

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE TOWN HALL,  
COCKERMOUTH ON TUESDAY 17 MAY 2016 AT 7PM**

Present: Councillor J Laidlow Town Mayor/Chair  
Councillor I Burns  
Councillor L Davies  
Councillor A Kennon  
Councillor D Malloy  
Councillor S Nicholson  
Councillor K Scales  
Councillor A Smith  
Councillor S Standage  
Councillor A Tyson

Apologies: Councillor E Nicholson & Councillor C M Jackson

Also Present: A press representative and approximately 18 members of the public were present.

**Welcome**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

She reminded those present that although all members of the public were allowed to attend only electors were entitled to vote and speak.

**Minutes**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 30 April 2015 were signed as a correct record.

**Annual Report of the Town Council**

The Town Mayor, Julie Laidlow presented her report as follows:-

2015/16 has once again been a very busy year for Cockermouth Town Council. Town Council meetings can now be recorded and filmed and as a result the Town Council has adopted a Protocol which is displayed at the entrance to our meeting room.

Flooding early in December 2015 affected many local businesses and householders. I continue to be amazed by the resilience and comrade spirit evident in the town and applaud everyone involved for their valiant efforts in such atrocious conditions to return the town back to a state of readiness for the festive season. Many of our own assets, Town Hall, Victoria Hall, Tourist Information Centre and Memorial Gardens were badly affected.

The Town Council is consulted by the Borough Council on all planning applications within the town of Cockermouth and in all cases comments have been forwarded to the Borough Council setting out the Town Council's views. The final decision on

planning applications does not always agree with the views of the Town Council however the majority of decisions do agree.

I am pleased to inform you that every square inch of available space in the Town Hall is now leased. An exhibition showing off artefacts recovered from the Papcastle Dig continues to attract visitors. The exhibition will end on 31 December 2016. The Citizens Advice Bureau continue to hold their outreach sessions each Wednesday in a ground floor office. The illegal parking in the car park in front of the town hall has reduced significantly as a result of Allerdale Borough Council enforcing usage on our behalf.

Victoria Hall is currently empty, it has been fully refurbished following December's flooding. We are in discussions with interested parties regarding a long term lease.

The Tourist Information Centre continues to be managed by Mrs Julia Hindle assisted by a small number of part time staff. The Tourist Information Centre closed temporarily following flooding early in December 2015 but was re-opened on 29 February 2016.

Dates of town council meetings, minutes of meetings etc are available on line at [www.ckermouth.org](http://www.ckermouth.org)

Our twinning links continue to flourish despite tough economic times. Our twinning structures/procedures were reviewed in August 2015 due to an issue with coverage of our public liability insurance for volunteers. The Town Twinning Advisory Committee was disbanded and it was agreed that town council sub committees be formed to assist with the organisation of each visit.

As a result of the town being awarded the Europe Prize in the year 2000 a Europe Prize Scholarship Fund was set up and has now become established and a great help to Cockermouth 6<sup>th</sup> form youngsters pursuing their studies in Europe. The Committee continues to raise money to keep the fund going for the foreseeable future and the Council continues to actively support the Association of Towns Awarded the Europe Prize of which it is a proud member. Preparations are well underway for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Visit to Cockermouth in October 2016.

The Council provides allotments on two sites St. Helen's Street and the Gote. The Gote Road allotments were transferred to the Town Council from Cumbria County Council under a community asset transfer. There are currently 40 people on the waiting list for an allotment. Several of the allotments on the Gote were badly affected by the flooding in early December 2015. Allotment holders are being sign posted by the Town Clerk to funding that is being offered by the Cumbria Community Foundation. A successful presentation evening was held in the Council Chamber on 10 September 2015 for winners of the Garden and Allotment Competition.

We were lucky enough to host the start of stage 3 of the Tour of Britain on 8 September 2015. The Town Council sponsored various events held in Cockermouth during 2015/16 including Cockermouth Live, Taste Cumbria, Taste Christmas and Cockermouth by Candlelight. We have also sponsored Daffodil Day, a new town event which will take place on 2 April 2016 and the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of John Dalton.

