

TOWN COUNCIL OF GRANGE-OVER-SANDS

Chairman/Mayor:
Cllr. Peter Endorsor

Vice-Chairman/Deputy Mayor:
Cllr. Ann Walmsley

Town Clerk:
Mrs. C. Benbow



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V.A.T. Reg.No: 164 8707 80

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council held remotely on Monday 16 November 2020 commencing at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllr. P. Endorsor – **Chair**

Cllr. Logan, Cllr. Howson, Cllr. Thomas, Cllr. Greenway, Cllr. Handley,
Cllr. Walmsley, Cllr. Hathorn

Mrs. C. Benbow – Town Clerk

In attendance: There were no members of the public present

Minute Ref:		Agenda No:
C20/97	Apologies for Absence	1

Cllr. Bailey was absent; no apologies were received.

C20/98	Public Participation: Have Your Say	2
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There were no members of the public present.

C20/99	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	3
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RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 9 November 2020 were accepted as a true record and that physical signing by the Chairman would take place in due course.

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C20/100 **Declarations of Interests and Dispensations** **4**

NOTED There were no declarations of interest or dispensations.

C20/101 **Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 – Excluded Item** **5**

RESOLVED That no items should be considered without the presence of the press and public, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Section 2.

C20/102 **Unitary Authority** **6**

At a meeting with Town Councillors on 4 November 2020, District Councillor Robin Ashcroft presented SLDC's perspective on the formation of a new Unitary Authority. County Councillor Bill Wearing provided the County's perspective in documents. Cllr. Greenway produced notes from the meeting with District Cllr. Ashcroft. Members were asked to consider a response to the proposals.

The following documents were circulated for the item:

- (a) South Lakeland District Council - 'The Bay - An outline proposal for a new Morecambe Bay Unitary Authority prepared by Barrow Borough Council, South Lakeland District Council and Lancaster City Council'.
- (b) Cumbria County Council – Independent Analysis of Governance Scenarios and Public Service Reform in County Areas (Sept 2016).
- (c) Cumbria County Council – Appendix 5 – One Cumbria: a proposition for local government reform.
- (d) Cumbria County Council – Appendix 6 – Local Government Reform - Strategic Business Case.
- (e) Cumbria County Council – Scrutiny Committee Workstreams.

RESOLVED

That the below response would be sent to:

Robert Jenrick MP, Tim Farron MP, Simon Fell MP, Cat Smith MP, District Councillors Robin Ashcroft and Giles Archibald and the CEOs of South Lakeland District Council, Barrow Borough Council and Lancaster City Council.

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Unitary Authority Options – Response from Grange-over-Sands Town Council

There are currently two options for establishing a Unitary Authority in Cumbria. Grange Town Council looked at both models and make the following response, in favour of the proposal for a Bay Authority comprising Barrow Borough Council, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council.

Although the Town Council understands that Unitary Authority will be established, it does feel that now is not the time to be making any changes to local authority structure. There is much instability and uncertainty about dealing with the damage arising from Covid-19, plus coping with issues arising from Brexit, without introducing more major change.

The Town Council is concerned that the staff restructuring, and job losses involved might create gaps and delays in crucial public services, and the loss of experienced and committed staff. SLDC has just completed a major restructure at considerable cost.

We have serious concerns that, due to a lack of previous experience and expertise in the fields of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, including Education, a new Bay Authority would struggle to provide continuity in these very important areas. This could have serious implications for residents.

The immediate substantial costs involved in restructuring might put Cumbria County Council (which is already struggling with austerity and Covid-related demands) into a very precarious financial situation unless any reorganization is fully funded by central government. Grange Town Council is concerned that there is a lack of capacity to manage any transition.

In response to each of the models:

1. Model One: Cumbria as Unitary Authority

- There appear to be few advantages to Grange in this model. Despite the efforts of the local County Councillor, the existing County Council is remote and unresponsive to Grange's needs in areas such as education, extra-care housing and public transport. County staff are difficult to contact and are very arms-length in dealings, appearing not to recognise or practice any community consultation or negotiation outside legal requirements.
- No evidence has been provided that any savings produced by economies of scale would benefit all Parishes, and the cost of reorganisation could eat up any savings for several years.
- Cumbria County Council is not a leader in adapting to climate change; it has just given permission for coal mining in the north of the County. This will negate all the carbon emission reductions that Districts in the south of the County are making progress on.
- The Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) has the view that Town and Parish Councils may 'fill the gaps' in local services whichever model is adopted. In our experience of local governance, none of the Town or Parish Councils in South Lakeland (apart perhaps

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for Kendal Town Council) have the skills, experience, time or staff to do that. It would lead to big gaps and unfairness in provision, putting small and rural parishes at a disadvantage.

- CALC has also suggested that it could provide the necessary training for Town or Parish Councils which want to take on running local services, but at the moment, CALC can barely provide basic training for Councillors, and sessions often do not run.
 - There is an existing challenge of attracting candidates for Town and Parish Councils. Making the Councillor role more difficult, and time-consuming, might mean that some local councils would cease to operate. The risk is that local services become more fragmented, expensive or non-existent.
- 2. Model 2: Two Unitary Authorities** - a Cumbria Unitary Authority covering Carlisle and the Lake District as far south as the existing boundary with South Lakeland, and a Morecambe Bay Unitary Authority comprised of Barrow Borough Council, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland.
- Model 2 is probably the least worst option for Grange. There are plenty of existing economic connections between the three existing Authorities. There would be one approach to developing the Bay and its hinterland as a tourist attraction, a quality food-producing area, an energy generating location, and a marine and wildlife conservation area.
 - The three Authorities' climate change priorities are compatible and forward-thinking. They have major projects in the offing that benefit from co-ordination. Barrow has a grant of £25 million from central government to regenerate, Morecambe has the prospect of Eden North and Lancaster has an enterprising and prestigious university.
 - The Authorities are already better connected by road and rail than Model 1 and have a shared history. Existing council staff who might be expected to form the core of a new authority have a broad experience of local service delivery and community consultation, which would produce more continuity and familiarity for Town and Parish Councils and the communities they serve.

C20/103

Next Meeting

7

Members noted that the next Full Council Meeting would be held remotely:
Monday 14 December 2020, 7pm.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8pm.

Signed:

Dated:

Chair, Grange-over-Sands Town Council