

ADRIAN WAITE

22nd October 2018

Mr. Colin Maughan,
Editor,
Cumberland & Westmorland Herald,
14 King Street,
Penrith,
Cumbria.
CA11 7AH.

Sent by email to: colinm@cwherald.com

Dear Mr. Maughan,

Appleby Town Council and Moot Hall

Information that is emerging about Appleby Town Council and the Moot Hall appears to be casting doubt on the financial viability of the Council.

The Town Council owns, and is responsible for managing and maintaining, several public buildings in Appleby of which the Moot Hall is probably the most prominent.

I would have thought that a local council that wanted to manage its assets and finances responsibly would do three things:

- Commission surveys of the buildings to establish what repairs and maintenance was required, when and at what cost.
- Establish a medium-term financial plan, showing when expenditure would be incurred and how it would be financed.
- Ideally, establish a major repairs reserve into which appropriate sums would be paid each year to ensure that when major repairs are required enough money would be available to carry them out.

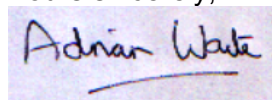
I understand that the Council has recently commissioned a survey that shows that the Moot Hall now requires repairs at a cost of about £1½million. I am not aware of any surveys of any other buildings. It does not appear that the Council has a medium-term financial plan, and the accounts contain no provision or reserve for major repairs at the Moot Hall or any other buildings.

The published accounts show that Appleby Town Council has net assets of about £100,000. If a liability of £1½million was added this would put Appleby 'in the red' by £400,000 – effectively bankrupt! Baling out the Council would cost a band D council tax payer in Appleby about £350.

The Council's preferred solution is to apply for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. However, I understand that the Heritage Lottery Fund will only fund improvements to buildings and not maintenance. Hence the Council appears to have decided to present a scheme to make alterations to the Moot Hall in the hopes that the Heritage Lottery Fund will meet the cost of both the alterations and the repairs. That is the real purpose of the proposed extension!

For the Council's scheme to succeed they will have to persuade the Heritage Lottery Fund to fund the maintenance and then secure planning permission and listed building consent. The cost may yet fall on the council tax payers of Appleby.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Waite