The fireworks display held in the Memorial Gardens was a resounding success and will be repeated again this year.

The Double Mills Youth Hostel is currently leased to the Youth Hostel Association and has been for many years. This building will be handed back to the Town Council on 1 December 2016. The Town Council wishes to lease this building to a third party for use as either a youth hostel, hotel, bed and breakfast or private residence.

Despite the flooding, the usual Christmas activities organised by the Town Council took place and were well attended. We continue to be grateful for the donations made by businesses, local organisations and individuals towards the cost of the lights despite tough economic times.

Civic events organised included the annual Civic Dinner, Civic Service & Remembrance Sunday. Services were also held to commemorate one hundred years since VE Day and VJ Day.

The Council's Internal Auditor, Jean Airey, a former Town Clerk of Keswick, regularly audited the Council's accounts and reports back to the Council. This year's annual accounts have been prepared and the Clerk will shortly be sending off the required Annual Return to the External District Auditor. The repeal of Section 150(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 now allows enables the Town Council to finally embrace modern banking methods. Financial Standing Orders have been revised.

The Council continues to employ ISS Waterers Landscapes as their Maintenance Contractor for works at the Memorial Gardens. The Memorial Gardens have been left in a devastating condition following the floods early in December 2015. We hope to renew the pathways in the west gardens and will return the pathways in the east gardens to grass in the very near future.

A 30 year lease has been signed with Cockermouth Junior Football Club for their future use of Tarn Close Sports Ground. Their vision involves the creation of a football centre at Tarn Close for use by all teams in the town, junior, senior and veteran serving in the region of 500 members initially. Their long term vision involves the erection of a synthetic indoor pitch to serve Cockermouth and the surrounding villages. We wish Cockermouth Junior Football Club every success.

Play areas at Greyrigg Avenue, Harris Park Extension, Isel Road, Towers Lane and Memorial Gardens continue to be maintained by Cockermouth Town Council.

The Localism Bill published on the 13 December 2010 aims to shift power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and Councils by lifting the burden of bureaucracy, empowering communities and strengthening accountability to local people. A range of new powers and reforms will be introduced as a result of the Bill.

One of those new powers is the General Power of Competence (GPC). I am pleased to announce that on the 21 May 2015, the Town Council re-confirmed that it meets both criteria for eligibility for use of the General Power of Competence as set out in a statutory instrument known as the Parish Council's (General Power of Competence)

(Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 which came into force in April 2012.

The new General Power of Competence will fundamentally change the way Local Government behaves, giving them the same capacity to act as an individual generally which will enable us to do anything apart from that which is specifically prohibited. This will result in greater innovation and a new more confident entrepreneurial approach which should in turn lead to greater efficiencies, improved partnership working and the ability to help our community in ways previously outside our remit.

The Town Council adopted a revised Code of Conduct on 17 July 2012. Copies of the Code can be obtained from the Town Clerk.

The Town Council continues to maintain two new bus shelters which were erected as part of the Main Street Improvement Scheme outside Bet DSL and the Fletcher Christian and a new bus stop opposite the Hospital on Castlegate Drive.

The Town Council has been working closely with a number of voluntary organisations regarding a series of events planned to mark the anniversary of the Great War. We have adopted a flower bed adjacent to Gote Bridge on the Crown Street side. This is currently being leased to the Rotary to commemorate those lost during WW1.

The Memorial Gardens and Harris Park have been registered as assets of community value under the 2011 Localism Act.

The Town Council donated two re-furbished benches to the League of Friends, these have been sited outside the new hospital.

Our speed indication device continues to be placed at 'speeding' hotspots around the Town.

Local elections were held on Thursday 7 May 2015. Warding arrangements in Cockermouth have been revised as a result of The Cumbria (Electoral Changes) Order 2012.

As of 7 May 2015:-

- 4 councillors will represent All Saints
- 3 councillors will represent Christchurch
- 2 councillors will represent Double Mills
- 2 councillors will represent South Lodge
- 1 councillor will represent Fitz Ward.

