documentation at a separate meeting. The Council agreed this would be the best approach to ensure clarity and agreed to a budget meeting on Wednesday 10 February 2021.

Resolved: To arrange a separate budget meeting on Wednesday 10 February 2021, 6.30pm, on Zoom.

20.13. Planning Committee

The Council received the draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting on 5 January 2021.

Resolved: To accept the minutes.

20.14. Environment Committee

The Council received the draft minutes of the Environment Committee meeting on 14 January 2021.

Cllr Wilkinson declared an interest as an allotment plotholder and as Secretary of the Feenans Allotment Association. The Town Clerk confirmed he could remain present as long as he did not participate in discussions.

Cllr Miskelly requested more information about the report referenced under minute item E19.108 (Allotments). The Town Clerk provided more information about the report.

Cllr Miskelly raised that the minute for item E19.108 did not clearly express that Cllr Wilkinson left the meeting during the decision making for funding, which would be required procedure as a pecuniary interest. The Town Clerk confirmed that Cllr Wilkinson followed proper procedure by expressing his interest at the beginning of the meeting and this was recorded in the minutes. The Town Clerk also confirmed Cllr Wilkinson left the meeting during discussions. Cllr Miskelly requested the minutes were amended accordingly.

Cllr Miskelly questioned item E19.113 (Vulcan Park) and requested further information about the tender process for the path resurfacing, including:

1. Who was the contractor?
2. How was the tender advertised?
3. And how many contractors applied?

Cllr Heaslip and Cllr Miskelly requested the same information for item E19.110 (Vulcan Park Nightingale Garden).

Cllr Heaslip requested more information about item E19.122 (Harrington Park) and wanted confirmation that the expenditure was approved at a previous meeting.

Cllr Cannon requested an update on the bus shelter to be installed at Salterbeck cemetery and the old telephone box. In previous meetings it has been agreed the bus shelter would be replaced. There have also been previous discussions about the removal of the old telephone box. The Chair of the Environment Committee, Cllr Cllr Harrington, explained that the bus shelter for Moss Bay has been prioritised as there is currently no shelter at the site. Cllr Harrington explained the telephone box project was originally linked to a company that redeveloped old telephone boxes into defibrillator points, but no further developments have been made beyond the original discussions.

Cllr Cannon expressed concern about the proposed play area for Westfield as its separated by a busy road. Cllr Harrington responded that negotiations are ongoing with Allerdale Borough Council about the play area. The Town Clerk explained that whilst Allerdale Borough Council confirmed they would welcome a play area, they do not have funding currently available and would need support from a developer. The Town Clerk confirmed she would continue discussions.

Cllr Rollo clarified that a grant has been awarded from Allerdale Borough Council for the bus shelter at Salterbeck so the work should go ahead. Cllr Harrington confirmed it would be investigated and if a grant has been allocated the work will proceed as a priority (subject to planning permission).

Resolved: To accept the minutes.

20.15. Culture Committee

The Council received the draft minutes of the Culture Committee meeting on 12 January 2021.

Cllr Miskelly queried item C19.93 and the arrangements for the Town Assembly. Cllr Miskelly felt the wording of the minute did not reflect that it was a public meeting. The Chair of the Culture Committee, Cllr Carole Armstrong, explained that they intended to proceed with a public meeting but that some aspects may need to occur via Zoom depending on COVID restrictions.

Cllr Miskelly also raised that the date of the Mayor Making should be confirmed at the Finance and General Purposes meeting, not the Culture Committee meeting.

Cllr Cannon raised that the proposed date for the Mayor Making would be the evening before the local elections.

Cllr Heaslip queried the plans for the VE Day soldier statue and expressed concern about removing the beacon. Cllr Heaslip also expressed concern that the budget line for the project had not been included in the 2021-2022 budget report. Cllr Armstrong explained the budget was approved to come from reserves but agreed it should be reflected in the 2021-22 budget documentation. Cllr Armstrong explained the beacon would not be removed altogether but reduced in height. Cllr Armstrong agreed to circulate the plans for the project with budget figures.

Cllr Miskelly requested more information on item C19.97 and the plans for COVID-19 memorial. Cllr Wilkinson provided an update about the project and confirmed he would continue to update the committee with any significant developments.

Cllr Cannon queried whether the COVID-19 memorial should be managed by the Environment Committee, not the Culture Committee.

There was discussion about the beacon as a location for the statue and whether it should be modified considering the original symbolic nature of the site and the potential expense involved in its modification. There was also a request for a VJ statue to be included. Cllr Armstrong noted the feedback for consideration.

Resolved: To accept the minutes.

20.16 Employment Issues

The Committee resolved to exclude the press and the public from item 13 (Employment Issues) on the agenda, as it pertains to an employment matter.

The meeting closed at 20.40.