



Minutes of the Thirty second Annual Town Meeting held in the Drawing Room, Northwood House Cowes on Thursday 18 May 2017 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 Brown, J Bartrum, R Bartrum, Fuller, Glendinning, Oliver, Peacey-Wilcox,
Nicholson, Taylor

In attendance: Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and 5 members of the public.

212 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bertie, Hammond and Wardrop.

213 MINUTES RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Thirty first Annual Town Meeting held on 10 May 2016, be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

214 REPORT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Jones provided a written report which was circulated to attendees.

As the Unitary Authority continues to devolve discretionary services to towns and parishes, Cowes Town Council have made the important and challenging decision to acquire ownership of the public toilets in the town, rather than see them close; confirmation of this transfer was recently received. Your local council is now responsible for not only the day to day cleaning and maintenance of four public toilets, but also structural upkeep and, as finances allow, upgrading these assets. The Town Council also ensures that the toilets in Northwood Park and Northwood Recreation Ground are fit for purpose.

Recognising the value of our local library, it was decided to continue to pay for an extra member of staff until March 2018; this will allow the library to function as both a library and community hub. The Town Council continues to have a good working relationship with the Supporters of Cowes Library. A figure of £22,400 was agreed as our contribution towards keeping a library in Cowes which includes paying for the extra member of staff.

Having agreed in 2016 to pay for contractors appointed by the Isle of Wight Council to maintain green areas in the town, including Northwood Recreation Ground, Moorgreen Reservoir and Arctic Park, it was agreed to continue to fund this vital activity for another year. The Town Council also pay for grounds maintenance work at Northwood Park. This arrangement has worked well. Thanks to a helpful gesture by the IW Council, the heavily overgrown Moorgreen Reservoir was cleared; just how this green space can be used has yet to be decided.

Faced with these extra commitments it has been necessary to raise the annual precept. This rose from £177,300 in 2015/2016 to £238,010 in 2016/2017. Thanks to savings in areas such

as grants, a more modest increase, despite extra commitments, has been possible with a precept of £244,700 being set for 2017/2018. This equates to a cost to a Band D Council tax payer in this current financial year of £57.90 - an increase of about 3p per week.

The following grants were approved during the year: Cowes Short Mat Bowling Club in the sum of £300; Cowes Open Bowls Tournament Committee in the sum of £400; Cowes Week Limited Fireworks Committee in the sum of £5,000; The Isle of Wight Literary Festival in the sum of £6,300; Cowes Amateur Operatic Society in the sum of £500; Cowes Primary School in the sum of £1,000; Isle of Wight Music, Dance and Drama Festival in the sum of £100; Friends of Northwood Cemetery in the sum of £2,000. As part of our commitment to the long term prosperity of Cowes it was also resolved that, as all official partners / stakeholders have signed up to Destination Cowes, Cowes Town Council releases the funds held of £5,000 for the marketing of Destination Cowes.

Some progress can be reported on Cowes Town Council's wish to make the High Street more pedestrian friendly. Councillors have been provided with a schedule of the new signs to be installed when the changes to the Traffic Regulation Order in the High Street come into effect. This will make the High Street and Shooters Hill pedestrianised from 10.00am until 7.00am the next morning, basically allowing traffic, except for emergency vehicles, access just for deliveries. Councillors were happy with the majority of the signs, however, felt that the signs should ask cyclists to dismount. This follows reports of persistent abuse by cyclists failing to dismount in the High Street, an ongoing issue which is difficult to resolve. Among the successful projects completed during the year, the most noticeable is the very attractive shelter, which offers a welcome resting point for the many walkers on Prince's Esplanade. The Town Council has been successful in obtaining S.106 money to help with the cost of the shelter and to upgrade the Cut. Unfortunately work towards this much needed improvement to this area in the centre of town has hit various snags resulting in yet more delays, however positive discussions with Island Roads and the IW Council suggest this upgrade, which has been on the Town Council agenda for far too long, might finally provide a nice area where markets and other events can take place.

Less noticeable but a vital contribution to local welfare has been the provision of defibrillators in Cowes. I am pleased to report that, in conjunction with the First Responders, a list has been compiled identifying defibrillators that are located within Cowes and available for community use. Signs indicate where these potential life savers are situated.

Thanks to Councillor Brown researching options for outdoor gym equipment, it was confirmed at the April meeting that the chosen supplier be appointed to install mobile gym equipment at Northwood Recreation Ground for the sum of £9,386.50 plus VAT, subject to the IW Council's agreement of the equipment and proposed location. A survey conducted in Northwood Recreation Ground confirmed support for this additional facility. It also highlighted the need for a junior skate park, cost feasibility of which is being considered. A financial commitment to this year's Big Lunch was agreed as this is considered to be a very worthwhile community event.

