



Morecambe Town Council

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Proper Officer: Mr Luke Trevaskis

Minutes of the Meeting of Morecambe Town Council held at Morecambe Town Hall at 7pm on the sixth day of January 2022

Present: Councillors C Matthews (Chairman); P Clarke; I Clift; P Hart; J Pilling; C Pilling; G Blaikie; J Firth; J Ashworth; V Boyd-Power; G Dennison; J Goodwin, D Whitaker, M Pattison, P Anderton, J Hanson, J Bates,

In attendance: Luke Trevaskis (Proper Officer) and nine members of the public.

Minute 20368

Apologies

Apologies for absence received from Cllrs A Ashworth, S Burns, Mirka Balcer, Mariusz Balcer, T Heath.

Minute 20369

Declarations of Interests

Cllr Pattison noted membership of Lancashire County Council.

Cllr P Anderton declared directorship of Morecambe Winter Gardens and membership of Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee.

Cllr J Hanson declared membership of Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee.

Cllr V Boyd-Power declared membership of Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee.

Cllr C Matthews declared membership of Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee and noted spouse's directorship of Morecambe Winter Gardens.

Minute 20370

Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Minute 20371

Public Forum

A member of the public requested the suspension of symptomatic testing at Morecambe Town Hall.

Members of the public were advised that Morecambe Town Council does not own or operate Morecambe Town Hall, or have any control over the Covid-19 testing.

A member of the public spoke to Item 6 on the agenda advising that they did not feel a vacancy had arisen.

A member of the public wished everyone a happy new year and congratulated new members on securing their seat. It was questioned as to whether the summons to members was circulated three or five days prior to each meeting. A warning was given if Item 12 on the agenda was to proceed and a recorded vote was requested.

Minute 20372

Elections

It was noted that Cllr Bill Jackson and Cllr Louise Stansfield were duly elected to fill seats in Heysham North Ward and Westgate Ward.

Minute 20373

Vacancy

It was noted that a vacancy had arisen in line with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Council requested the Proper Officer seek clarification from Lancaster City Council.

Minute 20374

Winter Gardens

The Council resolved to approve the financial contribution of £5,000 to Morecambe Winter Gardens for the funding of the Economic Impact Report.

Minute 20375

Welcome Back Fund

An update was received on the Welcome Back Fund and the Council resolved to approve all projects with the exception of the app, with officers delegated to progress the projects and the expenditure.

Minute 20376

Finance

The Council accepted Month 8 and Month 9 budget reports and accounts.

Minute 20377

Exclusion of Press and Public

The Council resolved that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business, on the grounds that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

Minute 20378

Harassment of Council Staff and Councillors

The Council noted the recent harassment of council staff and councillors, including oppressive correspondence, homophobic abuse, and unfounded accusations.

The Council considered a recent case *Ashford Borough Council and Kerly v Fergus Wilson (2021) EWHC 2542 (QB)*, where the Council sought a final anti-harassment injunction to protect staff, councillors, and agents from a campaign of harassment and intimidation from the defendant. In July 2020, the High Court granted an interim injunction restraining the defendant from pursuing a course of conduct amounting to harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Between February 2016 and July 2020, the Council's legal department recorded 454 pieces of correspondence from the defendant. The High Court judge found among other things that the defendant had engaged in a campaign of repetitive, frequent, oppressive, and offensive correspondence with the claimants, which ignored reasoned responses from the Council. The defendant's correspondence included two suggestions that a councillor should commit suicide, numerous examples of personally offensive comments about appearance, unfounded accusations of criminal conduct and professional misconduct and requests that councillors or employees should resign or be dismissed. In the circumstances the judge was satisfied that the interim injunction should be continued and converted to a permanent injunction.

The Council resolved to delegate authority and expenditure to the Proper Officer to engage a legal expert to provide options for the Council on how to address the harassment.