A community defibrillator has been installed in Kings Arms Lane. The Town Council continues to monitoring and pay for the maintenance costs of this machine.

The Town Council were instrumental in the installation of cycle stands on the Main Street and are now responsible for their maintenance.

Usage of the banner poles on the Main Street is proving popular.

Cumbria County Council have transferred the title of land surrounding the cenotaph to Cockermouth Town Council.

The Clerk is in negotiations with Allerdale Borough Council regarding the future transfer of all 4 toilets to the Town Council.

The Town Council will be discussing CCTV provision within the Town with the new Police Commissioner following the May 2016 elections.

Our 2016/17 precept request was set at £184,042.

The Town Council agreed not to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the following reasons:-

- The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan represents a serious commitment over several years, this would seriously stretch existing resources and may affect the town councils ability to take on further assets/services
- Duplication – the current planning system uses community engagement methodologies to engage local communities in the statutory planning process
- A Neighbourhood Plan cannot conflict with the strategic policies in the local plan prepared by the Local Planning Authority
- A Neighbourhood Plan cannot be used to prevent development that is included in the Local Plan
- There was no evidence of any community support for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan
- It was difficult to anticipate costs as these were dependent on the complexity of the plan and the cost of specialist advice and support. It was acknowledged however based on research into the cost of other Neighbourhood Plans that the £9,000 grant on offer from the DCLG would be insufficient and that the true cost would be in the region of £50k
- Further resources would be required to regularly review the plan
- Lack of evidence of any local benefit
- Allerdale Borough Council has a 'duty to support' the production of a plan but have made it clear that we will not receive the same level of support we did as a front runner during the production of our Neighbourhood Development Order

I would like to congratulate our Town Clerk on her nomination for 'Clerk of the Year'.

Finally I would also like to thank all my fellow Councillors, Sheila Brown, the Town Clerk and her staff for their hard work.

Sheila Brown, the Responsible Financial Officer gave a brief summary of the accounts.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the Town Council's reasons for not implementing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Many of the electors present were disappointed by that decision and argued strongly that a development plan was needed to shape the town. The Town Council was requested to re-consider their decision.

### **Annual Report from All Saint's CE Primary School**

The year began for the children at All Saints' School with kayaking and canoeing and a visit by M and M Productions of 'The Hobbit'.

In the second half of the autumn term the 'Happy Puzzle' Company visited our school and all our children were engaged in stimulating practical activities which they thoroughly enjoyed. The Maths focus continued with a whole school Maths day where children worked on investigations, Maths in everyday life and cross curricular links. All the children had fun worked collaboratively together and enjoyed showing the work they had completed at the end of the day.

We were delighted when a pupil of ours won a free science show for the school. It was lively and entertaining and full of interesting facts.

Our school also won the Rotary Technology Competition for the third year running. The children had to design a catapult and the winning team was the one that hit the target!

We have an exciting term ahead of us involving caving, ghyll scrambling, a visit by the choir to the Sage at Gateshead and children from Year 2 to Year 6 going on residential visits.

### **Observations from County Councillor A Kennon**

Since last year there have been even more cuts to the County Council budgets. From 2011 there has been £153 million of savings, but there is still a need to find a further £75 million for 2016-2019. This can only mean more difficult times ahead.

Following this year's consultation process a new revenue budget of just over £380 million for 2016/17 was agreed.

The Council also approved an investment of £291 million in council capital programme for 2016-2021. This investment includes new council headquarters in Carlisle, new transport hub at Maryport station and a transport hub and council offices with parking at Workington rail station.

My District Cockermonth South, includes the Parishes of Dean, Greysouthen, Brigham and Little Clifton and grants from the Local Committee and local member's funds are listed below.

I also attend various County Committee meetings which include-  
Local Committee for Allerdale  
Allerdale Highways & Transport Group  
Various Task and Finish Groups

Along with my fellow County Councillor Eric Nicholson for Cockermonth North- We have jointly funded various schemes from our local area allowance to improve the town and surrounding areas.

