



Penrith Town Council

Unit 1, Church House, 19-24 Friargate, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 7XR
Tel: 01768 899 773 Email: office@penrithtowncouncil.gov.uk

Meeting Minutes: Communities Committee

Date: Monday 29 June 2026 at 17:15

Place: Board Room, Unit 1, 19-24 Friargate, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 7XR

Present: Chair: Cllr. B. Jayson, Vice Chair: Cllr. Jackson, Cllr. Bowen, Cllr. Kenyon

Officers: Community Services Manager, Events Manager

Public: 0

Meeting opened at: 17:15pm

CC26/07 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllrs Lawson and Donald.

CC26/08 Appointment of Vice Chair

Cllr. Jackson be appointed as Vice Chair of the Communities Committee for the remainder of the 2026-27 municipal year.

CC26/09 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Jackson and Bowen declared a registerable interest in Item 7: Proposed Changes to Secondary School Academy Trust Arrangements in Penrith, as they had relatives at Secondary Schools in Penrith.

Cllr Bowen recorded a registerable interest in Item 13: Penrith Stars of Business Awards, as they had been shortlisted for an award.

CC26/10 Minutes

Members considered the minutes of the previous Committee meeting held on Monday 1 June 2026.

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes for the meeting held on Monday 1 June 2026 were approved and signed as a correct record.

CC26/11 Public Participation

There were no representations from the public.

CC26/12 Excluded Item: Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960

Members noted that there were no matters to be considered in private session.

CC26/13 Proposed Changes to Secondary School Academy Trust Arrangements in Penrith

Members considered the report and recommendations contained within.

RESOLVED THAT:

The information received through public participation at Full Council on Monday 8 June 2026 be noted, and Penrith Town Council write a letter to the Department for Education regarding the proposed changes to secondary school academy trust arrangements in Penrith which is shown at Appendix A.

CC26/14 Resolutions Report

Members noted the written report.

CC26/15 Communications Report

Members noted the written report.

CC26/16 Communities Committee Workplan Report

Members noted the written report.

CC26/17 Penrith May Day 2026 Review

Members noted the written report.

CC26/18 Castle Park Leaflet

Members considered the report and recommendations contained within.

RESOLVED THAT:

A contribution of up to £300 from the Castle Park Development Fund towards the design, production and printing of a Castle Park leaflet developed in partnership with Westmorland and Furness Council be approved.

CC26/19 Penrith Stars of Business Awards

Members considered the report and recommendations contained within.

RESOLVED THAT:

Sponsorship of the "Volunteer of the Year" award as part of Penrith Chamber of Trade and Commerce's Stars of Business Awards 2026 at a cost of £500 be approved, and the Penrith Mayor and a guest attended the awards ceremony on Friday 9 October 2026.

CC26/20 Next Meeting

Members noted the next meeting of the Communities Committee was scheduled for 21 September 2026 at 5.15pm at the Board Room, Unit 1, 19-24 Friargate, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 7XR.

CHAIR SIGN:

DATE:

General Power of Competence

The Town Council resolved from 15 May 2023, until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council, that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, to adopt the General Power of Competence.

FOR THE ATTENTION OF **ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE** **& FOR INFORMATION FOR TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Access to Information

Copies of the agenda are available for members of the public to inspect prior to the meeting. Agenda and Part I reports are available on the Town Council website:

<https://www.penrithtowncouncil.gov.uk/>

Background Papers

Requests for the background papers to the Part I reports, excluding those papers that contain exempt information, can be made via:

office@penrithtowncouncil.gov.uk

Appendix A



Penrith Town Council

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Tel: 01768 899 773 Email: office@penrithtowncouncil.gov.uk

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

6 July 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

Proposed academy trust arrangements for secondary schools in Penrith

Penrith Town Council received a representation from a concerned resident during public participation at its Full Council meeting on Monday 8 June 2026 regarding proposed changes to academy trust arrangements affecting the town's two secondary schools. The matter was subsequently considered by the Council's Communities Committee on Monday 29 June 2026, where Members resolved that the Council should write to the Department for Education to express its concerns.

The Council understands that academy trust arrangements are a matter for the schools, their governing bodies, the relevant trusts and the Department for Education. The Council also recognises that schools may need to be part of strong and sustainable academy trust structures. However, Members are concerned that if both Queen Elizabeth Grammar School and Ullswater Community College were to come under the same multi-academy trust, this could reduce meaningful choice for young people and families in Penrith.

Penrith is fortunate to have two well-regarded secondary schools, each with its own identity, ethos and contribution to the life of the town. Their

distinctiveness supports parental and pupil choice, helps maintain a rich and varied educational offer, and gives young people access to different opportunities, including sixth form provision, enrichment activities and the wider school experience.

The Council's concern is not with either school, both of which are valued highly by the community, nor with the principle of schools being part of an academy trust. Rather, the Council wishes to emphasise the importance of preserving genuine independence between the town's secondary schools. If the same trust were responsible for both, there is a risk that their individual character could be diminished over time and that families could have less practical choice when considering secondary education in Penrith.

The Council therefore asks that, before any final decision is made, the Department for Education gives careful consideration to the potential impact on choice, school identity and the range of educational opportunities available to pupils in the town. The Council would also welcome assurance that the views of parents, carers, pupils, staff and the wider community are taken into account as part of any consultation and decision-making process.

Penrith Town Council respectfully requests that any academy trust arrangements affecting Queen Elizabeth Grammar School and Ullswater Community College protect the independence, character and breadth of provision currently offered by both schools, so that young people in Penrith continue to benefit from a vibrant and varied secondary education landscape.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'V Bowen'.

Cllr Valerie Bowen, Chair of Penrith Town Council & Penrith Mayor