



Minutes of the Thirty first Annual Town Meeting held in Drawing Room, Northwood House Cowes on Tuesday 10 May 2016 at 6.15pm, convened under the provision of the section 99 and schedule 12 of the Local Government Act, 1972.

Present : Councillor Jones (Town Mayor) (Chairman)
Councillors Banks, Bartrum, Brown, Corby, Cowan, Doyle, Fuller, McNeill, Nicholson, Peacey-Wilcox, Slade and Spalding.

In attendance: Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and 1 member of the public.

205 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ellis, Hammond and Wardrop

**206 MINUTES
RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the thirtieth Annual Town Meeting held on 30 April 2015, be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

207 REPORT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Jones provides a written report which was copied and provided to those attending.

This has been a challenging year given the extra expenditure and responsibilities Cowes Town Council has taken on. Increasingly discretionary services are being devolved from the unitary authority to Towns & Parishes. Cowes Town Council has had to make difficult decisions on funding those services that we see as vital for our community. This has meant a rise in the precept equating to just 4 pence per day for a band D household.

Ensuring that public toilets remain open is one of these vital services. Faced with an ultimatum that the toilets would close on April 1st this year, unless we agreed to fund them, Cowes Town Council took over their management. We have awarded an annual cleaning contract to a local company, this covers the four toilet blocks in town plus Northwood Park & Northwood Recreation Ground. Extra cleaning will take place during Cowes Week.

Grounds maintenance is something that Cowes Town Council is willing to take responsibility for, being one of the discretionary services the Isle of Wight Council are asking Towns and Parishes to help finance. This year we entered into a grounds maintenance contract for public open spaces in the town as well as agreeing to a separate contract for Northwood Park. We have also taken over responsibility for the Bandstand including the Commemorative plaques, which have recently been cleaned and serviced. We have agreed that 3 more commemorative plaques are erected when available. The Park Road rose bed is

now looking much tidier; although not under Town Council ownership we have agreed to include this highly visible feature in the grounds maintenance contract.

The library service has again been subject to a significant budget reduction. Cowes Town Council agreed at the December meeting to support the running costs of Cowes Library for the year from April 1st 2016.

At the April meeting it was agreed to buy into the Environment Officer Service for 5 hours a week at an annual cost of £2,600. This was in response to public concern regarding dog fouling & other anti-social issues.

The Town Council has agreed to remedy the problem of a boggy area between the footpath & the War Memorial in Northwood Park. Initially holes will be bored & filled with gravel; hopefully this simple solution will alleviate the problem. With our offices & meeting rooms in Northwood House we are happy to continue to have a good working relationship with Northwood House Charitable Trust Company Limited.

Upgrading our town continues to be an important part of the business of the Town Council. The Festive Lights installed in the High Street in November proved a great success; so much so that a local resident made a contribution towards their cost. We were pleased to work with Cowes Business Association on this project. To brighten up the High Street during the summer the Town Council agreed to pay £1,000 to erect & remove bunting through the High Street. The bunting has been donated free of charge.

The other main projects are progressing, albeit slowly. Planning permission for upgrading The Cut has been granted; work is due to begin shortly. A welcome shelter on the rather exposed Esplanade sited halfway between Cowes and Gurnard, has been slightly delayed, but all permissions are in place and we look forward to its completion in 2016.

At the July 2015 meeting it was resolved not to replace the shelter provided for those using the Skate Park & MUGA in Northwood Rec. which vandals had completely destroyed.

In June 2016 there will be two events to which the Town Council have made financial commitments. On June 12th celebrating Her Majesty's 90th birthday there will be an all-day event culminating in a lunch/picnic in Northwood Park. Between 22nd & 25th June great things are planned for Cowes Yacht Haven as Cowes hosts the only UK leg of the renowned La Solitaire Bompard Le Figaro single handed yacht race. It was felt that this event will bring visitors, kudos and financial gain to our town. It was a decision approved by a majority of Councillors to commit £10,000 to shoreside events that clinched a deal to bring the race to Cowes. Similarly it was agreed to contribute to a giant TV screen allowing onshore viewing of the Cowes Classic Powerboat Race on 3rd & 4th September.

