

# **WHITEHAVEN TOWN COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 27th February 2025**

**Present:** Councillor C Hayes (Deputy Chairman in the Chair);  
Councillor E Dinsdale; Councillor R Gill; Councillor B O’Kane;  
Councillor R Redmond; Councillor A Spedding; Councillor R Taylor;  
Councillor R White

M. Jewell, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

V. Gorley, Assistant Clerk

Home Group

Members of the Public

The Press

Prior to the Meeting starting the Deputy Mayor asked all Town Councillors present to introduce themselves.

He informed all those present that there was no scheduled testing of the fire Alarms and gave evacuation details should the fire alarm ring and the location of toilets.

He explained about public participation and gave information about conduct at Meetings

### **2705/25    Apologies 2wfor Absence**

Apologies for absence were received as follows:-

Councillor G Roberts	illness
Councillor J Carr	work commitments
Councillor A Pearson	holiday
Councillor G Dinsdale	illness

It was proposed by Councillor Hayes and seconded by Councillor Taylor that the apologies for absence be accepted and noted. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** - That the apologies for absence be accepted and noted

**2706/25     Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Hayes declared that he was a member of the Whitehaven Tidy Town Group and the Harbour Users Group.

Councillor Gill declared that he was a member of the Whitehaven Heritage Action Group

**2707/25     Public Participation**

There was no public participation

**2708/25     Minutes of Council Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

It was proposed by Councillor Gill and seconded by Councillor Hayes that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**2709/25     Planning Applications**

The Council considered a list of Planning Applications shown at Appendix 1. It was proposed by Councillor O’Kane and seconded by Councillor Hayes that following consideration of the Planning Applications on Appendix 1 that Cumberland Council be informed that the Council had no representations/comments to make. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** - That after consideration of the Planning Applications on Appendix 1 that Cumberland Council be informed that the Council had no representations/comments to make

**2710/25     Report from Cumberland Council**

Councillor M Hawkins had informed the Council that he could not attend the Meeting as he was ill

## 2711/25 Finance Report

The Council considered the Finance report

- i. Appendix 1 – The Council considered a list of invoices at Appendix 1 plus 6 additional invoices as follows:-

Mrs V Gorley	£2.57 mileage
Mrs V Gorley	£4.73 mileage
Arboroscape	£4,800 Beds, Planters, Baskets Contract Jan 2025
Arboroscape	£656.40 Allotment Maintenance Contract Jan 2025
Mrs V Gorley	£10.04 Metal Acco clips
Viking	£255.88 stamps and copier papers

It was proposed by Councillor Gill and seconded by Councillor Hayes that the invoices shown at Appendix 1 plus the 6 additional invoices detailed above be approved and paid

**RESOLVED** – That the invoices shown on Appendix 1 plus the 6 additional invoices detailed above be approved and paid.

- ii. Appendices 2 and 3 – It was proposed by Councillor Gill and seconded by Councillor Hayes that Appendices 2 and 3 be approved and noted. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** - That Appendices 2 and 3 be approved and noted.

## 2712/25 Home Group

Two representatives from Home Group attended the Meeting namely James Varah and Loren Hannah. James said they had been invited by Councillor O’Kane and his understanding of attending that day was that there was some kind of general feedback that the Town Council wanted to provide them. He said if there was anything the Council wanted to raise that they were there for that. He said he guessed the question was what did the Council want that interaction to look like between the Town Council and Home Group. He said if there was a regular report that the Council wanted to see from them they could do something like that.

Councillor Gill said that the last time Home Group came the Council had had a healthy discussion and it was in the best interests of both Home Group and the Town Council that we work together. But it was promised last time and never happened. He said some time ago they used to have a walk around the estates every 6 months and he thought that this would be a positive way forward and asked that this be considered. James said yes and said he was aware that the last time they had met with the Town Council that there had been an action to do

this but for various reasons including some significant staff shortages it had not been done. He said that their Teams were doing it informally at the minute but they hadn't done the formal walkaround where other people were invited. He said that probably by mid April they would have a full schedule across the whole of Whitehaven that would give dates and times and he would send those to the Council and would also do reminders nearer the time.

Councillor O'Kane said they were there to deal with the general aspects and he thought that there was 1 or 2 things that the Council struggled with. He said Councillor Hawkins and Councillor White were the ones who had a partnership with Home Group and he said the most difficult thing he found was communication and said this had deteriorated over the last 2 years. He said he had found it difficult to phone somebody or make contact with them.

He said that last time Home Group attended a gentleman promised that the Council would be supplied with telephone numbers but that hadn't happened. He said the Council was desperate to build up a partnership because the last time they had spent 20 to 30 minutes talking about this and maybe we could avoid all that if we agreed to work together. He said he didn't know how many Councillors realised where Home Group were these days and how to contact them – do you make an appointment etc.

Councillor Taylor said in Councillor Pearson's Ward there had been an issue with a fence that went on and on and Councillor Pearson had difficulty getting it sorted out and no timescales were given. He said Councillor Carr had had an issue on Mirehouse where someone's garden was flooded.

Councillor E Dinsdale suggested that there should be a Home Group Hub in Whitehaven even for 1 day a week where residents could go.

Councillor Gill said for 10 years following the Housing Stock Transfer there was an agreement between Home Group and the Council and there were area offices at Whitehaven, Mirehouse, Woodhouse and there was good interaction but once the 10 years were up the curtain went down. Sometimes we come here and then we go away and nothing happens. Last time we met we were promised things and nothing happened.

James made the following points

- In terms of the relationship he recognised some of the things said by the Council. He said he was aware of the arrangement with Councillor Hawkins and Councillor White and if that hadn't quite worked maybe his understanding of that was they would be the representatives from the Council and the Council would feed in and Councillor Hawkins and Councillor White had a direct route to James and Lisa who is our Regional Director and Home Group would provide feedback on any cases and the feedback that he had had was that this had worked really well
- He said the Council was pushing at an open door and they were there and could come to every month or every other month, we can send a report or whatever the Council wants.

Councillor R White entered the Meeting

Councillor Dinsdale said what he would like to see is more engagement with the residents because if you have an appropriate level of engagement people don't come to the Council. Councillor Taylor asked if would be possible to set up regular meetings in the wards where people could go and talk to Home Group

- James said in terms of having people get in touch with Home Group that they had established systems where everything was logged in but that they should probably do a piece in terms re-education on that and sharing it back so that the Council could pass that on to customers
- James said in terms of engagement they had just finished the Kells one following a request from the Kells Residents Group to do that and it didn't work – only 3 people attended but he was happy to try it again. So if there were better locations, better times he said he would give it a go. He said if the Council thought it was a good idea they could give it a go and that if they trialled it and it didn't work then they could say that they'd tried it
- He said they attended most of the Police Hub meetings in the town to try and capture some footfall

Councillor O'Kane said there were 2 things

1. In general he didn't think everybody had an appreciation of things. He said they were dealing at the moment with the negatives. He said he had had emails from Home Group with 3 telephone numbers on the bottom and some were unobtainable
2. He asked if the partnership could be developed and asked how the structure could be managed differently to improve the working relationship

James said he thought they had this process in force and it was working and that the feedback he'd had was that it had been productive. But that was not what he was hearing and if what the Council wanted something different then they could do it.

Councillor Gill wished it to be noted that he thanked Home Group for attending the meeting

The Deputy Chairman thanked home Group for attending

## **2713/25     Skip Hire Quotes for Allotments**

The Council considered a report on quotes received for the provision of skips to the Council's 4 allotment sites twice a year. 3 quotes had been sought but only one had been received in sum of £300 per skip per occasion. It was proposed by Councillor Gill and seconded by Councillor Hayes that the quote of £300 per skip per occasion be accepted. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** - That the quote of £300 per skip per occasion be accepted.

**2714/25     Contract for supply of Electricity and Gas to Council Offices**

Further to Minute 2695/25 the Council considered a report giving details of the Contracts entered into for the supply of electricity and gas to the Council Offices. It was proposed by Councillor Gill and seconded by Councillor Hayes that the action taken be approved and noted. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** - That the action taken be approved and noted.

**2715/25     Information Boards for Harbour**

The Council considered a report on a request from the Harbour Commissioners for a contribution towards the cost of providing several Information Boards about the brown water in the harbour to be placed around the harbour. It was proposed by Councillor Taylor and seconded by Councillor Gill that a contribution of £200 be given by the Council to the Harbour Commissioners towards the cost of supplying Information Boards on the Harbour. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** - That that a contribution of £200 be given by the Council to the Harbour Commissioners towards the cost of supplying Information Boards on the Harbour

Councillor O’Kane said he knew Councillor Hayes was on the Harbour Users Group and he wished at times maybe once every month or a couple of months that Deanne Shallcross would come to the Council Meeting as he would like to see a closer relationship between the Town Council and the Harbour Commissioners. The Clerk suggested that Deanne Shallcross be invited to the next Council Meeting and this was agreed.

Councillor Gill said unlike in the past there was no direct representation on the Harbour Commissioners Board but that at least we had an input through the Town Council Chairman who was a member of the Task Force and agreed that the Council should meet now and again with the Harbour Commissioners to build up a relationship.

Councillor E Dinsdale said himself and Councillor G Dinsdale would be prepared to give £400 each from their Councillor Ward Grants to cover the shortfall between the Council donation of £200 and the total cost of the Information Boards

## **2716/25      Toilets**

The Clerk gave a report on an email received from Cumberland Council about the closed toilet attached to the Market Hall and which asked if the Council might be interested in taking on the management and maintenance of the facility.

Photographs of the interior of the toilet supplied by Cumberland Council were circulated. The Clerk reported that herself and the Deputy Chairman had inspected the toilet facility that day and as could be seen from the photographs the toilet facility was in a very poor state of repair and condition. Following a discussion it was proposed by Councillor O’Kane and seconded by Councillor Hayes that this be not considered at this time but that an answer be requested from Cumberland Council as to why this particular toilet which is adjacent to the Green Market was not included in the Green Market development. A vote was held and 7 Councillors voted for the proposal and 1 Councillor voted against

**RESOLVED** - That this be not considered at this time but that an answer be requested from Cumberland Council as to why this particular toilet which is adjacent to the Green Market was not included in the Green Market development

## **2717/25      WCSSG**

Councillor E Dinsdale reported that he had attended 2 Meetings since the last Time. One was a stakeholders meeting which took place on 4th February at Cleator Moor and the second meeting was on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February which was The Sellafield Working Group. There were a great deal of presentations in these Meetings and he was reporting on the pick of them

- The MSSS which stands for the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo where it was reported that there was still 2 metre cubes a day leaking into the ground which was over 2,000 litres. This was causing the Company and the site a real problem. There was a report on this from the Senior Manager in that Department but they were hoping to accelerate the work that was going on in this area and the work was slow but they were hoping to double, treble or even quadruple the amount of stuff that they were going to clean out of this area
- The Storm. There was a discussion on this around the issue that he had raised and an Emergency Planning Meeting would be taking place on 3<sup>rd</sup> March at 1.00pm at Cleator Moor Civic Hall. He said the storm would be discussed and that Sellafield would be producing a report around what went on and hopefully the findings from that will be implemented to work a bit smarter as to how we go forward

- GDF. He said a report was given and there was a big concern raised from Seascale around the Mid-Copeland GDF part as it virtually surrounds Seascale. The high populated areas of Whitehaven, Cleator Moor and Egremont and in particular their parishes around the Sellafield site have given a lot of support to the nuclear industry and they have put up with some pile of detriment in the past and he thought that to do this and promote it in the way they have in Seascale that they had not set themselves up as a good neighbour. He thought that it would have been more tasteful before anyone started making proposals to go and meet the Town Council down there to sound it out before making anything public
- There was a report about the Financial aspects. The Company secured just under 2.8 billion pounds for the next financial year. The Company were having to say that they were totally dissatisfied with this and publicly said that this was going to cost the acceleration of projects which ultimately could cost jobs. He said if projects started to be knocked off at Sellafield then somewhere along the line it would be costing someone their living. He said the Employer NI which on average was going cost £1.300 per employee which would come to an annual bill of £15,000,000. Then there was the Contract Staff and the Supply Chain Staff and this was going to cost millions of pounds. He said that 1% inflation on £2.8 billion spend was £28,000,000 and these are the figures that seem to be causing the Company concern
- Councillor Dinsdale said that these were only a few of the issues discussed in a long meeting and that if anyone had any questions to send him an email and he would do his best to answer these.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Dinsdale

