

WHITEHAVEN TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 31st August 2017

Present: Councillors B O’Kane (Chairman); J. Forster; S. Gearing;
J. Kane; C Maudling; G. Roberts

M. Jewell, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Vanessa Gorley, Trainee Assistant Town Clerk

Caroline Mc Donald and Clare Proudlock from Home Group
Jo McLeod CBC
Susan Fryer CBC
Janice Carrol CBC
Members of the Public

The Chairman apologised for the late start of the meeting which was due to a Copeland Borough Council meeting. He said it would be necessary to change the order of Agenda items as there were people waiting to give presentations who had a long way to travel home.

753/17 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Guest, Councillor Laine, Councillor Lowrey and Councillor Rayson.

754/17 Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th July 2017

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record

755/17 Minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 30st August 2017

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

756/17

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Gearing declared that she was a tenant of Home Group

757/17

Public Participation

- (i) Mr Nicholson asked if there had been any progress on street cleaning as outside Wilkos was littered with cigarette ends, cans wrappers etc.
The Chairman said there was item 12 (the Whitehaven Lengthsman Partnership) later on in the Agenda about this and this might answer his questions.
Mr Nicholson said that a lot of councils now seem to be getting enforcement officers to check on these things. The Clerk said that CBC had enforcement officers who were out and about and who regularly issued a lot of litter tickets outside Wilkos and other areas of the town and that a lot of people paid the litter tickets rather than go to Court.
- (ii) Mr Nicholson asked if the Council would consider looking at introducing a Tourist Information Office perhaps at the Beacon and manned by volunteers. He said a lot of town councils seem to be doing this. The Chairman said he had a meeting the next day with CBC and would mention this. Councillor Maudling said that when he had attended a meeting for the presentation of the World Heritage Site he had stood up and said that was great but now we have Copeland open for business and we don't have any toilets nor do we have any tourist information. He said the Mayor of Copeland said that a tourist information centre would be opened.
- (iii) Mr Nicholson said the Coast to Coast starts here and when people come they haven't got a good starting point other than when they get dropped off and then start looking for a toilet. He asked if it would be possible for WTC to approach the Harbour Commissioners to ask if agreement could be reached for people to use their toilet and changing facilities before they set off. The Chairman said the Clerk would write to the Harbour Commissioners about this.
Councillor Maudling said 12,500 cyclists come to Whitehaven each year for the Coast to Coast and we never see them again and we should be looking at ways that we can retain them so that businesses can benefit.
- (iv) Mr Nicholson asked if there had been any progress on the X4 and X5. The Chairman said that Councillor Roberts would answer this

when he arrived

- (v) Dorothy Martin said that she lived on George Street and had a beautiful Home Group property but that there were one or two grot spots. She said there were discarded needles and rubbish at the entrance to Birley Court and it was an eyesore and was horrendous and horrible to look at. She said there was also a lot of antisocial behaviour and the Police were in regular attendance. Councillor Maudling said he had had this on board for the past three years and That Home Group had refused to meet him face to face to go round Birley Court. Mrs Martin said that last week someone opened a flat window and dropped a needle out and on 5th August 2 addicts were seen by her grandchildren injecting on Queen Street. Councillor Maudling said that all the druggies seemed to have been moved in together.
- (vi) Dorothy Martin said their bins after being emptied were left in the archway to Birley Court and that people didn't collect them and that this was blocking the public access. The Chairman said that he would ask the Police, the Ward Councillor and Home Group to sort this out together.

Councillor Kane and Councillor Roberts entered the meeting at this point.

