

# **Welcome to Cowes Town Council's first Newsletter**

*Compiled and written by Cllr. Geoff Banks, Town Mayor*

## **INTRODUCTION TO OUR NEWSLETTER**

**ISSUE 1 : SEPTEMBER 2013**

This is the first of what will be a quarterly Newsletter which your Town Council aims to deliver to every household in Cowes.

The aim of the Newsletter is to provide you with regular updates on what your Town Council is actively engaged in to improve and safeguard our town for its betterment and to share those ideas with you and gain your own input.

Many of you will receive the Beacon magazine where the Mayors have had a monthly article for Town Council news. Such has been costly and many of you have failed to receive regular copies. Furthermore, the articles required submission to the publishers many weeks in advance of their distribution making certain news items no longer relevant.

Hopefully your Town Council, by the issue of this Newsletter, can better engage with its electorate. However, it is as much your Newsletter as it is that of the Council. We seek your input in what you would like us to provide you with. This first edition is, therefore, somewhat of a trial run which we hope to improve and broaden as time moves on.

You will see that this edition, on its last pages, sets out a questionnaire for you to complete and return. Cowes is part of the Medina Valley Area Action Plan (MVAAP) which allows Councils in this area to evolve their own blueprint as to how they wish the town to develop as well as set out what we don't want to see for the direction of the town. This questionnaire is a very important public consultation document whereby we can all give our views. How to return the questionnaire is explained as a footnote.

## **A little about your Town Council**

Cowes Town Council was established in 1985 following a central government objective to emparish towns and rural areas in order to provide the electorate with a more local tier of authority besides that at County level. Its function is to engage with its local electorate and to act on their behalf through a democratic process. The cost of running your Town Council comes from a precept which is paid by all Cowes' households and forms part of that payment made to the Isle of Wight Council through its Council Tax. The cost is on average about £20 per household per annum and pays for office administration, provision of grants and expenditure on capital projects and ongoing services such as those facilities at Northwood Recreation Ground.

Unlike the Isle of Wight Council your Cowes Town Council owns no property and has no control over those services provided through County Hall. As a Town Council we are very much a 'grass roots' organisation and share those many concerns and frustrations as yourselves. We have a say in Planning and Licensing matters, however, we are very much a lobbying group and only can, sometimes at best, challenge those in authority to provide and deliver local services the way we would all wish. We are, however, blessed in the fact that we have always had at least one Town Councillor who sat as a councillor with the controlling authority, whether it was with the former Medina Borough Council or at the County Council. At this time we are fortunate to have three Town Councillors who are also Isle of Wight Councillors; this gives us those extra voices at County level to support our town and lobby on the townspeople's behalf.

## **Island Roads**

As you will now know the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) funding for the multi million pound upgrade of our roads is now underway. There has been those initial 'teething problems', however, the programme runs for the next 25 years and these are early days. Cowes lies in 'District 1' of the roadworks and your Town Council has had and will be having meetings with other town and parish councils in that area to ask the pertinent questions such as what will be done, where and when. The long running saga relating to the Medina Wharf asphalt plant now, hopefully, has closure. Although it was to be sited in the Cowes area it was outside of the

parish of Cowes. Several Cowes Town Councillors considered the concept as a threat rather than an actuality, whereby much posturing for a commercial position appeared to be the intent.

### **Health and Safety**

We all, nowadays, are more aware of the need for one's health, safety and welfare. Your Town Council, as other parish and town councils, have to show due diligence in how they assess and manage the risk when providing council services. Cowes Town Council is presently evaluating what further checks and balances it needs to emplace. Often health and safety awareness comes somewhat late in the day, as was the case with Cowes Business Associations', (CBA), erection of their flags and banners throughout the High Street in readiness for our yachting events. The 'man off a ladder' was considered too high a risk for Island Roads which now has full governance over what goes on or above our highway. Cowes Town Council has also been drawn into those restrictions when erecting its bunting about the town. The CBA found itself having to engage Island Roads to erect all flags and banners by their trained personnel. However, Island Roads has now acceded in allowing the CBA's contractor to undertake the work for the rest of the season. Island Roads are devising an application form for those wishing to erect anything traversing the highway so that compliance, with their health, safety and welfare procedures is strictly adhered to. Interestingly, this will affect anyone fixing any objects above the highway which will include estate agents' signs, projecting signs, projecting lighting and even the Christmas lights and trees. Island Roads will be charging an administration fee for vetting those submitting their application forms.

### **Traffic Control High Street & Shooters' Hill**

Your Town Council has had meetings with Island Roads, Cowes Business Association, Cowes Safer Neighbourhoods Team, (Cowes Police), and Isle of Wight Councillors and Council representatives to resolve the ongoing issues relating to vehicles and cyclists using the roadway during the pedestrianized hours as well as the siting of tables and chairs along the highway. The erecting and lowering of the traffic bollards appears a main factor and your Town Council is endeavouring to find a responsible organization to take this on. The Town Council is also requesting that the Traffic Order for times of pedestrianization is changed to 7am till 10am and restricting the use to service vehicles and to those residents with vehicular access direct onto the road. With review on restrictions for setting out of tables and chairs this would free up the streets for pedestrians also of an evening. Consideration is being given as to how best to deal with the cyclist problem. A police report indicates that many cyclists are unaware of the restrictions and there is therefore a call for better signage as well as policing. A possible dedicated cyclist route is under consideration, taking cyclists away from the High Street.

