

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the COWES TOWN COUNCIL held at Northwood House, Cowes on Wednesday, 9th February at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Wells (Town Mayor) (Chairman)
Councillors Banks, Birch, Jones, McGregor, Matthews, Mazillius,
Peacey-Wilcox, Robinson, Sanderson, Thwaites, Walters and Wilcox

6423 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ellis and Hammond.

6424 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

6425 REPORTS FROM ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCILLORS

Cllr Peacey Wilcox gave a verbal report referring to 1 person who has received some aggressive scam mail who has been advised to refer the matter to the police.

She had attended a public meeting of around 300 people regarding the floating bridge.

Following last month's question about the shortfall in pension provision for the IW Council some feedback has been received stating the shortfall is due to increased life expectancy and this passed to Cllr Walters.

Cllr Fuller submitted a written report summarised below:

IW Council Cutbacks

Had had many appeals against the cutbacks:

Libraries 19, Wightbus 13, Tourist Information and life guards 4, Cowes Floating bridge 4, Public toilets 3, Car parking 2, Adult services 2

Members Allowances

These were to be frozen. He had suggested that they were means-tested to encourage a more diverse range of councillors to come forward and that mobiles/blackberries be withdrawn in current austerity.

School Re-organisation and Community Engagement

Cowes High School – a meeting with residents and contractors stated that the new structure will be in place from March.

Planning Applications

Met with residents concerned with 55 Baring Road Egypt House – residents have complained about the builder burning waste. Three Crowns has had its planning application approved.

Cllr Fuller also referred to the proposed cuts to the Wightbus service; Southern Vectis had agreed that if volunteer drivers were found they would train them in order to make the routes economically viable and would provide the buses. This would be discussed further by the joint Northwood, Gurnard and Cowes working party.

Cllr Brown apologised for not having written a report. He referred to the following in an oral report:

Libraries

It was agreed 8th February at a cabinet meeting to add £100k to libraries in the coming year which would allow Cowes Library to remain open for 21 hours per week, provide self-service equipment and extend those libraries which were still closing with funding until the end of June. This was in response to the public consultation and the funds would have to be found from other budgets.

Floating Bridge

Charging foot passengers was considered impractical and so has been dropped as a proposal with savings required elsewhere.

Overall IW Council Budget

Required to be balanced and take account of increasing adult and child social care needs alongside a concessionary fares gap of £2m.

Cllr Mazillius submitted a written report summarised below:

Budget for 2011/12

The budget proposals covering the IW Council's revenue and capital position were now published available via the iwight.com website. The IW Council had identified the anticipated budget gap, as £17.8m.

The Council was proposing to continue to invest in core council services. Any additional budgetary pressures, e.g., continuing to run all libraries would therefore need to be met from spending reductions elsewhere in the budget.

Libraries

Cowes library was run efficiently but had low levels of issue figures, visitor numbers and income generation. It was known that many Cowes residents actually use the Newport library; the library was not based in the main shopping area of Cowes. Thus it was not clear that the present venue was best-placed to meet the needs of local customers.

Floating Bridge

He remained of the view that pedestrians should continue to travel free of charge and was very hopeful that a majority of his IW Council colleagues would agree.

Southern Water

The company's latest report showed an investment of £7.5m on a series of environmental improvement projects over the next five years none of these schemes were directed at the Cowes area, but all Islanders would benefit from these improvements one way or another.

Community Bus Service.

Marc Morgan Huws of Southern Vectis would be attending the next meeting of the joint Gurnard, Northwood, and Cowes working party to discuss how Southern Vectis might be able to assist in any local service linking in with their main services. This was positive news although there would need to be a plan "B".

Release of Online Spending Information

The IW Council has published on line details of every transaction of over £500 made in the last financial year in addition to every post within the authority that had salaries over £50k p.a. and the Councils property asset register. All of this would be up-rated annually.

Additionally Cllr Mazillius stated that 88% of people responding to the social care consultation stated that changes to trigger point for social care was acceptable and £6m would remain in the IW Council budget for those needing substantial care. The Westminster House working party had concluded that closure was the best option.

6426 REPORT FROM SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER

Local Action Group had established 3 priorities:

- Road Safety outside Schools

18th February there will be a partnership meeting

- Litter in Birmingham Road/Shooters Hill and Mill Hill Road

Shops in these streets have been asked to sign-up to a voluntary code of conduct which would result in them cleaning up the litter from their premises.

