



## MORECAMBE TOWN COUNCIL

### **MINUTES of the Meeting of Morecambe Town Council held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 7.00 p.m. at Morecambe Town Hall.**

**Present:** Councillors: J. Ashworth (Vice-Chair), T. Anderson, P. Anderton, A. Ashworth, Mariusz Balcer, Mirka Balcer, J. Bates, V. Boyd-Power, S. Burns, R. Cleet, T. Clarke, I. Clift, G. Dennison, R. Dennison, M. Evans, J. Firth, J. Goodwin, J. Hanson, D. Jenkins, C. Matthews, J. Newton, J. Pilling, M. Pattison, P. Ross-Clasper, D. Whitaker

**Officers in Attendance:** B. Bailey (Town Clerk), N. Kitchen (Assistant Clerk).

There were 15 residents and one member of the press in attendance at the meeting. The Vice-Chairman opened the Meeting by welcoming everybody present.

20012. **Election of Chairman:** The Town Clerk reported that Councillor Heath had stood down as Chair of the Town Council on ill-health grounds.

Nominations for Chair were then invited with Councillors J Ashworth and J Hanson being nominated. On being put to the vote Councillor J Ashworth was elected as Chair of the Town Council until its Annual Meeting in May.

As Councillor Ashworth had been Vice-Chair nominations were then invited for this position with Councillor C Matthews being nominated. There being no other nominations, Councillor Matthews was elected as Vice-Chair of the Town Council until its Annual Meeting in May.

20013. **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from Councillor P. Heath.

20014. **Declarations of Interests:** Councillors Anderton, Boyd-Power, Goodwin, Hanson and Matthews declared an interest in agenda item 20025 as Members of Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee.

Councillors Pattison and Ross-Clasper requested a dispensation on matters on the agenda due to their respective association as an elected County Councillor and Proprietor of a local guest house. Councillors J Bates and R Dennison similar requested a dispensation on matters relating to plans for the VE Day celebrations.

Following a point of order raised by Councillor R Cleet, Councillors J Bates, V Boyd-Power and J Hanson declared an interest as members of the Morecambe Business Improvement District (BID) Committee.

20015. **Minutes:** The Council considered the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 and Extraordinary Town Council meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

Members enquired as to the reason why the Minutes of the Extraordinary Town Council, which had been previously posted on the Council's website had been removed and not provided to members of the public. The Chair advised that these had been withdrawn as the Town Council had voted that the matters under discussion at that meeting were exempt.

After further comments about the content of the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting, it was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of both meetings be signed as a correct record.

20016. **Public Participation:** The Chair invited members of the public to speak. Representatives from Catch the Wind, Vintage by the Sea and the Morecambe Carnival each spoke about the plans for their respective festivals in 2020/21 and the added value and benefits that each brought to the local community, visitors and the local economy. Each asked that the Town Council give this due consideration when deliberating on the funding of festivals in the town during 2020/21.

Speaking as a resident, one of the speakers asked why the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting were not now available. The Chair repeated that the matters under discussion at the meeting had been exempt and that they had been posted on the Council's website in error.

The Town Clerk responded that the Minutes of this meeting had been published after consideration of the so-called 'public interest test' as defined by the Information Commissioners Office in relation to exemptions.

A resident then raised a range of complaints about anti-social behaviour in the Poulton Ward which he urged the Town Council and the Police to address through the application of their anti-social behaviour resources and procedures, including seeking funding for the installation of Close Circuit Television and notices warning about enforcement relating to anti-social behaviour. Ward Councillors were thanked for agreeing to meet with the resident to discuss these matters in more detail.

The Chair thanked all speakers for their contributions.

20017. **Chairman's Urgent Business:** There were no matters of urgent business from the Chair.

20018. **Motions:** Councillors Bates and Pilling proposed the following motions:

1. *Morecambe Town Council should undertake an independent, internal audit of information handling and storage and financial management. The audit should cover the period from April 2018 to the present day. Tenders should be invited from three audit companies which are based outside the Parliamentary constituencies of Morecambe and Lunesdale and Lancaster and Fleetwood. Companies which have provided audit reports to Morecambe Town Council in the last two years should not be considered. The audit report should be presented in its entirety to all members of the Council. The Council should appoint an audit committee to facilitate the process of audit.*

Councillor Pilling explained that the motion had been submitted given the circumstances and concerns raised regarding the financial management of the Council's activities and to provide assurance to the Town Council and the local community that management of the Council accounts, financial management and governance arrangements comply with legislation and proper practices.