A small band of volunteers planted summer bedding plants in the concrete troughs and planters placed around the town. The hanging baskets on the Cowes signs and Parade lamp standards were supplied by Forest View Nursery. We ensured that the large planters placed on the Parade for Cowes Week remained in situ until the end of the season.

Looking to the future, Cowes the Town Council agreed to pay a proportion of the cost of a feasibility study, together with other stakeholders, of Gateway Cowes. This is looking at ways of upgrading & improving access to Fountain Yard, the Red Jet Terminal & the waterfront. Destination Cowes, still in its infancy, was discussed in Council; Councillor McNeill was appointed our representative on what is hoped will become the promotional organisation bringing great things to Cowes.

During the February meeting it was resolved that the Assistant Town Clerk write to the IW Highways Department asking for the transfer of ownership, maintenance & operation of the bollards in the High St. One of the frustrations faced this year has been a failure to move this & other High Street issues forward. Cycling remains an issue & our attempts to restrict traffic to between 7am & 10am has so far come to nothing.

As part of our commitment to local organisations the Town Council continued to provide financial help in the form of grants. This year there has been a change to the criteria, however Councillors awarded a significant number of grants with several organisations benefiting.

We continued this year to meet with Gurnard & Northwood Parish Councils, shared costs as a cluster group has been, & will continue to be, on the agenda.

An extremely important initiative was set in motion this year. A list of defibrillators in the town has been produced with Cowes Town Council taking the lead on ensuring this potentially vital lifesaving equipment is available throughout the town.

Quarterly newsletters have been printed & delivered to most houses in Cowes, as well as providing information about the Town Council they also allowed local groups space to promote their activities. As an additional publicity tool a Cowes Town Council Facebook page has been set up.

The possible loss of a Post Office in Cowes was a serious concern; happily the efforts of the Council and individual Councillors ensured that continuity was maintained with the temporary facility being moved from the Marks & Spencer's car park to Cowes Yacht Haven.

This year three new Councillors have joined us; Councillors Bartrum & Slade are already actively engaged in Council business and we will welcome Councillor Doyle to his first meeting at the Annual Town Council meeting immediately after this meeting.

Finally I would like to thank Debbie & Sue the Town Clerks who have kept the Council running smoothly despite having to deal with a significant amount of extra work. Thanks also to my fellow Councillors who give their time freely as volunteers. Particular thanks to Councillor Mark McNeill who has been a most capable & supportive Deputy Mayor.

Questions were invited but none asked. One member commented how nice the bunting in the High Street looked.

208 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016 were circulated at the Meeting. Councillor McNeill (Chair of Finance Committee) and Ms Debbie Faulkner (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer) were available for any questions but none were asked.

RESOLVED

That the accounts be received and noted.

209 ANNUAL SUMMARY – SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

Police Constable Adam Dollery was unable to attend the meeting and no written report was received.

ANNUAL SUMMARY – I.W. COUNCILLORS

Written reports were received from Councillors Bertie, Fuller, Nicholson and Peacey-Wilcox

Councillor Paul Bertie (Cowes North)

Planning Committee. I have now completed a planning training session, and can stand in for colleagues as and when required.

Disabled Parking in Cowes. There is currently no disabled parking bay in the centre of Cowes, and I am pursuing this matter.

Cowes Tourism. I have attended and contributed to Destination Cowes meetings. I was the only IOW or Cowes Town Councillor to attend the Visit IOW conference in March. Attracting tourism to Cowes remains a high priority for me.

Churchill Trail. I attended the opening event in April for the new Churchill Trail which starts in Cowes (being where Winston's parents first met).

Christmas Lights. I was very happy to see that the 'Christmas Lights Initiative' which I started as Chairman of the Cowes Business Association 5 years ago has finally come to fruition in a funding partnership between the CBA and Cowes Town Council.

Cowes Town Council. I attend meetings as an observer as and when necessary. As more discretionary services are being taken on by CTC, I intend to put myself forward as a Town Councillor at the next election. I stay in regular touch with several of the more active current Town Councillors.

ORP Blyskawica. I have been invited to join the committee to prepare for the 75th year celebrations in 2017 of this Polish ship's defence of Cowes in 1942.