- Vandalism and graffiti on bus shelters

Co-op at Terminus Road would adjust lighting so that lights remain on at front of building all night and not at the side of the building.

PSCOs have begun a 12 month project of street mapping to discover policing priorities. Harbour Commission was examining the possibility of extending CCTV into the harbour area.

Motor Vehicle Damage - back windows were being smashed and some items stolen. This was a trend which is extending into East Cowes and maybe part of a "game" by young people.

Assault in High Street - following this assault PC Pringle had identified a suspect who was now on bail.

Pub Watch Meeting - PCSO Lisa Poole attended this meeting; publicans had no knowledge about the closing ceremony of the Island Games

Q. Off the floating bridge there was a "no cycling £30 fine" sign. Would this be enforced in Shooters Hill and High Street?

A. Write to the highways to request a no cycling sign for these areas.

Q. Would Cowes Police Station Close?

A. No, the front desk will be severely curtailed. The IW is suffering less than the rest of Hampshire in policing cuts.

6427 REPORT FROM ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

The Environment Officer had submitted a written report stating that nothing of urgency had happened in Cowes, although people were still putting their rubbish out early.

6428 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That subject to recording that Councillor Mazillius had arrived at 8.45p.m., the Minutes of the Meeting of held on 19th January 2011 were taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6429 MATTERS ARISING

a) I.W. Association of Local Councils

The Town Clerk submitted a letter from IWALC requesting the Town Council consider rejoining the Association. The current rate was 15.5p per elector; that would equate to £1,328.94 for the Town Council although they had chosen to cap the fee so the actual figure was £935.

The Chair and Vice Chair of IWALC wished to attend a Council meeting to outline the benefits of membership.

RESOLVED

That the Town Council invites the representatives from IWALC to one of their future meetings.

b). War Memorial

The Town Clerk submitted a letter from G.J. Banks (IW) Ltd. which stated that the mortar pointing of hydrated lime on the war memorial had been badly affected by continuous wet weather which had delayed the curing period. There was little point in attempting the re-pointing works until the spring; in the interim they would brush off the spoiled lime mortars. There would be no costs for the re-pointing works.

A letter was also submitted from the Royal British legion stating that the 2011 Remembrance Parade would start at Northwood coach park; the shortened route was considered necessary because of bad weather and young children and veterans taking part.

c). Vacancy, Cowes South Ward

The Town Clerk reported that three nominations had been received for election as a Councillor for the Cowes South Ward; the election would be held on Thursday, 3rd March and in accordance with Town Council instructions, poll cards would be issued.

d). Office furniture

The Town Clerk submitted a letter from the I.W. Council Strategic Projects Officer which stated that he was producing an inventory of surplus furniture which would become available over the next 6 to 12 months. As this timescale was no good to the Town Council, Councillor Mazillius undertook to ask the Chief Executive if furniture could be made immediately available.

A letter was also submitted from DN Associates giving the Town Council permission to drill walls in the office to install equipment on condition that the walls were returned to their original condition on termination of the lease; the Town Council would be invoiced for remedial works if they failed to comply.

RESOLVED

That the Town Council accepts the terms of DN Associates permission regarding works to the office.

6429 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS

a). Northwood House

Councillor Thwaites gave a report in her capacity as chairman of the Northwood House Charitable Trust referring to the following:

Clearing, cleaning and generally improving conditions in the House continued and the grass had had its first cut of the year. Work to bring the kitchens up to standard was progressing and the play area had been fully inspected and only two low priority aspects had been identified for attention. The Trustees planned to improve and bring the signage on Ward Avenue up to date.

Two profile raising events had been held in the house; the first was a celebration by the I.W. Chamber of Commerce to mark 60 years of the Minghella Ice Cream Company and the second was a breakfast meeting for 120 businessmen and women to launch the Island's sector of the National Apprenticeship Scheme. A charity antiques fair was booked for 27th February and there would be a Jazz at Northwood House evening on 5th March. Civil wedding ceremonies had been booked and work to promote the house continued with interest from across the board.

The car park was the main source of income; at this quiet time of year it was essential to monitor expenditure very closely. With the aid of a specialist they had identified ways of reducing electricity costs by 25%.

