

# **WHITEHAVEN TOWN COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 23rd May 2017**

**Present:** Councillors R Gill (Chairman); B O’Kane; J Forster; J Kane; G Roberts

Mayor Starkie, Copeland Borough Council

Councillor Keith Hitchen representing CALC

Councillor Mike Hawkins, Cumbria County Council

M. Jewell, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Councillor Mike Hawkins, Cumbria County Council

Members of the Public

### **APM/1 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence

### **APM/2 Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 23rd May 2017**

The Chairman reported that there were no Minutes for last year’s Annual Parish meeting

### **APM/3 Chairman’s Report on the year 2016/2017**

Councillor Gill reported on the events and activities of the Council for the year 2016/2017. Report attached.

### **APM/4 Report from Mike Starkie, Mayor of Copeland Borough Council 2017**

Mayor Starkie said May marked the mid term of his office and that CBC had been trying to get everyone to work together. He made the following points

- CBC had gone through 4 years of cuts
- In the current term there had been a 26% reduction on government funding
- CBC needed 1 million pounds to repair the ventilation system to the building
- Sellafield had won their appeal against the rates and CBC had to pay £31 million which left a deficit in the accounts of £13 million

- CBC have demonstrated that we can work together in partnership
- Over the last 12 months CBC have employed 35 new members of staff
- CBC have built strong relationships with large businesses in the area and is making significant ground with commercialising the organisation
- Two projects are coming to life which will generate revenue for the next 2 years
- There is a transformation project at Sellafield which will be good for commercial opportunities
- CBC had been looking at all their assets and some had been sold at top dollar
- Town centre regeneration – The market despite the best efforts to derail it had been successful. The income generated was up 60% with what it was before and nearly all the shops in the Market Place were now occupied.
- CBC were pursuing dilapidated buildings
- A major project is the Harbourside project and despite rubbish written about it on social media there is going to be £300million inward investment coming into the town
- CBC have invested £500,000 in the town centres with the regeneration spread across Whitehaven, Cleator Moor and Millom
- There is a social isolation project due to launch
- Health and wellbeing has been launched over the last two years with a pre-birth and beyond programme with the Howgill Centre
- CBC has maintained services and enhanced them and has plans to transform the landscape and the Mark House project would definitely be going ahead

APM/5

### **Report of Councillor Keith Hitchen, Chairman of CALC**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Keith Hitchen the Chairman of the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) who made the following points: -

- The parish council is the first tier of local government and one of the things we can do to effect change is to have strong local parish councillors.
- In 1999 when he became Parish Clerk to Waberthwaite he realised how unfair Copeland was because every parish council outside Whitehaven had double taxation which he thought was unfair
- People felt it was time Whitehaven had a parish council and we now have a parish council in Whitehaven
- CALC makes sure that every parish council is supported and is there to help, guide and educate. CALC also puts on training programmes
- The difference between a parish council a district council and a county council are that in the vast majority of cases parish councils are non-political and have been elected because have been identified by the community who trust them to deliver quality services for the community. Local people can recognise their local parish council and talk to them.

- Parish councils can turn to CALC for help. CALC is run by volunteers with two part time workers to look after the whole of Cumbria.
- The residents of Whitehaven I believe two years ago made the most significant decision to have a parish council in Whitehaven because there is an ability to work together for the good of the residents of the parish.
- Councillor Hitchen said he would ask the public to get behind the parish council and councillors as there was a lot of work to be done in Whitehaven and he wished everyone all the best for the future

APM/6

**Report from Councillor Mike Hawkins, Cumbria County Council**

Councillor Hawkins referred to the elections on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and said the Cumbria County Council Local Committee was held up as the best performing Local Committee and it has always worked as a team for the benefit of Copeland. He made the following points: -

- Cumbria County Council has had budget cuts but have managed to implement major schemes for example the new office building in Carlisle.
- There are new schemes – the Sekers site; a new care home in Barrow; they were pushing ahead with the new school campus for St Benedict’s and Mayfield schools
- There was a major road scheme planned which would cost £1 million and the County Council Highways Team deserved credit for that for getting funding for the scheme

APM/7

**Report from Councillor Graham Roberts, Deputy Mayor**

Councillor Roberts said he was very proud to stand before everyone as Deputy Mayor and to applaud and update everyone on the Town Council’s activities. He said it had been an extraordinary year where the Town Council had been travelling along a road with no sat nav or atlas – just a mandate from the public to use our budget wisely and work with a multitude of agencies to bring about improvements to the town.

