

Silloth-on-Solway Town Council
Minutes of an extraordinary meeting held on Tuesday 22 September 2020 at 7.00pm
via video conference

Present:– Councillor. M. Orchard (MO).

Councillors

J. Cook (JC), C. Doran (CD), A. Emmerson (AE), V. Hope (VH), M. Irving (MI),
W. Jefferson (WJ), A.J. Markley (AJM), J. McCormick (JM), J. Snaith (JS) & G. Wilkinson (GW).
Also present: Wendy Jameson (Town Clerk) & various members of the public.

	In accordance with The Local Authorities & Police & Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority & Police & Crime Panel Meetings) (England & Wales) Regulations 2020 this meeting was held by video conference call.	
685.	Apologies: Councillor S. Graham (surgery).	
686.	Declarations of Interest Councillor Cook – Chair of Silloth Tourism Action Group (STAG).	
687.	Exclusion of Press & Public None.	
688.	Public Participation – Adjournment of meeting Two requests were received from members of the public and therefore the meeting was briefly adjourned to allow them to speak. Mr Owen Martin spoke at the meeting in relation to allegations made to the Police about Silloth Tourism Action Group (STAG) in which he called for an apology from the Town Council, for the Council to review its policies and procedures, work more closely with volunteer groups and consider holding an annual meeting with volunteer groups in the town. Mr Bill James also spoke at the meeting in relation to STAG and the discord within the Council, suggesting that members of the Council should stand down and let people vote a new Council on. The Chairman asked if there were any questions or comments from members of the Council. It was suggested that the Council had not been working together and the petty squabbles need to stop. Many members of the Council have served the town for many years in various capacities whether it be volunteering, representing the town at Allerdale, County Council or as Mayor etc, and have been voted on to the Council by the local community, for the good of the town.	
689.	Explanation requested from Councillor Snaith It was questioned why Councillor Snaith had stated to the full council at the meeting on 7 September that STAG was still under investigation by Cumbria Police when they have confirmed in the press that there was no further action to be taken. It was questioned why there had been a need to call an extraordinary meeting which Councillor McCormick said was due to the number of times STAG had been discussed over the last 12 months which reflected badly on the Council and caused the resignation of a councillor. The matter had only been discussed twice in the last 12 months, as it would only be discussed when both Councillor Cook and Councillor Snaith were present. After a question was raised in a previous meeting, Councillor Cook met with the Chairman and Clerk and was asked to provide details of how STAG had spent the funds provided by the Town Council. An explanation would have satisfied the Council that there had been no misappropriation of funds. A list was sent by the Clerk to Councillor Cook but the information was never provided. Councillor Snaith had asked for audited accounts which have never arrived and gave a deadline by which time if it was not dealt with he would deal with it. This is not a Town Council matter but is a matter between Councillor Snaith and STAG. In the last 12 months none of the Council have ever mentioned that they were unhappy with how it has	

	<p>been dealt with. Councillor Snaith went to the Police as an individual and as previously minuted, no authorisation was given by the Council. The Accounts have not been audited because everyone left STAG and joined Rotary. The Accounts were going to be audited but then an alternative auditor had to be found. Delays were also due to covid but Accounts have now been prepared for the last 2 years which have been externally examined. Legislation has now changed and groups no longer require a full audit. STAG needs to change its constitution, which other groups may also need to do, to reflect the changes in legislation. The option was given months ago for an explanation to be provided on how funds had been spent but the information was not forthcoming. The Council asked to see audited accounts. For 12 months, there have been delays due to covid and it was not discussed due to the relevant councillors not being present at meetings. It has therefore not been discussed constantly over the last 12 months. Councillor Snaith was to be given the opportunity to answer the question raised on the Agenda but was no longer in the meeting. When the extraordinary meeting was called the Chairman decided to contact the police to obtain the information and clarify everything. There is a police log number but no crime number. The Chairman has looked at the questions raised and the accounts provided and cannot see anything wrong with them. The Police have also stated that there has been no crime submitted with regard to the information provided and therefore no crime number. This will be the last time it will be on a Town Council's agenda.</p>	
<p>690.</p>	<p>Apology to Silloth Tourism Action Group</p> <p>It was suggested that the Council make a formal apology to STAG and its suppliers for allowing the ongoing victimisation of the group and its suppliers. The Chairman spoke to Councillor Cook and Mr Martin on the phone prior to the meeting to say the Council would not be issuing an apology to STAG, as the Council has not pursued this. Councillor Cook had accepted it over the phone but the Chairman asked for it to be confirmed in the meeting by both Councillor Cook and Mr Martin that they there would be no apology from the Town Council. A bank statement from August had been seen which had not been passed to STAG. Councillor Cook has no confidence in Councillor Snaith and does not have trust in him. Councillor Cook accepts what the Chairman has said but would like an apology from Councillor Snaith and for him to be asked to stand down. Town Councillors are volunteers and do a lot for this town and it is unfair to expect them to apologise to STAG which was accepted by Councillor Cook, who is also chair of STAG. It was questioned if the Accounts are acceptable by the Council, although STAG does need to change its constitution. From the questions that were asked and the information that was to hand, as Chairman of the Town Council, he is happy but he can't speak on behalf of other council members. There needs to be a meeting of STAG to get the constitution brought up to date and remove the requirement for a full audit. Other volunteer groups also need to be made aware of the changes. The Police have suggested that STAG's accounts need to be more transparent and more readily available, with the necessary changes made to the constitution with regard to not requiring a full audit. STAG also needs to look at their own procedures and investigate how information has come into the public domain. The Town Council appreciates what local volunteers do and have provided considerable financial support. The Council and volunteers need to work together and a meeting will be arranged with a representative from each of the groups which would involve them in any decisions to be made. A line needs drawn and for everyone to move forward. This has all been brought to a head and it was suggested that Mr Martin should be thanked for that. It was questioned if Mr Martin could refrain from going onto social media with constant attacks on the Town Council, however Mr Martin said he would not stop using social media and has done nothing wrong but if anyone has a complaint they can contact Allerdale.</p>	

Signed.....

Date.....