### **Cowes Enterprise College**

Cowes Town Council has, at best, been only able to keep a watching brief on the delays, and misfortunes of what must be an expensive exercise in mismanagement. The primary consideration with the Town Council has lain with the students and our continuous concerns have been registered. However, this debacle as regards to the delivery of the college continues with the demise of the parent company which contracted the works. Inasmuch that delays were, in part, given as to the degree of technical innovations having to be integrated and managed, one wonders whether the highly qualified technical personnel engaged by the contractor will be there to 'drive' this technically hybrid machine.

### **Dog Fouling**

This continues as a major problem. The Town Council would like to know where this is prevalent and regular. It may be alleviated to a degree by the Town Council providing additional bins in the locality. At our recent full council meeting it was agreed to request that the present bins about town are additionally labelled as dual purpose. Apparently many dog owners are unaware that all litter bins can accept dog litter but we ask that such is properly bagged before depositing.

## **Vandalism at The Park Road Recreation Ground,**

Closing of the toilets at The Rec due to vandalism is of concern to us all. This is costing this Council a great deal of money and time. Anyone having knowledge of the perpetrators can they please inform the Town Council so that appropriate action can be taken against them.

## **Seaside Shelter**

This idea has been resurrected and has been met with a positive response by councillors agreeing to the notion, in principle, subject to siting, cost and obtaining the necessary permissions from the Isle of Wight Council's various departments and agents. The idea is to erect a Victorian style shelter, similar to those along Cowes Green, sited on one of the projecting breakwaters halfway between the nearest shelters between Cowes and Gurnard. Thoughts are that this would make an excellent midway stop for those taking this beautiful panoramic much journeyed seafront walk.

## **Public Open Meeting**

The Town Mayor has re-introduced holding public meetings allowing the public to hear and question what their Town Council is doing on their behalf. Additionally there will be presentations from local organizations which will give an update on their work in the community. The first meeting is planned for Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October at 7pm and will be held in the Cowes Methodist Church in Birmingham Road. Refreshments will be served free to all able to attend. The meeting will be further advertised in the County Press and Town Council notice boards earlier to the date.

## **Lights of Love**

Annually your council holds this event in Francki Place in order to raise funds for the Earl Mountbatten Hospice. Attendance was very much weather dependent and, due to such, your Town Council this year will hold a Lights of Love Carol Service in the Cowes Methodist Church in Birmingham Road on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 6pm for a concert at 6.30 with free refreshments afterwards.

## **“Who do you think lives here?”**

Is the title of Cowes Heritage's next exhibition to be held at Regatta House, Cowes Parade, from 19<sup>th</sup> October till 10<sup>th</sup> November, 10am to 4pm weekdays; entrance is free.

## **Contact**

Office - 7, Baring Chambers, 13, Denmark Road, Cowes, PO31 7YS. Tel. – 209022.  
Opening hours generally Mon. – Fri. 9.30am till 12.00 (except Bank Holidays).

## **Meetings**

Our next full Council Meeting is on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October @ 7pm in the Parish Hall at St. Mary's Church. At these meetings there are open sessions for the public to present questions to councillors. All are most welcome to attend.

## **Website**

Why not visit our website at [www.cowestowncouncil.org.uk](http://www.cowestowncouncil.org.uk) for updated news, minutes of meetings and an introduction to your Town Council.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

The Town Council is working with the Isle of Wight Council to prepare a plan for the whole of the Medina Valley for the next 15 years. The responses to this questionnaire will help shape the approach that will be taken in this plan for Cowes. The questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes (??) to complete.

Q1. Are you a permanent resident of Cowes?      Yes       No

Q2. If you were not born in Cowes, why did you move here?

- Employment
- Retirement
- Recreational
- Other

If Other please specify:

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Q3. How do you think Cowes can be improved?

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Q4. What type of housing do you think is needed in Cowes?

- Social     Assisted     Small Family     Large Fami     Affordable First Hon   
Rented     Bungalows     Non

Q5. Where do you think this housing should go?

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Q6. Do you think that Cowes needs other types of development?

- |                     |                              |                             |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Retail outlets      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Industrial          | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Marine-related uses | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

If other please specify:

Q7. If your answer to question 6 was yes, where should it be located?

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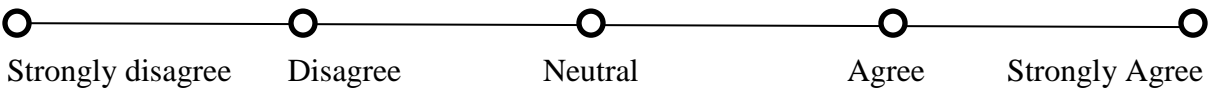
Q8. Are there areas of green and open space within the Town that are important to you?

Yes  No

Q9. If your answer to question 8 was yes, please explain what green and open spaces are important to you and why?

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Q10. The green and open spaces between Cowes, Northwood & Gurnard are important. How much do you agree with this statement?



Q11. How do you think the retail experience in Cowes could be improved?

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Q12. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your Town that might help in shaping its future?

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If you would prefer to complete this form online it can be found on the Town Council website at:- [www.cowestowncouncil.org.uk](http://www.cowestowncouncil.org.uk)

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.*

Cowes Town Council

Please return this questionnaire to:-

COWES TOWN COUNCIL  
Freepost RTGB-BRJJ-RHUA  
Office 7, Baring Chambers  
13 Denmark Road  
Cowes  
Isle of Wight

PO31 7DY