Councillor Anderton then made a statement acknowledging the current shortcomings that had been identified by the Town Council and the planned action to address these, principally a Finance and Governance Committee having been established with delegated powers and responsibility for financial management, governance and internal control.

It was also pointed out that as an independent internal audit is due at the end of the financial year (31<sup>st</sup> March) an immediate internal audit would be a further burden in the work of officers and not cost-effective.

By way of a friendly amendment, Councillor Anderton recommended that the next audit covers the requirements for 2019/2020 but also looks at financial management and accounts statements and records since April 2015.

A recorded vote on the amendment was requested after which the original motion fell, and the amended motion voted in favour by a margin of twelve votes to five.

2. *Morecambe Town Council Standing Orders should be amended to determine a suitable Line Management structure for all Council Staff.*

*Line management responsibilities would be;*

- *to assist the Town Clerk in day to day issues that may arise;*
- *to act as a critical friend;*
- *to act as a conduit between the Town Clerk and the Council Members, and any such other responsibilities as the Town Council may determine from time to time.*

*The appointment of a line manager should be made with immediate effect.*

Councillor Pilling explained that he had submitted this motion given recent matters relating to discussions arising from Personnel Committee relating to the arrangements around the line management and appraisal of the former Town Clerk.

There followed a debate about the Town Council's responsibilities to make staff feel valued and be more effective in their work, as well as to deal promptly and positively with poor performance whenever the need arises.

Members acknowledged that the line management arrangements are in need review and it was suggested that this should be considered in detail by a sub-committee of the Finance and Governance Committee with responsibility for human resources, yet to established. It was then proposed that the details of both motions be deliberated by the Finance and Governance Committee with recommendations being considered by the Town Council in due course.

A recorded vote on the motion was then requested with eight Members voting in favour and eleven against. The Chair declared that the motion had failed, after which the original motion fell, and the amended motion voted in favour by a margin of twelve votes to five.

20019. **Precept and Budget 2020/21:** The Vice-Chair presented the 2020/21 budget proposed by the MBI group. It was reported that following publication of the budget and having listed to representations made by festival organisers it was proposed that the *Festival Funds* be increased by £10,000 to £30,000.

Referring to the proposed budget for *Ward Grants* it was proposed that this be increased by £8,000 to £100,000. It was reported that the additional £18,000 would be met from the *Town Council Office Fund* which had been reduced to £37,000.

The total budget amounted to £323,550 (including earmarked and general reserves). It was proposed that the precept for 2020/21 remains unchanged at £189,594 with the remainder being met from existing balances. The Vice-Chair reported that the 2020/21 would see the precept remain unchanged for the 11<sup>th</sup> year in succession.

Members raised several questions relating to the proposed budget including:

- 1) Why has no allocation been made for the feasibility study approved by the Town Council in January to consider risks, benefits and options for the former *Frontierland*?
- 2) Why is there no budget allocation to tackle Anti-social behaviour?
- 3) What method has been used to calculate the proposed festival funding?
- 4) What will be the criteria for allocating/awarding monies from the Ward Grants budget?
- 5) Why has the budget for the management of the promenade toilets and Christmas lights been removed?
- 6) What will be the overall impact of the proposed budget on existing balances and reserves?

The Vice-Chair and other Members of the MBI group broadly responded to some of the questions being asked, commenting that:

- 1) Work is now being undertaken by Lancaster City Council officers that should negate the need for a feasibility study;
- 2) Work is underway to assess whether value for money relating to anti-social behaviour was achieved in 2019/20. It is considered that, through proposed additional hours for the Enforcement Officer and effective partnership working with Lancaster City Council, anti-social behaviour in the town can continue to be dealt with;
- 3) The details and criteria relating to festival funding and Ward grants will be worked up by the Finance and Governance and Environmental Committees respectively;

- 4) The decision to increase the budget for festival funding was taken following feedback from the recent 'Have your say' consultation which ranked festivals as the top priority;
- 5) The Finance & Governance Committee will closely monitor balances and reserves to ensure that they remain within acceptable limits and do not negatively impact on current and future budgets.

At this point, Councillor Bates requested to be a member of the Environmental Committee.

Councillor Pilling was then invited to present the budget prepared on behalf of other groups.

This budget and supporting notes proposed expenditure (including £86,000 of Reserves) totalling £288,073. Included in the budget was £55,000 for festival funding (no change from the previous year); a deprivation fund (£4,065); retained funding for toilets management (£10,000) and anti-social behaviour (£14,000). A sum of £10,000 towards a feasibility study on the options for the purchase of the derelict land on the Frontierland site was also included.