A new Trustee had been appointed; the Trust was still seeking specialist assistance particularly from anyone with broad financial experience or with historic building management skills.

A short term office rental was coming to an end but discussions were ongoing with potential tenants for up to 18 months occupation and a local floral club was discussing the possibility of taking on flower arrangements at the house for special occasions.

Cowes Carnival committee had volunteered to run car parking on the grass during some of the special events in addition to Cowes Week this season.

Following advice from the Trusts auditor, accounts for the year ended 2009 had been completed and had been forwarded to the Charity Commission.

Finally, the Trust had been approached by a special interest group who wished to investigate more fully and secure the Ice House, which may be very rare. The Trust looked forward to learning more of this apparently Georgian relic.

The full report is attached to these minutes; the most recent report to the Town Council can also be viewed at www.northwoodhouse.org/news.

b). Library/TIC Working Group

The Notes of the Meeting of the Library/TIC Working Group held on 27th January 2011 were received.

Councillor Wells questioned whether the Town Council should reform its Acquisitions Committee bearing in mind they were considering possibilities for the library, toilets, dog and litter bins etc. It was agreed that this should be left until the Annual Meeting.

Following the Library/TIC Working Group meeting it had been reported that the I.W. Council had made an additional £100,000 available for the Library service which would enable the Cowes Library to remain open for 3 days per week.

In respect of Island TIC's, it had also been reported that Southern Vectis would assume a responsibility for the service in some form.

c). Town Improvements Committee

The Minutes of the Town Improvements Committee held on 2nd February 2011 were received. Councillor McGregor reported that numerous attempts had been made to contact Norton Projects regarding the preparation and issue of tender documents and assisting the Town Council in selecting a contractor (stage 2) for The Cut enhancement works, and undertaking site supervision when work commenced (stage 3); all of the efforts had failed. The Town Council had issued Norton Projects with a 'letter of intent' in July 2007.

RESOLVED

That the Town Council writes to Norton Projects Ltd. regarding the above stating that unless they receive a response to their communication by 1st March 2011 they would appoint another Project Manager.

(Councillors Peacey-Wilcox and Wilcox left the meeting at 8.38p.m.)

d). Community Transport Forum

The minutes of the Meeting of the Community Transport Forum held on 3rd February 2011 were received.

It had transpired at the Forum that Mr. Morgan-Huws from Southern Vectis wished to deal separately with the Town Council regarding the Briary Court bus service; it was agreed that the Town Clerk contact him to invite him to the next meeting of the Town Council.

Councillor Mazillius expressed concern that the Town Council was once again not represented at the Forum; it was agreed to place an item on the March agenda to clarify the position regarding the Town Council representatives.

6430 MATTERS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN CLERK

- a). Renewal payment to the Information Commissioner under the Data Protection Act 1998.
- b). *To receive details of miscellaneous correspondence.

(* Copies circulated to Councillors)

RESOLVED

- 1). That the Town Clerk be authorised to renew the Town Council's registration with the Information Commissioners Office under the Data Protection Act 1998.

6431 SUMMER FLORAL PLANTING

The Town Clerk submitted a letter from Brighstone Landscaping which stated that as the I.W. Council had awarded all grounds maintenance work to another contractor it had become uneconomical for Brighstone Landscaping to continue to offer the Town Council a watering service for their baskets and troughs this summer.

Councillor Mazillius stated that the saving on the grounds contract to the I.W. Council was approximately £300,000 per annum or £1.8m over the life of the contract. The contract had been awarded to John O'Connor (Grounds Maintenance) Ltd. who were a well respected company; they were founded in 1969 and in 2008 had achieved internationally recognised standards for their business procedures and policies.

RESOLVED

That the Town Clerk seeks to obtain a quotation from John O'Connor (Grounds Maintenance) Ltd. for watering the summer bedding plants.

6432 RELOCATION OF BUS STOP, PARK ROAD/GRANVILLE ROAD JUNCTION

The I.W. Council were proposing to relocate the bus shelter from the junction of Park Road/Granville Road to a point in Terminus Road, northeast of its junction with Granville Road and were seeking the Town Council's view. The Road Safety Engineer had undertaken an independent safety audit on the proposal and could find no safety issues.

RESOLVED

That the Town Council has no objection to the relocation of the bus shelter.

(The proceedings terminated at 9.00pm)

CHAIRMAN