Cowes Week Trademark. I continue to fight for the businesses and people of Cowes to have this trademark transferred from a commercial limited company (who effectively can control the use of the words 'Cowes Week') to a more 'neutral' and representative body such as Cowes Town Council.

Cowes Business Association. I continue to engage with the CBA on all matters relating to the support of Cowes businesses.

Councillor Paul Fuller (Cowes West and Gurnard)

Representing our Community in County Hall, rather than County Hall in our Community.

This is my seventh annual report and summarises my work as your Councillor for the past 12 months.

Despite financial pressures, I'm committed to ensure our Council says yes, rather than no, and as long as I remain your Councillor, I will listen to, and fight your corner whenever and wherever necessary.

Being part of the Council's ruling Independent Group, it is important to continue putting the needs of our community first. If you feel my group gets things wrong, or if I get things wrong – Please let me know.

If you wish to know more about my work, I write monthly reports. These are available at meetings of Cowes Town Council, Gurnard Parish Council and are available from Cowes

Library and Gurnard Village Hall. Reports feature on paulfullercc.blogspot.com, whilst edited versions feature in the Cowes Magazine, Gurnard News and the Beacon.

In addition to my role as Isle of Wight Councillor, I am an active member of Cowes Town Council, Gurnard Parish Council and Northwood Parish Council.

The reason I do this, is because I thoroughly love it! Because I enjoy my “work”, I hope it shows and I am achieving the right outcomes for our community.

Councillor John Nicholson (Cowes South and Northwood)

I am partaking in and progressing the Wellbeing agenda on the Island, through organising meetings and introductions between Island, national and international leaders. Circulating relevant informative material for the attention of stakeholders. Getting Wellbeing as a regular agenda item on Northwood Parish Council and an item for regular discussion at Cowes Town Council, driving forward significant progressive and leading practice in the awareness of mental health and the importance that mental state has in health, crime, education, performance, work, community and wellbeing.

Supporting, representing and advising residents in various local and personal issues and concerns, from planning matters to parking issues.

Negotiating and being actively engaged with Island Roads in regards to road works quality and impact mitigation.

Acting as representative on Island Roads Health and Safety Forum.

Supporting Isle of Wight high-tech industry, attending their group meetings, introducing new members and connections, for greater appreciation and growth of this valuable and important industry.

Liaising with local schools and businesses, to support, encourage, connect and facilitate.

Being outspoken, when needed, to represent and voice concerns that have caused local outrage.

Serving on the Planning Committee, the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee, the Environment and Transport Select Committee, the Children’s Services Committee and the cross-party Strategy & Communications Forum.

Being an actively involved member of Northwood Parish and Cowes Town Councils, chairing Cowes Town Council’s Projects Committee.

Councillor Lora Peacey-Wilcox (Cowes Medina)

I continue to represent my constituents concerns as best I can. I do not give up trying to help and support without a battle.

My monthly reports keep you up to date with my daily/weekly issues that are raised and dealt with.

As you can imagine, the past few weeks have been rather pre occupied with sorting the new waste contract and bins versus bags!

Should you wish clarification on any issues then please contact me.

Questions were raised from Councillor Bertie’s report regarding the lack of disabled parking in the centre of the Town. There is short stay disabled parking in the St Mary’s Road Car park which allows for a maximum of three hours – long stay is provided on The Parade and at Brunswick Road.

Councillor Fuller's report was too large for many members to open electronically – a few hard copies were available.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE MEETING

No questions were raised but a discussion followed about possible services which may be passed to Town and Parish Councils from the IW Council:–

- a) Principal Parks and Open Spaces are the next items to be considered.
- b) That the waste contract is a statutory duty therefore will not be passed over.

This led onto a general discussion about the new waste contract.

- That dog waste deposited in a household non-recyclable bin is put into landfill.
- That the leaflets sent to each householder about the new collections are too general.
- That residents living in unmade roads – such as Alexander Road were told that they would have to take their bins to the end of the road – this is not happening.
- That although many complaints have been received, thousands of people are happy with the new system.

(Meeting ended at 6.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN