

MARYPORT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Annual Town Assembly held on Monday 10 March 2025 in The Town Hall, Senhouse Street, Maryport, at 7.00pm.

Present

Councillor S Ashworth	Councillor B Copeland
Councillor V Cuthbert	Councillor J Cuthell
Councillor I Greaney	Councillor P Hetherington
Councillor C McCarron Holmes	Councillor S Merrin
Councillor D Peggs	Councillor W Pegram
Councillor L Radcliffe, (Chairman)	Councillor C Slater

In Attendance

Mr P Bramley, (Clerk)
Mrs L Douglas, (Clerk)

1/25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Bell, J Hastewell, G Kemp, G Mitchell & J Newton.

2/25 Minutes of Annual Town Assembly held on 11 March 2024

Resolved that the Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on 11 March 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record, with the substitution of 'oyster catcher' for 'curlew' in item 6/24, Report from Councillor C Slater on Solway Area of Natural Beauty, (AONB).

3/25 Annual Report of the Town Council

The Mayor, Councillor L Radcliffe, reported that it hardly seemed possible that another year had gone by, yet so much had been done to & for Maryport. Supported by residents & visitors to this small westerly town, great things had been achieved by those who cared about having enhanced facilities for both groups of people.

The Mayor reported that visitors could now find their way around Maryport's interesting places to see, guided by both worded information & beautifully crafted paintings & signs. Feedback from that group of society had been enthusiastic & all had become more aware of visitors saying how astonished they were to find so much going on in the town, & that they would be returning.

All of the redesigned areas were now moving towards completion. The skate park had been completed, which was attracting people of all ages to either watch enviously as youngsters showed off their skills or use the facilities, with young people coming from as far away as Carlisle. There was huge enthusiasm for the free pirate themed play park as well.

The popular Shipping Brow Art Gallery was attracting those with a love of art & the Senhouse Roman Museum was benefiting from being awarded a substantial grant towards enhancing its facilities & attractions. The refurbished Wave, renamed the Maryport Activity Centre, (MAC), was attracting people of all ages, with a soft play area for the very young & enough physical activities for people of all ages to have seen it fully booked on many occasions.

Later in the year, the Promenade would feature a new café adjacent to the skate park, where refreshments could be taken against the backdrop of one of the most beautiful scenes in Britain, the Solway coast. The Council also looked forward to the completion of Christ Church, which would host the Maritime Museum following the major upgrade to its interior, with an aim to educate & inform. It was hoped that the Carlton redevelopment would result in another welcome attraction, as a place of gathering & entertainment. Residents & visitors would, in the near future, also have the outdoor space on the harbourside for organised entertainment, or as a space to picnic & enjoy the views. Maryport was also being spruced up along its main thoroughfares, with shopfronts being redecorated to a standard design enhancing the main shopping area. New businesses & old had come aboard to attract visitors & locals alike, with enterprising entrepreneurs having opened many & various businesses to attract people to local shops.

The Mayor thought that the redevelopment of the town had not been painless but that it was a credit to all the people who had assisted & directed the delivery of all the new & improved facilities, where their persistence, hard work & real enthusiasm had been the key to delivering so much for the enjoyment of so many. It would be up to those who loved Maryport to ensure that enthusiasm & drive continued building a bright future for our historic town.

4/25 Annual Report on the Council's Finances

The Chairman of Finance & General Purposes Committee, Councillor S Ashworth, reported that a budget of £400,100, with associated precept of £384,301, had been set for the year 2024/25 in support of the Council's priorities for the area.

During the year, among many other things, the Council had:

- Maintained and updated Christmas lighting features in the town centre
- Introduced new signage on the history of Maryport Coke Ovens.
- Made environmental improvements through the provision of sea themed flower displays in recognition of Maryport's position as a seaside town
- Celebrated D Day 80 with community events.
- & provided grant funding of over £100,000 to the area's organisations & for festivals, as well as £20,000 towards the Taste of the Sea Festival.

Councillor Ashworth reported that the Town Council had a crucial role locally in helping to address the impact of service cuts by Cumberland Council, particularly in the provision of grant funding for dependent organisations. The reorganisation of local government in Cumbria & the introduction of Cumberland Council as a unitary authority had only added to such funding issues. Whilst the Town Council had been able to not increase its element of council tax over the previous three years, it appeared likely that Cumberland Council would have to curtail the provision of some services, meaning local councils such as the Town Council would have the option of providing those services themselves, if the statutory powers existed, or seeing such services disappear altogether.

Councillor Ashworth stated that, as he had noted in last year's report referring to the creation of the new Cumberland Council from April 2023, Cumberland Council would seek to devolve services to the Town Council. The Town Council had agreed to take on the Events Space at the Marina developed by Cumberland Council, & Cumberland Council was understood to be considering asking the Town Council to take over other developments from the Maryport regeneration schemes, such as the flower displays on Senhouse Street. He considered that it could be expected that the Town Council would be requested to operate other such projects as Cumberland Council sought to pass on financial & other responsibilities, which would have an impact on the Town Council's budget, & hence, council tax.