We have also approved various grants for local organisations through the County Councils Neighbourhood Forum Grants and 0-19 Budget Scheme which are listed below.

Friends of Cockermonth Swimming Club	Towards IOS level 1 coaching course and T-	<b>£2016.00</b>
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	shirts for the newly qualified coaches	
Mary Platt Methodist Pre-School	Towards new resources including ICT equipment	<b>£848.00</b>
Highfield Community Association	IT equipment, internet access, outdoor play equipment and non-slip flooring	<b>£1500.00</b>
Kirkgate Arts	Funding an Artist to run 3 days of free family workshops, creating a Boogie Bike Sound Sculpture and 10 mobile bike sculptures for Tour of Britain event	<b>£1000.00</b>
Cockermouth Music Society	Towards funding for the music master classes in March 2016	<b>TBC</b>
Yew Tree Hall	Towards purchasing 2 table tennis tables	<b>£400.00</b>
Highfield Community Association	Towards workshops about Cockermouth for children	<b>£560.00</b>
Cockermouth Mechanics Brass Band	Towards joint concert with Petworth Town Band in Sussex	<b>£352.00</b>
Workington Transport Heritage Trust	Towards costs for running a free Boxing Day bus service	<b>£200.00</b>
North West Junior Orienteering Squad	Towards a trip to Norway	<b>£2000.00</b>
Dean Parish Festival	Towards an annual festival	<b>£1400.00</b>
Kings Church	Towards older person lunches	<b>£1000.00</b>
Kirkgate Centre	TBC	<b>£115.00</b>
Cricket Club – to come in	Flood recovery items	<b>£1900.00</b>

Rotary Club of Cockermonth	Towards the 2016 Touch a Truck event	<b>TBC</b>
Kids at Broughton School	Towards the purchase of a mini bus to share with sports clubs	<b>£2000.00</b>
Cockermonth Leisure Centre	Multiple activities for young people	<b>Up to £5000.00</b>

Members Allowance Schemes 2015/16:

Permanent Lighting of the Cenotaph £7407.00

Greysouthen History Project £500.00

Brigham Play Park Refurbishment £2000.00

### **Observations from Allerdale Councillor Len Davies**

It is a privilege to be allowed to be of service to you and Allerdale.

My activities during the last 12 months in All Saints Ward and Allerdale Borough Council were as follows:-

#### Ward Work

As with previous years, the bulk of my work has been concerned with housing issues including:-

Maintenance & repair

Accommodation difficulties with regard to the aftermath of flooding

Overcrowding

#### Other matters

Drainage problems on the Greenway bridge

Street lighting

Fly tipping

Unsafe trees

Vandalism

Visits to year 7 of Cockermonth School with Cllr Alan Smith to explain Local Government structure and function.

Trustee of the Cockermonth and Papcastle Recreation Trust

#### Allerdale Borough Council

I continue to be a member of the following Panels and Committees:-

Licensing Panel

Licensing Committee

Community Scrutiny Committee  
Development Panel  
Spent Fuel & Nuclear Management Committee  
Allerdale Borough Council Representative to the Allerdale Disability Association

At the AGM of Allerdale Borough Council of May 2015 I was honoured to be appointed Mayor of Allerdale Borough Council for the second consecutive year.

At the AGM it was announced that my fund raising appeal for "Let Laura Speak" and the Maryport Sea Cadets, Chindit Army Cadet Force & Workington Air Training Corp realised a grand total of £29,000.

#### External Activities – Non Council

Member of the Cockermouth Branch of the Royal Air Force Association.

#### Conclusion

I will continue to give you my very best efforts to make our Community a healthy, safe, enjoyable place to live in and to be proud of.

#### **Observations from Allerdale Councillor Margaret Jackson**

I have been a representative on Allerdale Borough Council for the Christ Church Ward in Cockermouth for the last 17 years.

I am a member of Allerdale's Full Council, the Development Panel and the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### Development Panel

The majority of planning application decisions are made by officers but there are occasions that officers feel the panel need to make the decision, e.g. if it is outside planning policy or a major application. We also look at applications that have been called in by Councillors.

