



Morecambe Town Council

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Proper Officer: Mr Luke Trevaskis

Members of Morecambe Town Council

Cllr C Cozler - Chairman

Cllr P Hart - Vice Chairman

Cllr C Ainscough, Cllr J Ainscough, Cllr Dan Blacow, Cllr David Bottoms, Cllr L Bradbury, Cllr P Clarke, Cllr B Cooper, Cllr F Cooper, Cllr R Dennison. Cllr W Dixon, Cllr K Gee, Cllr J Goodrich, Cllr J Hanson, Cllr C Kent, Cllr D Knight, Cllr G Knight, Cllr J Livermore, Cllr M Pattison, Cllr J Pilling, Cllr J Rogerson, Cllr J Slater, Cllr M Stenneken, Cllr R Walsh, Cllr D Whitaker

Minutes - 18 April 2024

Minutes of Morecambe Town Council's Full Council Meeting held at 7pm on the eighteenth day of April 2024 at Morecambe Town Hall, Marine Road, Morecambe, LA4 5AF.

Record of Attendance:

Councillors: C Cozler (Chairman), C Ainscough, J Ainscough, D Blacow, D Bottoms, L Bradbury, P Clarke, B Cooper, F Cooper, R Dennison, W Dixon, K Gee, J Goodrich, J Hanson, C Kent, P Hart, D Knight, G Knight, J Livermore, M Pattison, J Pilling, J Slater, M Stenneken, R Walsh, D Whittaker

Officers: Luke Trevaskis, Peter Fisher, Joel Beal, Helen Freeborough

Press: Beyond Radio

Public: None

Minute 2023/24 - 111 - Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance received from Cllr J Rogerson.

Minute 2023/24 - 112 - Declarations of Interest

Cllrs R Dennison, P Hart, M Pattison, M Bottoms, J Livermore, J Ainscough declared an interest as a Councillor of Lancaster City Council.

Cllrs R Dennison and C Cozler declared they were members of Lancaster City Council planning committee.

Cllrs C Ainscough and D Whittaker declared they are employees of Lancashire County Council.

Cllr J Livermore declared an interest in Item 9 due to a commercial donation made to the grant applicant.

Minute 2023/24 - 113 - Minutes

The minutes of the last full council meeting were approved.

Minute 2023/24 - 114 - Public participation

None.

Minute 2023/24 - 115 - Public and Press Exclusions

The Council noted that some of the Council's historic exclusions of press and public have quoted principal authority legislation (section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972) as opposed to town council legislation (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960). Whilst this would not have any material impact on the outcome of resolutions, the Council is recommended to approve addendums to prior minutes for completeness. The Council approved the recommendation and also approved for any additional addendums that may arise due to the same legislative references that may appear in minutes of committees (or any other council minutes) covering the same period (2020-2023).

Minute 2023/24 - 116 - Budget and Precept Reports

The Council noted that all budget and precept reports for the fiscal years 2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 included schemes of delegation (to committees and officers). These schemes were approved concurrently during meetings with the acceptance of each budget and precept. However, it was noted that some minutes do not explicitly state that all recommendations within the reports were accepted, and it was recommended for completeness that the Council ratifies or accepts this to be the case, so that the External Auditor is satisfied that all Officers and Committees have had the delegated power which the Council intended. The Council resolved to approve the recommendation and reaffirmed that it has operated in line with its own procedures, and in accordance with its intended schemes of delegation, as outlined in each annual budget and precept report for the years stated.

Minute 2023/24 - 117 - Internal Audit Report 2022-2023

The Council received and accepted the Internal Audit report for 2022-2023, along with recommendations, and the Council's responses. The Council noted that the report had been presented to the Finance and Governance Committee at its meeting held on 09.04.24 and the documents had been recommended for approval by Full Council.

Cllr B Cooper, Chair of the Finance Committee, summarised for members that there were three issues identified by the auditor. The first issue highlighted the Council's insufficient General Reserves. The second issue noted the Council's website had not always been updated in a timely fashion (due to staffing shortages). The third issue noted that the Council had provided a timescale for the public to

inspect accounts which exceeded the permitted legislative timeframe (in other words, in trying to improve accessibility to council documents for a longer period of time, the Council has been told it must only provide access within the legislative timeframe). Cllr B Cooper noted that all three issues have been addressed.

Members debated the report before a vote took place. Cllr J Ainscough commented that the recommendations highlighted by the internal auditor are fair, and that the Council is continuing to head in the right direction.

Cllr Cooper re-iterated that best practice was being implemented by the Council and thanked officers for their work.

Minute 2023/24 - 118 - Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Council resolved that, in accordance with Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business, on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings.

Minute 2023/24 - 119 - Nice and Sleazy - End of Grant Report and Audited Accounts

The Council considered the accounts provided by the grant application, and noted that the applicant's accountant had advised "there has been a limitation of the scope of our review as unfortunately one of the joint organisers has sadly passed away since the festival and information was stored on his computer that we have been unable to gain access to and verify".

The Council noted that the criteria of the grant the organisation applied for indicates that "organisations applying for a grant of £10,000 or more will be required to submit independently audit accounts to support their application".

As the applicant's accountant had been unable to "gain access to and verify" a full set of accounts, the Council resolved that the applicant had not met the criteria of the grant and it was withdrawn.

Members noted how disappointing it was to have awarded a substantial grant of £11,500 to the organisation, and it not be processed as intended. Members also noted it had taken the organisation until 28.3.24 to provide accounts, despite the event taking place at the end of May 2023, with several efforts throughout the year to clarify the terms which the applicant accepted when signing their application.

The Council encourages all grant applicants to adhere to the terms and conditions of grants awarded as it is essential the Council undertakes its due diligence when managing public funds, in line with its own procedures, and feedback from its auditors.

Minute 2023/24 - 120 - Central Government Grant - Community Ownership Grant

Members received an introduction to the Community Ownership Grant Fund - an initiative to secure funding directly from Central Government to restore 'at risk' local assets into opportunities to deliver social value to communities.

Members noted the fund was available to Parish and Town Councils, with up to £2m available as a grant, which principle authorities cannot apply for.

If successful, the money would be used to transform a local asset at risk of being lost into a multi-purpose space, to be used by the local community, and to host other community activities and services that would benefit residents and visitors to the town.

Members considered and approved that the Council pursue the opportunity to attract inward investment into Morecambe. Members considered and agreed a number of work parcels, as outlined in a confidential report (to preserve competition of any future bid) and associated costs, that would be required to assess the work required to restore a local community asset, and delegated to officers to facilitate the engagement of professional services to support the preparation of a full submission bid to the Community Ownership Fund. The Council noted a final submission would be considered by Full Council at a future meeting, following community engagement.