It was reported that this would be met by a 5% increase in the annual precept and a small amount of income from Town Council activities.

Councillor Pilling also read out a statement which set out an assessment of how the festivals benefit the local economy.

There followed further lengthy debate, during which the Town Clerk made a statement that it would be more effective and efficient for the Town Council to debate one proposed budget and precept as recommended through an established Finance and Governance Committee made up of Councillors from across the Town Council.

After some comments on this suggestion, it was proposed, seconded and following a vote (sixteen Members in favour and eight against) **RESOLVED** unanimously that the budget and precept for the financial year 2020/21 as set out by the MBI group be adopted. It was noted that the agreed precept represents an annual cost of £19.53 on a Band D property.

20020. **Festival Funding:** The Town Clerk reported that he had reviewed in detail the submitted accounts and supporting documents, invoices and vouchers of the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Vintage by the Sea held on 31<sup>st</sup> August and 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 and had found them to be a correct record of the events income and expenditure.
- Members had previously been sent the funders evaluation of the event which set out that, despite the poor weather, the event had attracted over 30,000 attendees and generated an estimated £1M for the local economy.
- It was then **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Town Council approves the requested funding of £15,900 for Vintage by the Sea 2019.
20021. **Information and Communications Technology:** The Town Clerk had previously issued a paper setting out the need for new information and communications technology following serious problems with the current broadband, personal computers and telephone system since early 2019. It was reported that this was now having a significant impact on the efficiency and effectiveness on the Town Council's ability to deliver its functions and communicate with the local community.
- The Town Clerk had secured detailed quotations from two companies based in Kendal (current supplier) and Carnforth. These contained a range of options for broadband telephones; stand-alone PC's and laptops that could be acquired through capital expenditure, lease or a 'blended' solution which was a combination of both.
- In the detailed paper, the Town Clerk set out the optimum solutions offered by both companies, the related costs and the preferred option.
- Members thanked staff for the quality of their work under extremely difficult circumstances but given the relatively short time to consider the options, it was initially suggested that the matter be referred to the Finance and Governance Committee.
- There followed several comments and questions about the options under consideration and then it was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** unanimously that the preferred option be approved and that the Town Clerk makes immediate arrangements for the acquisition and installation of the new ICT equipment.
20022. **Payment's List:** Members considered the *payments list* to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020, which included funding for the 2019 Vintage by the Sea festival (Minute 20020 refers), and totalled £24,048.64.

After some questions, it was **RESOLVED** that payments as set out be approved and authorised. The Chair then signed the payments list.

20023. **Environmental Committee:** Councillor Boyd-Power, reported that at the first meeting of this new Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 she had been elected Chair and Councillor Ross-Clasper Vice-Chair. The Committee had agreed its terms of reference, to include responsibility for the Morecambe in Bloom competition, allotments management, environmental matters including enforcement and management of the proposed Ward Grants.

Councillors had attended a recent meeting of the committee run by the allotment holders who requested the Council's permission to erect a community building and install CCTV (Agenda item 20027 also refers).

Unfortunately, due to other external commitments, Councillor Boyd-Power had to stand down as Chair of this Committee with immediate effect.

20024. **Personnel Committee:** The Chair reported that the matters discussed at the Personnel Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> January had been exempt. Councillor Hanson moved that the exemption be rescinded so that the matters could be discussed in the public meeting and on being put to the vote, this was carried unanimously.

At this point Councillors G Dennison, R Dennison and S Burns left the meeting.

The Chair of the Town Council then read the Minutes of the meeting, which set out resolutions relating to the management of the Assistant Clerk and the Environmental Enforcement Officer.

The Minutes also referred to the Assistant Clerk addressing the Personnel Committee on her letter of complaint and subsequent grievance that resulted in six of the seven areas of grievance being upheld.

The Assistant Clerk made a further statement outlining her concerns about comments that had been made at the Personnel Committee meeting relating to matters raised in the original grievance. This had subsequently resulted in the Chair of the Personnel Committee standing down.

It was reported that the grievance raised concerns around financial management, staff management, governance, internal control and operational arrangements in line with proper practice and standards. Members made several comments about the need to support the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk in making improvements and for



Member to fulfil their own responsibilities to ensure that standards and maintained or achieved and the Town Council moves forward positively.

The Chair, thanked the Assistant Clerk and Town Clerk for their professionalism and integrity and stated that they had her full support and all the Councillors.

20025. **Planning Applications, Temporary Road Closures and Planning Decisions:**

Councillors Anderton, Boyd-Power, Goodwin, Hanson and Matthews left the meeting having declared an interest as Members of Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee.