The Council's Internal Auditor had reported in the year that the Clerks/Responsible Financial Officers of the Council had maintained a high standard of record keeping, that the Council's control systems were efficient & effective & gave the appropriate level of confidence & that financial statements & reports reflected a true & accurate account of the Council's finance & governance records. External Audit reports of the Council's financial management & governance arrangements had been satisfactory, the most that could be expected in terms of praise. Councillor Ashworth thanked the Clerks for their strenuous efforts to maintain the Council's high standards of financial & governance records.

In recognition of the economic climate, the Town Council had agreed a budget for 2025/26 which entailed no increase in council tax. Over the coming year, the Council would continue to support & make improvements in the Flimby & Maryport communities such as the budget could support.

5/25 Observations of Cumberland Councillors for each of the Town's Wards

Report from Councillor C McCarron Holmes, Cumberland Councillor for North Maryport Ward

Councillor McCarron Holmes reported that as Chairman of Place Scrutiny Committee, it had been a busy year. A major piece of work had been scrutinising the St Cuthberts Village plans, which envisaged ten thousand dwellings along with shops, a school & pharmacy, together with the usual requirements of a new village. It was a ten-year plan which would completely change the face of the city of Carlisle, with the Southern link road as part of that plan. The committee had also scrutinised the new Disabled Grant Scheme, with its new procurement regime for builders, to facilitate a quicker discharge from hospital to home. In the next financial year, Councillor McCarron Holmes reported that she intended to have coastal erosion on the committee's agenda, since most of the authority was in the coastal belt and in a four-year period, it was expected that up to four metres of land would be lost to the sea, making the coastal railway evermore vulnerable.

Councillor McCarron Holmes reported that she also sat on the Health Scrutiny Committee, where the closure of Udale Ward mental health provision had been lost at the West Cumberland Hospital. She stated that this loss was a great worry to her, as the existing bed provision in the Carlton clinic was only ten beds. The only other offer of beds was in the North East of England, where the Trust was based. The increase in suicide numbers of young people in Cumberland was worrying to everyone and needed greater input by professions to understand the stresses which caused these losses of young lives. Councillor McCarron Holmes reported that she also sat on the Joint Cumberland & Westmorland Councils Committee to discuss matters/services which affected both authorities, such as births, deaths & marriages, and Tullie House Museum, to consider which location those artefacts and services would be best located. Councillor McCarron Holmes reported that she also acted as the Armed Forces Champion for Cumberland, & had meetings set to meet with the Royal Navy's Senior officer regarding the work they did in Cumberland. The Council was also gearing up for the 80th Centenary of the end of the Second World War celebrations throughout the authority's area. Councillor McCarron Holmes reported that she was a member of the Police & Crime/Fire Panel which discussed the plans /initiatives which the Cumbria Police & Crime Commissioner, (PCC), had in place and the setting of the council tax element of the respective budget, together with Police initiatives the PCC was developing. She reported that, from a Fire Service perspective, there were only seven full time Fire Stations throughout Cumberland & Westmoreland; others were for retained /part time officers only. Councillor McCarron Holmes reported that, after a break of over ten years, she was to sit again on Planning Committee. She saw it as a challenge in some respects but advised that she was looking forward to it.

Report from Councillor W Pegram, Cumberland Councillor for South Maryport Ward

Councillor Pegram reported that 2024/25, the second year of Cumberland Council, had been a busy time for him, particularly with sharing the chairmanship of the Joint Cumberland & Westmorland Councils Scrutiny Committee for the second half of the year. The main theme which the Scrutiny Committee had been dealing with had been the disaggregation of the many council functions which still operated on a single authority basis.

He advised that he had also been the chairman of Broughton Moor Parish Council during the process of recruiting new members for that council. A full complement of the council had attended the last meeting.

Councillor Pegram advised that he had been a member of the Cumberland Council Lakes to the Sea Panel which operated to provide funding for local organisations. Maryport area groups which had benefited from such funding included the Ewanrigg Centre, the Boys Club & Flimby Girls' Brigade.

Councillor Pegram reported that the integration of the Local Enterprise Partnership into Cumberland Council had been a great success since the introduction of the arrangement in April 2024.

In the near future, he advised, there were likely to be more changes resulting from the government's proposed devolution arrangements.