Councillor Roberts said: -

- With the resources at the Town Council’s disposal it had achieved a great deal.
- The council had had a few setbacks and it is possible that things could have been done better or in a different way but that all public bodies make mistakes from time to time
- The commitment of the Council was not shaken and the Council would progress and had brought about a community town plan
- The Council had lost some very good Councillors and he wanted to personally thank them for their expertise and that new Councillors were being elected to help the Council improve what people called home – Whitehaven

**Questions/ Comments from Members of the Public**

- Councillor Peter Tyson asked Mike Starkie, Mayor of Copeland why there was a lot of ugly and dilapidated buildings e.g. the former Methodist Church and the baths. Mike Starkie said the former Methodist Church had been bought by a dentist from out of the area to be renovated and used as a dental surgery and retail use. He said the baths would go without putting their head down and highly recommended that the Council take this ahead as a priority but the four decorative bits would be sent to the Beacon and that for other building there was a dilapidated buildings committee.
- A member of the public said she had chosen to come and live here and would like to see what happened in Workington – someone employed to clean Whitehaven and that it needed an old style on the ground person with a dust pan and brush. The sooner the Council could find a pot of money to employ someone at £9 per hour to do this would be a bonus. She said people could walk around Workington without putting their head down and highly recommended that the Council take this ahead as a priority.
- Councillor Gill said he was one of the people who was in favour of Whitehaven Town Council initially as the Council could spend its own money for the benefit of the people. He was in support of Britain in Bloom and getting the streets clean. He said he wanted the people of Whitehaven to walk down the streets and see that the Council had made a difference.
- Councillor O’Kane said we seem to have lost our pride in ourselves and there was no point in having a clean up if there was no follow up. He said the Council needed to work as a team. He said that whatever happens in the town spreads out. If the town is clean the rest of the area will be clean.
- A member of the public suggested that the Council contact independent shops in the town and say that if they looked after their pavement the Council would look at cutting their rates. Mayor Starkie said that business rates were not set locally and Councillor Gill said that the Town Council did not get any business rates. He also said that Workington was owned by Allerdale Borough Council but Whitehaven Town Council owned nothing.
- Councillor Gill said that the Council had offered grants two years ago to clean the exterior of buildings and 15 businesses took it up.
- A member of the public said that any time the Council wanted someone to sweep the streets she was prepared to help.
- Councillor Peter Tyson said that before Whitehaven Town Council there was a lengthsman scheme and that it worked well. He wanted to ask the Town Council to consider bringing it back into being

- Councillor Gill said that representatives from the lengthsman scheme came along to the Town Council to explain about it but that the goalposts kept moving and the Town Council was in its infancy at the time. He said the Council needed to get staffing, premises and storage facilities. He said in relation to rates the Town Council was the lowest in Cumbria
- Councillor Peter Tyson said when there was a lengthsman scheme they cut the grass but now it had gone back to wild but that there was funding that could be applied for
- Councillor Hawkins said CCC was part of the lengthsman scheme and county councillors gave their £5,000 ward grant to it and it ran for 3 years employing 2 local lads and the funding was coming to an end just as the Town Council was setting up and it would have been better if the lengthsman scheme had had another year to run. He said there were still contacts with the lengthsman scheme and it could be tailored to what the Council wanted and would be happy to set up a meeting. Councillor Gill said the Council would need to be certain what the costs would be.
- Emma Williamson, the County Councillor for Kells asked about setting up a budget and asking them what they could do. She said residents go out into the community litter picking and the Harbour Youth Project could also help out
- Councillor O’Kane referred to the tragedy of the Manchester bombing the day before and Councillor Gill asked for a minute’s silence as a mark of respect for those who had lost their lives.

The meeting closed at 7.00pm

*Bohane.*