Councillor Cleet (Planning Committee Chair) spoke to each of the following planning applications, reporting that the Planning Committee recommends that the Town Council supports them in principle.

<b>Application No:</b>	<b>Description &amp; Site Address</b>
19/01492/FUL	Change of use of shop (A1) to wine bar (A4) installation of new shop front and creation of an external seating area - 269 Marine Road Central. Morecambe. LA4 5BX <b>Recommendation: Support in principle</b>
19/01609/FUL	Demolition of existing garage and erection of a two-storey extension and a single storey rear extension - 15 Kayswell Road. Morecambe. LA4 6PU <b>Recommendation: Support in principle</b>
20/00007/FUL	Construction of a hip to gable extension, construction of a dormer extension to the rear elevation, demolition of conservatory & erection of a single storey rear extension - 91 Fulwood Drive, Morecambe <b>Recommendation: Support in principle</b>
20/00027/FUL	Demolition of existing lean-to rear extension and erection of a single storey rear extension - 82 Lancaster Road. Morecambe. LA4 5QN <b>Recommendation: Support in principle</b>
20/00040/FUL	Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension – 1A Brentwood Avenue, Morecambe LA4 6HB <b>Recommendation: Support in principle</b>
<b>Application No:</b>	<b>Description &amp; Site Address</b>
20/00048/FUL	Erection of a single storey side extension - 16 Westminster Avenue, Morecambe LA4 4DX <b>Recommendation: Support in principle</b>

After some comments, it was **RESOLVED** that all planning applications be supported in principle. Councillors Anderton, Boyd-Power, Goodwin, Hanson and Matthews returned to the meeting.

20026. **Planning decisions:** Members considered the up-to-date position on decisions of the planning authority (Lancaster City Council) on planning applications previously considered by the Town Council. It was noted that four planning applications had been permitted, two had been refused and two are awaiting a decision.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the update on planning authority decisions be noted.

20027. **Allotments:** Councillor Cleet reported on matters of interest arising from a recent meeting of the committee run by the allotment holders. It was reported that they are seeking the permission of the Town Council to install a community building on the allotment land, prior to formally submitting a planning application to Lancaster City Council.

Members asked questions and commented on the potential benefits that a community building would bring to the allotments site. Councillor Matthews remarked that Councillors would benefit from training and/or guidance on the Town Council's management responsibilities for the allotments and associated legislation.

It was then unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council gives its permission for the allotment holders to erect a community building subject to planning permission being granted. **ACTION:** The Town Clerk was asked to research and provide guidance on allotments management and/or to seek suitable Member training.

20028. **National Association of Local Councils (NALC):** The Town Clerk had distributed a paper setting out the perceived benefits of subscribing to the National Association of Local Councils and the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC). Benefits for individual Town and Parish Councils and the sector include: legal, accountancy and audit advice; conferences, events and training; publicity and campaigning; standards, awards and recognition.

Members were generally in agreement that it would be beneficial to subscribe to both NALC and LALC but, after some discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk makes arrangements for a future presentation on the benefits of subscription so that a more informed decision can be made.

20029. **Exclusion of Press & Public:** The Council had been asked to consider whether *"in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business (Agenda item 20030) on the grounds that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act."*

Members were reminded that, whilst the following item has been marked as exempt, it is for the Council itself to decide whether to consider it in private or in public. In making the decision, Members should consider the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A of the Local Government 2 Act 1972 and should balance the interests of individuals or the Council itself in having access to information

The Chair informed Members, however, that Councillor Heath had agreed to the decision of the Standards Committee being considered in public.

20030. **Standards Committee:** The Chair then read out the following relating to Councillor Heath's attendance at a Standards Committee Hearing on 16th January 2020

*'The complaint was in relation to a statement read out by you at a town council meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019 which named Mr & Mrs Brayshaw. The complaint alleged that you had deliberately read out the statement to discredit the Brayshaws. The statement was placed on YouTube and recorded in the minutes of that meeting.*

*The Committee upheld the complaint that you and breached the code of conduct and resolved as follows:*

- 1) *That the breach be reported to Morecambe Town Council and that the town council be requested to note in their minutes that there had been some*

*inaccuracies in the statement that the Subject Member had read out at the meeting of the town council that had instigated this complaint.*

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Standards Committee statement be recorded in the Town Council Minutes in full.

20031. **Date of Next Meeting:** The date if the next meeting is Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting ended at 9:40pm

.....

Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Bailey'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bob Bailey, Town Clerk