- (v) Councillor Roberts then answered Mr Nicholson's question about the X4 and X5. He said it was a misunderstanding on his part, the County Council and Stagecoach. He said this was a prototype service for an early morning school bus and it would go only as far as Cockermouth Main Street. He said it was not regular and that Stagecoach had no plans to run a regular service. He said the 600 service from West Cumberland Hospital could be used to link up to Cockermouth. Mr Nicholson said his original request was could the X4 and X5 service from Kendal to Workington be extended to Whitehaven and Councillor Roberts said the answer was no and Stagecoach had no plans to do so. Cllr Gearing said that she would like to go on the X4 and X5 to go to the lakes and Councillor Roberts said that when the new Traffic Manager from Stagecoach was in place in Preston he would be having a meeting with him as he felt for the beauty of Lakeland and to open up the Lake District we need good infrastructure and buses are an integral part. Councillor Roberts was asked to make representations on this in his capacity as a County Councillor. The Clerk was asked to write a

letter about this to CCC and Stagecoach.

758/17 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

The Chairman moved the following resolution:-

That in view of the special or confidential nature of the business about to be transacted the public and/or press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

RESOLVED – That the public and press be excluded for the following item

759/17 **Local Government Pension Scheme**

Further to Minute 747/17 (ii) the Chairman reported he had received advice from J McLeod about employees joining the LGPS. Jo McLeod

RESOLVED – (i) That membership of the LGPS be extended to employee VG in accordance with the employment contract.

(ii) That The Chairman and Jo McLeod discuss with employee MJ alternative to pension membership the value of which not to exceed the cost of the employer contributions to LGPS.

IN PUBLIC

760/17 **Planning Applications**

The Council considered a list of planning applications shown at Appendix 1 plus an extra application No. 4/17/9014 which had been received from CCC relating to the former Sekers site. Councillor Gearing said that she fully supported application No CH/4/17/2017/0F1. Councillor Roberts stated that he was a member of CCC.

RESOLVED – (i) That the Council noted Councillor Gearing's support and that the Local Planning Authority be informed that there were no representations to the planning applications.

- (ii) That the CCC be informed that there were no representations to planning application 4/17/9014.

761/17 **Planning Committee and Training**

Further to Minute 738/17 the Clerk reported that she had contacted CALC whose response had been that planning training was normally carried out by the Planning Manager of district councils. The Planning and Development Manager from Copeland Borough Council had been contacted about providing planning training this and a reply was awaited.

RESOLVED - That the Clerk contact the Planning Manager again and if he is unable to provide the necessary training that the Clerk find an alternative training provider.

762/17 **Whitehaven Market**

The Chairman introduced Janice Carrol from Copeland Borough Council who gave a report on the continuing development of Whitehaven Market and requesting a contribution from the Council for operational and ongoing development costs of £21,795
She said that

- Copeland was funding the Market Traders Initiative for start- up stalls and was not asking for any funding for that
- The market was starting to gain momentum
- The Markets officer has been networking and looking at other markets
- They were starting to look at Christmas events but had not looked beyond that because CBC needed commitment from WTC
- There was a lot of promotion for the market in the media
- The number of market stalls being rented was not big but was showing consistent growth.
- CBC was asking for a 50 % contribution of £21,795 for 2017/2018 for operational and ongoing development costs (including the Markets Officer on 2.5 days per week)

There was reference in the report to the cost (£1,800) of

supporting the Market Traders Support Initiative from September 2017 but Janice Carrol said that the £1,800 had been found.

Councillor Maudling said that the same markets advert was being used time after time and Janice Carrol said the Council was not going to continue with that and the plan for the future was to use different media eg the West Cumbria Guide and Facebook.

Janice Carrol said that there would need to be a meeting of the Market Stakeholder Group very soon as it had not met for a few months and the Chairman asked for a volunteer(s) from the Council to sit on the Group and Councillor Gearing volunteered to sit on the Group.

The Chairman proposed that the Council pay 50% contribution amounting to £21,795 towards operational costs and the Markets Officer on 2.5 days a week and this was seconded by Councillor Gearing.

Following a vote it was unanimously

- RESOLVED** :- (i) That the Council pay 50% contribution amounting to £21,795 for 2017/2018 towards operational and ongoing development costs for Whitehaven Market (including the Markets Officer on 2.5 days per week).
- (ii) That Councillor Gearing represent the Council on The Markets Stakeholder Group.