There has been an increase in applications being looked at by the Panel so we are now meeting every three weeks.

There have been a number of large developments in Cockermouth and the surrounding areas considered by the Panel.

We look at changes to planning policies made by the Government.

We are now using the new National Planning Policy Framework and the new Allerdale Local Plan in making decisions.

#### Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The work plan for this committee includes, monitoring and reviewing the quarterly Performance Report, monitoring the impact and implications of the Welfare Reform Act.

The Health Care Reform Review continues with different themes, one being highlighted was Youth Unemployment and a sub group was set up to look at the reasons for this. A report has been put together.

We also refreshed the Reducing Poverty Strategy.

I have also dealt with a number of problems reported to me by the people of Cockermouth and look forward to continuing to represent them.

### **Observations from Allerdale Councillor Alan Smith**

As Leader of Allerdale Borough Council, I do not have any Committees or portfolio to report, but I can outline what actions have been taken over the past year regarding Cockermouth

The £10k town centre funding for Cockermouth in 2015/16 was spent on:

- The new town centre maps (in place)
- Lighting for the cenotaph (work on-going) in partnership with Cockermouth Town Council.
- Improvements to the confluence area (work on-going) with £13k match Funding from Lovell Homes

### **Support for local festivals and events**

- Taste Cumbria financial support with 40k visitors & £2m boost to local economy following Sept 2015 festival plus logistical support
- Northbound festival very well received with plans for Northbound-branded street party in 2016 to bring trade into town centre
- Allerdale teams massively increased the publicity for Tour of Britain start in Cockermouth including pre-event photo opportunities at Wordsworth House and Garden with Tobi the tour mascot
- ABC pledged and delivered huge amount of additional comms, practical and logistical support for planned Taste Cumbria/Cockermouth by Candlelight events after that Chamber meeting (despite the events happening only six days after the floods hit). Estimated 20,000 people attended the weekend, with hundreds of thousands of people in UK and beyond seeing the town in positive mood and in recovery in the media.
- Creation of very attractive banner signage in town centre for forthcoming events ( facilitated by ABC staff with ABC financial support)
- In addition, support for Cockermouth Spring Fair and supporting the Town Council in bringing the Malcolm Wilson Rally back to the town centre this year
- Allerdale visitor guides produced and distributed including chapter on Cockermouth Website

## Environmental and operational support

- We had the street scene walk-rounds and issue logs as usual and Town Centre cleans (one last Spring) and the recent one in Memorial Gardens where we had 20+ volunteers and 3 truck-loads of debris removed
- On-going support for Cockermonth Chamber of Trade, Cockermonth Civic Trust and other groups and businesses from Town Centre Area Manager and others
- On - going repairs, cleaning out and rewiring of Evolution Centre
- Maintenance of public toilets within the Town and on-going discussions with Town Council
- Repair works to footbridge Butts Fold
- New water supply for public use and wall repairs in Lorton Road Cemetery
- Nuisance parking and damage caused behind view point prevented by placing a series of boulders along the edge of Kirk bank road.
- Extensive stencilling and signage in dog fouling hot spots.

## Floods

- The Council's liaison with partners including Sellafield plus dedication of ABC staff on the streets was totally and utterly crucial. The ad hoc benefits from ABC coordinating Sellafield project managers, to sorting out loans of generators/dehumidifiers/advice centres/temporary premises/general TLC was immeasurable.
- Two flood-hit businesses sorted with keys and new temporary leases in ABC-owned premises within 24 hours of them asking
- Fantastic presence at the Chamber of Trade meeting on the Monday, just 48 hours after floods hit – ABC team providing immediate advice/support/networking/practical stuff was an experience for us all! 120+ local people - residents and business people - in attendance
- ABC (Leader) with town council Mayor instrumental in securing the Sainsbury's bus into town from the Gote
- Amazing efforts by ABC Street Scene/waste teams to ensure Cockermonth stayed as clear of skips as possible (Carlisle still, even now, a bit swamped with them) providing positive practical and psychological benefits
- I along with ABC staff going the extra mile sourcing food freebies to feed the folks on the Gote via volunteer burger van