## **2718/25     Councillor Ward Matters**

- (i) Councillor Taylor made the following points:
- He gave a report on the cycle track on behalf of St Bees Parish Council. There had been a meeting on the 3 cycle tracks in Cumbria and this was about the Whitehaven and St Bees one. The NWS have now been engaged with St Bees Parish Council directly and the NDA Manager is also involved and is communicating with all the landowners along the route of the cycle track. He said once land ownership had been settled the next stage would be to lock the route down and look for funding to progress with it. So it was moving and he would keep people informed. He said our MP Josh Macalister was driving it.
  - A local resident had asked if Councillor Hayes could take an issue to the Harbour Commissioners as he was concerned about Britain's role in the slave trade being adequately portrayed as he thought that



the organisation that had been proposed wouldn't do it justice so he asked if he could send all the information to Councillor Hayes and Councillor Hayes agreed to this.

- He said the resurfacing and tarmac work on the road on Highfields leading through Hillcrest estate was an excellent job by Highways and the tarmac company. However on a negative note the road comms with Stagecoach and a lot of stakeholders had not been good.. On Monday the road had closed and the buses were going through the estate and had to do 360s including double decker going onto people' driveways because they had locked down Hillcrest Avenue and all the roads around the area. He said it was abysmal communication for the older generation and others who were using the buses couldn't get to the bus stops because they were locked down by the road closure. So an excellent job had been overshadowed by abysmal communications and he thought there was some learning to be had for future work
- He said the roof of Jericho School had blown off as a result of the recent storm which has resulted in the top floor being completely flooded and all the kids had been going to Valley School and other schools. A number of residents had raised concerns because they were now building portacabins on the field and that had taken a lot of the field for kids games in the summer etc and the bigger concern was how long the kids were going to be in the portacabins being educated and he would like to understand the feedback from Cumberland Council as it was an absolute embarrassment
- He said he had attended a remembrance service for one Hensingham resident the previous Saturday at Beck Bottom and they had planted a bench and a cherry blossom tree in her memory.. He said it was very well attended. He said he had been asked if he would go in with Councillor Gill to fund some plants and a maybe another bench for people. Councillor Gill said he had already paid for a new bench
- He said that he had been talking with Josh MacAlister recently who was keen to engage with local Councils and to attend their meetings Councillor Taylor asked if this was something we could do and the Clerk said that she had already been contacted by Josh Macalister about this
- Councillor White said the storm wind debris had now been cleared by Highways. He said there were some parking issues on Corkickle

## **2719/25     Date and Time of next Meeting**

The next Town Council Meeting would be on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at

the Beacon Portal, Whitehaven at 6.00pm

Councillor E Dinsdale left the Meeting

**2720/25 IN PRIVATE**

That prior to the following items of business the Chairman moved the following resolution:

That in view of the special or confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it is advisable in the public interest that the public and or press be instructed to withdraw. Councillor White proposed this and Councillor Taylor seconded this. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** - That the public and or press be instructed to withdraw.

**2721/25 Update on Office Accommodation**

The Clerk gave a report received from the Contractor on progress since the report to the Council Meeting in January as follows:

Para 1.1 Page 1 – monthly update on Progress

- Insulation installed to ceiling voids on first floor
- Some plaster boarding has started on first floor
- Rear extension is built and roof will be complete by the end of this week
- New automated entrance doors being measured up 25/02/25
- Kone lift is ordered
- New floor slab including insulation is now complete
- New boilers have been installed
- Repair work to the exterior cracked masonry undergoing
- Wooden lintel to doorway on FF changed to concrete lintels

Para 1.2 Page 2

- Deposit Account Starting Balance, Contract Price minus payment made to William King

Para 1.2 Page 3

- Deposit Account Income since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024

Para 1.2 Page 4

- Invoices received from William King

Para 1.2 Page 5

- Projected expenditure other than from William King

Para 1.2 Page 6

- Expenditure since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024

Para 1.2 Page 7

- As at February 2025 individual percentages of work in contract that have been completed

The Clerk reported that the Architect has had to carry out more work and more visits to the Council Offices than envisaged because of additional works required to the property and although it had been possible to absorb some of the extra costs they were now in a position whereby they were losing money and would need to submit extra costs although as always they would try to keep the costs as low as possible. It was proposed by Councillor Hayes and seconded by Councillor Gill that the report be approved and noted. A vote was held and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** - That the report be approved and noted.

The Meeting Closed at 7.15pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Gill', written over a horizontal line.

Chairman