763/17 **Financial Report**

- (i) The Council considered at Appendix 1 a list of invoices for payment

RESOLVED - That payment of the invoices shown on Appendix 1 be authorised for payment.

- (ii) **RESOLVED** – (i) That the Cashbook (Appendix 2) and the Income and Expenditure (Appendix 3) be agreed and noted.

- (iii) **RESOLVED** – That the information at 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 be agreed and noted.

764/17 **Audit Report**

The Chairman reported that the Council's internal Auditor had carried out an Interim Audit for 2017/18 and her report stated that the cash book is properly maintained and up to date, VAT reclaimed, there are proper arrangements for payroll and HMRC payments, the insurance policy covers all risks, income is properly accounted for and arrangements for making transfers and payments from the Council's bank accounts are transparent and operate correctly.

RESOLVED – That the Interim Audit Report be approved.

765/17 **Annual Audit Review**

The Clerk reported that following Council approval of the Annual Return on 25th May 2017 it had been advertised for public inspection and submitted to BDO. BDO had raised 3 queries and asked for some further information. The queries were answered leaving one outstanding matter that the BDO intended to issue a qualified audit report on because the period of electors rights in 2015/2016 was not given in accordance with the Audit Regulations and the Council had in good faith ticked the box to say it had. BDO said the Council could apply to have the qualification lifted at a cost of £30 (which would involve BDO returning the original Annual Return form to have it mended and signed and returned to them) and it had been agreed that an email would be sent to BDO following the Meeting to confirm the Councils decision.

RESOLVED - That the Council apply to BDO to amend the original Annual Return form to have the qualified status lifted and that the Clerk contact BDO about this the next day.

766/17 **Whitehaven Lengthsman Partnership**

The Chairman said that over the last two years the Council had discussed the idea of having an employee of our own who would be able to do a range of different jobs. At a recent meeting with Mayor Starkie the proposal was to form a partnership based on a person employed for five days by Copeland Borough Council but for three days the person would work for WTC and the salary for those three days would be paid by

WTC. The cost for three days was £26,800 which included employee costs, machinery, maintenance, transport, training, admin costs. During the three days WTC would have charge of the employee and for things like grass cutting the whole of WTC's area would be covered. Other duties would include litter picking and checking play areas. Reference was made to funding an electric hand operated sweeper (Glutton machine) at a cost of £11,000. The Chairman asked to leave the Glutton machine to another time as this was being discussed elsewhere and proposed that this be revisited at the next meeting and CBC agreed to arrange a demonstration of the Glutton machine.

Susan Fryer from CBC said the work would be carried out by a member of the proposed Ranger Team and that the team would be supported by an arborist who would deal with any issues relating to trees. The Ranger Team would come into operation on 1st January 2018. Janice Carroll said that CBC could give business continuity in that if the Ranger was away from work there would be someone else in the Ranger Team to take over the duties.

Councillor Kane said the Council should have input into the job description.

The Chairman proposed that the Council agree in principle to entering into a partnership with CBC for an employee to work for the Town Council three days a week at a cost of £26,800 per annum subject to WTC and CBC working through the job description before anyone is employed either internally or externally. This was seconded by Councillor Maudling.

RESOLVED –(i) That the Council agree in principle to partner with CBC and pay a contribution of £26,800 per annum towards the annual operational costs of employing a Ranger based on three days per week working exclusively for WTC subject to WTC and CBC working through and agreeing the job description before someone is employed.

(ii) That the funding for the Glutton machine be deferred and that WTC and CBC should meet in the next few weeks and in the meanwhile CBC would arrange a demonstration of this machine.

767/17

Home Group

The Chairman said at the last meeting there was a range of Home Group issues and the reason for asking for the meeting was because the Council was concerned about the relationship between the Whitehaven residents and Home Group and the meeting was to discuss how to improve communication and get work done. Two representatives from Home

Group, Caroline McDonald and Clare Proudlock attended the Council meeting.

Home Group said that they were working quite closely with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

Home Group said that it was more difficult to get in touch with them because the customer had to have an understanding of how they offered their service. They said everything was now structured and recorded and that according to their records they had a very low rate of drop off of telephone calls.

Councillor Maudling said it was the responsibility of Home Group to care for their tenants and Home Group said that their customers also had a responsibility to report any repairs to them

Councillor Kane referred to the many empty properties and Home Group said they had 5 empty properties which were ready to let but that they couldn't find tenants for them.

Home Group asked that customers make contact with them initially. The Chairman said that the reputation of Home Group was nose-diving and that the communication issue was by far the worst problem.

The Chairman asked how the people of Whitehaven could be represented and the dialogue between the people in the Council's area and Home Group be improved.

Councillor Forster said that in Hensingham they had regular surgeries for people to attend.

Following a discussion it was

RESOLVED – That Home Group send information to the Council on how people can communicate with Home Group so that this can be put on the Council's website.

768/17

Christmas Events Advisory Group

The notes from the meeting of the Christmas Events Advisory Group held on 11th August 2017 were circulated. Councillor Maudling reported that the switch on of the Christmas lights would be 19th November 2017. He said that he was waiting to hear about the festivities but he estimated that it would cost between £6000 and £8000 to stage the event and that 2 artistes would be appearing.

The Clerk said that the Advisory Group recommended either using S101 of the Local Government Act 1972 or suspending Financial Regulations to award the contract for this year for the collection, repair, testing, erection, maintenance and dismantling of the Christmas lights to Cumbria County Council and that for the future it was recommended

that the infrastructure of the Christmas lights be completely redesigned and revamped/replaced.

Cumbria County Council had submitted a quote that said this work would cost £26,745 but that there would be unseen repairs which may take the cost to a maximum of £27,000. S101 could not be used as it referred to the delegation of Council functions and Christmas lights was not a Town Council function. The Clerk said that the procedure for suspending Financial Regulations would require the matter to be dealt with at an Extraordinary Council meeting. The Chairman said that the cost of Christmas Festivities could be dealt with at the same Extraordinary Council meeting.

RESOLVED – (i) That an Extraordinary Council meeting be called to suspend Financial Regulations to award the contract for this year for the collection, testing, repair, erection, maintenance and dismantling of the Christmas lights to Cumbria County Council.

(ii) That Christmas Festivities be discussed at the same Meeting.

(iii) That the switch on of the Christmas lights in Whitehaven on 19th November 2017 be approved.

769/17

Bus Shelters, Waste Bins and Seats/Benches Litter

The Chairman said that at the moment the Council did not have a full list of requirements for bus shelters so they would be discussed at a future meeting.

The Chairman said that there were several bus shelters in the pipe line. He said all this was connected with the Pride of Place for Copeland and that one of the main areas was Whitehaven. So because everyone was aware that the town centre needed various things he was proposing that the litter bins and the seats/benches in the town centre be replaced (including those that had been removed) by the Council on a like for like basis. Research had been carried out by Nicky Scott and that the cost of the black soldier bins was approximately £3000 (including seagull-proof flaps). 36 bins were to be removed which would therefore cost approximately £12,000. It had been estimated that 50% of the bins removed could be recycled and redistributed at a cost.

The Chairman said that his second proposal was to replace the 10 seats/benches again on a like for like basis with high quality coastal seats/benches at a cost of approximately £900 each but that the Council needed the permission of CCC to do this.

Councillor Maudling asked if the seats would be resin instead of wood and the Clerk said that the seats were made of enviropol material. The Chairman proposed spending £10,000 to remove and replace the seats/benches and £12,000 to remove and replace the litter bins in Whitehaven Town Centre subject to consulting with CBC to make sure the furniture is of the right design, making a total of £22,000. Councillor Maudling seconded this

- RESOLVED** – (i) That 10 seats/benches in the town centre be replaced on a like for like basis subject to consultation with CBC and at a cost of £10,000.
- (ii) That 36 bins be removed and replaced on a like for like basis subject to consultation with CBC and CCC at a cost of £12,000
- (iii) That the Council investigate where to redistribute any bins that can be recycled.
- (iv) That Council look at Ward litter bins at the next meeting

770/17

King Street Pedestrian Area

The Chairman said that because of problems the Police and CCC were to be contacted to ask them to review the traffic access to King Street, Whitehaven.

