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Kendal Town Council welcomed its new Mayor at its recent Mayor Making Ceremony in the Assembly Room in Kendal Town Hall in May. Kendal's Mayoralty can trace its origins to Elizabeth I, who created a Corporation to be headed by an Alderman in 1575. The Elizabethan Charter was updated by Charles I in 1636, which stated: "Our well beloved Thomas Sleddall gent, to be ye first and modern Maier of ye Borough of Kendal."

Shap Road born and bred, Cllr Jonathan Cornthwaite is the 276th individual to take the office. His predecessor, Cllr Julia Dunlop was only the 16th woman. In common with Cumbria's other Borough's, Kendal blurs the local government history that accompanies the Mayoralty. The Minute books from 1973 and 1974 tell a story of the transfer of powers. The 'new' Parish Council exercised its power to be called a Town Council at its first meeting, but the familiar predicament of a mayoralty in name only soon become apparent and the records from the 1980s onwards are littered with low-level bickering as parish and district jostled to assert themselves.

With the advent of Westmorland and Furness, a new equilibrium is emerging. Kendal finds itself as the keystone corner in a triangle of old districts. County Council staff, used to the view down the M6 from the Scottish border are finding their way through the yards and lanes of the Auld Gray Town; huddling in Baba Ganoush (best soup!) or gazing out at the endless flood relief works from Waterside Café. The Town Council is finding its way through this new world too. Last year's Council Plan was both simple and committing. It's so much easier to know which way you're going when you have a plan! But the Town Council is also grappling with the changing wider world, like everyone else. Changes in employment may seem moot for parish clerks who have traditionally 'worked from home'. But the 450 years of Town Council tradition also placed the Clerk and staff in obvious offices in the Town Hall. Now we are squirreled away next to a 'Business Hub' in Angel Yard, where hot desking professionals ply their trade across the globe. But I think Thomas Sledall, gent, would approve.

Chris Bagshaw
Town Clerk, Kendal Town Council