6/25 Statements & Reports from representatives on Organisations in the Town

Report from Councillor J Hastewell on the Citizens' Advice Bureau

Councillor Hastewell reported that between January & December 2024, the CAB had seen 330 unique clients & achieved some £275,000 in income gains for residents of the Maryport area. Maryport residents had also benefited from support under the CAB's specially funded services, with 278 clients experiencing 2,826 issues around benefits, debt, energy, financial capability & crisis support, as well as a range of other issues. Income gains of £350,000 were achieved, together with debts of £150,000 written off & £75,000 repayments rescheduled. Included in this were over fifty clients with 355 issues supported at Maryport food bank, where the CAB has a presence. Councillor Hastewell also provided some key statistics & a Maryport case study.

Report from Councillor S Ashworth on the Fawcett Johnson Charity

Councillor Ashworth explained the basis on which the charity had been developed & its current operational arrangements.

Report from Councillor C McCarron Holmes on Flimby Wind Farm Community Fund

Councillor McCarron Holmes reported that during the past three years, despite mailings and telephone calls, she had received no replies. She was concerned about possible irregularities in the account, which should serve the village better. She advised that she was unaware of how much each year was given from the Windfarm owners.

Report from Councillor J Newton on Maryport Harbour & Marina Authority

Councillor Newton advised that he had attended all meetings of the Harbour Authority Board & had recently attended a training session in his capacity as Council representative.

Report from Councillor C Slater on Solway Area of Natural Beauty, (AONB)

Councillor Slater reported that she was currently the Vice-Chair of the organisation. There had been two meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee in the previous 12 months, (in March and November 2024).

After several years of being short-staffed due to long term illness of one staff member and delays in replacing another, the Solway Coast National Landscape finally had a full complement of three professional staff, one junior staff member and one administrative support officer.

In the current year, a new five-year management plan was in preparation, and also Nature Recovery Plans with Cumberland Council and Natural England. They had received funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, (DEFRA), for improving access, and for salt marsh recovery projects. A new project funded by Arts Council England and DEFRA would allow a range of local artists to explore and celebrate nature with school children, and to develop a public art project.

Conservation work party volunteers met fortnightly to discuss carrying out a range of tasks, mainly at Mawbray Banks, Mile Fortlet 21 and Crosscanonby Carr nature reserve; Councillor Slater advised that she participated when she could.

Councillor Slater attended the 20th AGM of the Solway Firth Partnership on 12 November 2024 at Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve, and the Coastal Habitat Creation and Restoration Conference organised by the Northwest Coastal Forum in Carlisle on 6th March 2025.

She also represented the Solway Coast National Landscape at meetings of the Cumbria and Lakes Local Access Forum in June 2024 and February 2025.

Report from Councillor I Greaney on Maryport Horizons Community Interests Company, (CIC)

Councillor Greaney reported that Maryport was in the process of going through a £12 million regeneration programme, which was looking to both improve existing facilities and deliver new ones for the town.

As part of the process, a new Maryport Town Group had been formed to assist in the delivery of the seven key projects. The formation of a series of sub groups was then organised to give key stakeholders an input into each of the projects. The sub groups were: Christ Church Museum; Carlton Hub; Pirate Play Park; Harbour Events Space; Promenade Skate Park/Café; The Wave/Maryport Activity Centre refurbishment; and Public Realm Improvements.

In mid-2024, it was recognised within the Maryport Town Board, an organisation established by Cumberland Council to oversee the projects, that following the completion of the final project in the summer of 2025, the Town Group would be discontinued. In order to maintain an input to some of the projects from the people of Maryport, an idea was postulated around the formation of a community company, which could help organise and possibly manage some of the facilities.

Following discussions with both Cumberland Council and Maryport Town Council, which were amenable to the idea, plans were initiated to form the new Maryport Horizons CIC and on 16 December 2024, the Maryport Horizons CIC was registered with Companies House. The Maryport Horizons CIC was a community interest company established to manage some of the new/refurbished facilities being developed in Maryport. Any profits from its activities would be reinvested in schemes to further enhance Maryport as a place to live and visit. It has a board of seven directors who represent the community and were from various aspects of Maryport life; including the Maryport Business Group, Town Council, museums and youth representatives. Under the main board sit sub-groups to feed into each project. Currently there was a sub-group for the Carlton, Event area and the museums. The Maryport Business Group were also looking to operate as an independent entity, sitting under the Horizons umbrella.

The Maryport Horizons CIC was currently working towards the delivery of a business plan and operational documents, as part of an application bid to operate the new Harbour-side Events space and also the new Carlton Hub. This would also necessitate the agreement and setting up of contracts with both Maryport Town Council and Cumberland Council, on the means by which those facilities are to be managed on their behalf. The first key milestone was the handover of the Harbour Events space to the Maryport Horizons CIC in May 2025. This would hopefully be followed by the second key milestone, a successful bid to operate the Carlton Hub for handover in July 2025.

7/25 Resolutions for which Notice had been given

None received.

8/25 Questions from Parishioners

None received.

The meeting finished at 7.25pm.

Signed

Chairman

Date