RESOLVED – That a letter be sent to the Police and CCC to ask them to review traffic access to King Street, Whitehaven

771/17

Corruption in Copeland

The Chairman expressed concern that one of our Councillors had posted comments about corruption in Copeland. He read out what had been posted on an open facebook page.

Councillor Maudling said he would rather the Councillor was at the Council meeting to answer the questions.

RESOLVED – That the matter be deferred to the next meeting so that an explanation could be given by the Councillor concerned.

772/17 **Suspension of Standing Orders**

The Chairman said it was now 9.30 and in order to deal with the remaining Agenda items he proposed that Standing Orders be suspended for 30mins to do this.

RESOLVED – That Standing Orders be suspended for 30 minutes to deal with the remaining items on the Agenda.

773/17 **Councillor Protocols**

The Chairman asked that all Councillors pass any issues they may have directly to the appropriate authority be it CBC or CCC as the Council should not be diving in and trying to solve everyone's problems but should be referring them to the appropriate authority.

RESOLVED – That this be noted

774/17 **Ceremonial Medals**

The Chairman said that the Council had two medals in its possession, one gold and one silver and that a decision needed to be made about them. The Chairman asked the Clerk to inform the Council of the Chairmans expenses for 2015/2016.

Following a discussion it was

RESOLVED – That this be deferred to the next meeting

The Mayor Announced that this year he had no proposals to do a Mayoral ceremony but said he would be having a Mass for Whitehaven at St Begh's Church because it was all about our town. This was noted.

775/17 **Councillor Matters**

1. The Clerk informed the Council that Councillor Rayson had asked that certain matters relating to her Ward be mentioned. These were as follows:-

- (i) The equipment in Jericho park is starting to look a bit dated with rust and flaky paint. Also a resident has commented on how it can't be used after wet weather unlike other play parks that have bark or

matting on the ground.

- (ii) The usual issue about lack of dog bins has been raised.
 - (iii) There is an ongoing problem with the path at the top of Highfields leading to Rascals Nursery which floods in winter. Residents have raised this with the previous Councillor.
 - (iv) A resident is regularly feeding seagulls, often scraping the remains of his meal off his plate onto the grass outside his house where children play. One of his neighbours has reported him to me.
2. Councillor Gearing said there were problems with the waste team getting round because of parked cars. She said she had suggested designated bin areas but they said that that would be difficult as they had assisted bin collections and that it seemed that every suggestion she put forward was rejected.
 3. Councillor Kane said that someone had dumped dead rabbits in a waste bin but that Janice Carrol had taken the bin away and replaced it with a new one.
 4. Councillor Forster said there would be a Ward clean up in Hensingham on 5/9/17 by herself, CBC and others to deal with weeds etc. Councillor Gearing suggested that other Councillors go along to help and Councillor Forster welcomed all help
 5. Councillor O'Kane read out a letter received from Mark Kirkbride the CEO of West Cumbria Mining which stated that WMC was extremely grateful for the letter of support from the Town Council dated 30th June 2017 but was concerned by a letter date 10th July 2017 signed by 2 Whitehaven Town Councillors written in a manner that appeared to represent and have the support of the Town Council and which set out a number of requests for financial support and other commitments to be made by WMC.
Mr Kirkbride said that WCM was seeking to bring major investment into Whitehaven with the prospect of well-paid jobs, financial benefits to local businesses and suppliers and that if there were too many formal demands placed on the project it could reach a point where it becomes uneconomical to proceed and that this would not be in the best interests of the Town Council or local communities.
Councillor Roberts said that he had said at a previous meeting that this

was a County Council matter

776/17 Date and Venue of next Meeting

RESOLVED – That the next Council meeting be on 28th September 2017
at a venue to be arranged.

The Meeting closed at 9.50



Chairman