- Working alongside and aiding teams of volunteers from the Muslim community
- Constant liaison and involvement for days after the food festival with the Taste Cumbria teams to ensure the Gote community was included and looked after (particularly elderly folks isolated in the Bridge End Court flats)
- Bridge Street Café and Advice Centre – setting up advice centre at support residents on that side of the river when bridges were closed and working with Churches Together to ensure the café was available.
- The last 12 months has been largely occupied with issues surrounding the Strawberry How development. As a consequence, I had hoped to bring in a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the whole of Cockermouth. This would have given the people and organisations in the town the opportunity to have their say on where future developments should be in town. I believe that this would have helped stop any planning ‘creep’ in the future and would have worked alongside the Local Plan, but alas the Town Council have voted against this proposal.

Mr George expressed his disappointment that the banner signage provided was not open weave as per the Town Council’s banner policy. He further stated that as far as he was aware Cockermouth Festival Group were the only group to be fully compliant with the policy.

The Town Clerk stated that the Town Council’s banner policy had already been revised, she advised Mr George to apply to the Town Council towards the cost of replacement banners.

### **Observations from Allerdale Councillor Mrs C Smith**

It has been a privilege to represent All Saints again for the past 12 months.

I am a member of the Borough’s Standards Committee.

I am also a member of Licensing Committee, which I find very interesting.

I have 100% attendance for Full Council.

I am still involved with the two other ward councillors who have been supporting the Highfield Residents Association to decant to the changing rooms, which have finally been refurbished, well done to the Residents Association for all their hard work, in delivering their community facility, with an expansion to facilities up there when the old social club has been refurbished, which they will share with the Food Bank, again as a Council showing commitment to my ward.

Housing is still a problem in the CA13 area, again like the last report a submitted, I have taken not only telephone calls from people desperate for a home, but also people who were flooded in December last year, who needed to be in the local

proximity, especially for the Schools and Doctors, I will continually do this service for my constituents..

During the December Floods I worked as a volunteer at the Christ Church Rooms Reception Centre, helping people who had been flooded to access, food, clothes, water etc, alongside Churches Together, Rotary and both Allerdale and County Officers, it just goes to show, when a disaster happens, how people pull together to help the unfortunate people effected.

Once again I am pleased to report that the 10p swims have been a fantastic success, during the school holiday, which have been funded by Allerdale BC and the Sports Centre contractor GLL, this is for the fifth year running,

### **Cockermouth & Papcastle Recreational Trust**

The Town Clerk outlined the activities of the Trust over the last 12 months. She indicated that the Trust was always happy to received applications from local organisations who may qualify for funding.

The Clerk was asked why Keswick Hockey Club had received a grant from the Trust.

The Clerk explained that Keswick Hockey Club played at Cockermouth School and that the membership was from Cockermouth.

### **Questions of which 48 hours written notice had been given**

Two questions were received.

Andy Rodger, 2 New Street, Cockermouth asked the following question:-

'I would like to ask the Mayor to provide the attendance record of Councillor Jackson over the last 2 years and is there a minimum of attendance which is deemed satisfactory?'

The Mayor read out the following answer:-

Councillor Jackson's attendance over the last 2 years is 48%.

There is no minimum attendance, however section 85 of the 1972 Local Government Act provides that a councillor ceases to be a member of the Council if he/she fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his/her last attendance to attend any meeting of the council unless his/her absence was due to some reason approved by the Council.

John Dent, The Alders, 6 Meadow Bank Close, Cockermouth.

'Cockermouth Civic Trust is willing to join with other bodies and individuals, including Town Councillors to work together on a voluntary basis to create a Neighbourhood Plan for Cockermouth. On this basis would the Town Council re-consider their decision not to have a Neighbourhood Plan?'

The Mayor read out the following answer:-

A decision (whether affirmative or negative) of the Council shall not be reversed within 6 months except by a special motion, the written notice whereof bears the names of at least 7 councillors of the Council.

The meeting closed at 7.46 pm.