This was the second year in which festive lights brightened the winter evenings. Thanks to Councillor McNeill and the Assistant Town Clerk they extended, this year, into Birmingham Road and down Bath Road. I was pleased to welcome Lady Sally Grylls to Cowes to officially switch on the lights. The Town Council also paid for a Christmas tree in Francki Place, with a kind donation from The Painters Arms.

It was resolved that Cowes Town Council fund a disability access audit of the town centre for the sum of £1,000.00. This comprehensive document provides evidence of issues faced by those with various disabilities. We will continue to seek solutions, pressing both Island Roads and the IW Council to comply with their statutory duties.

As part of our commitment to assist Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd maintain the much loved and used Northwood Park, it was agreed to fund drainage in the area of the War Memorial; possibly aided by a dry spell, the surrounding grass was noticeably less muddy than other years during the Remembrance Sunday service.

A small band of volunteers planted summer bedding plants in the concrete troughs and planters placed around the town. The cost of the plants as well as the hanging baskets and planters on the Parade, plus watering, was included in the agreed budget.

This year being the 75th Anniversary of the Blitz and defence of Cowes by ORP Blyskawica, your local council ensured that bunting was erected in the town prior to the visit by so many Polish visitors including the Ambassador and Consul General, plus the Captains and crew of visiting ship ORP Gniezno and museum ship ORP Blyskawica . It was agreed to fund a replacement plaques in Francki Place; these were re-dedicated at a service on 6th May; Captain Francki's daughter Janina Doroszkowska was guest of honour. This anniversary was an important event both for Cowes and East Cowes, receiving national and Polish television coverage. Councillors were happy to underwrite the event to a sum of £8,000. As Mayor, I was honoured to represent the town during the event.

Faced with the possible loss of the road crossing patrol in Park Road, which the Town Council had previously agreed to fund for one year, following cutbacks by the Unitary Authority, Councillors agreed to seek match funding from Cowes Enterprise College and Cowes Primary School. The latter, recognising the importance of the safety of children outside the school, has been actively fund raising.

During the year we have said goodbye to Councillors Doyle and Cowan and welcomed new Councillors Glendinning and Taylor. At the election on May 4th Councillors Banks, Corby, McNeill, Slade and Spalding decided not to stand for election, and Cllr Ellis was not re-elected. We will be pleased to welcome those newly elected Councillors at the first Full Town Council meeting on 18 May 2017.

During the year the Assistant Town Clerk, Sue Waters, left us as she wished to spend more time with her family. Kate Gibbs was appointed as her replacement; she has proved a valuable member of the team. I would like to thank both the Town Clerk, Debra Faulkner and Kate for their professionalism in ensuring that Cowes Town Council runs smoothly; they have been a great help to me during my term as Mayor.

Finally I wish to thank Councillors, whether leaving the Council or continuing to work for the good of the town. Councillors give their time freely without financial reward. Thanks go to Mark McNeill who was an able Deputy Mayor.

I wish to record special thanks to Geoff Banks, who, after many years on the Town Council, has finally called it a day. A founder member of Cowes Town Council, his is a remarkable story of public service covering 29 years since 1987. Elected Mayor 13 times, Geoff has made a tremendous contribution to the town. During my term as Deputy Mayor I saw at first-hand a little of what he achieves, without fuss or publicity seeking. Much of it not recorded, but whether designing a vandal-proof toilet roll holder or persuading people with influence in order to promote Cowes, Geoff has been a proper hands on Councillor who will be greatly missed.

Mr Banks responded that it had been an honour to serve the community.

Questions were invited but none were asked.

215 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017 were circulated at the meeting. Ms Debbie Faulkner (Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer) was available for any questions but none were raised.

RESOLVED

That the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017 be received and noted.

216 ANNUAL SUMMARY – SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Police Constable Dollery was unable to attend the meeting and sent his apologies.

In the year ending December 2016, the crime rate in Isle of Wight was about the same as the average crime rate across similar areas.

In the quarter ending December 2016, crime rates were up in Isle of Wight and Hampshire force area compared with the corresponding quarter in 2015.

217 ANNUAL SUMMARY – I.W. COUNCILLORS

Written reports were received from Councillors Bertie, Fuller, Nicholson and Peacey-Wilcox
Councillor Paul Bertie (Cowes North)

Isle of Wight Council. Just 3 months before the end of the Independent Group's 4 years in control at County Hall, the Conservative Group took back control of IWC. We immediately produced a balanced and lawful budget, and started new initiatives.

Local Elections. On May 4th, Island Conservatives won a large overall majority on IWC. I have been appointed to the 'Adult Health & Wellbeing Committee', and the 'Regeneration Committee' which looks after economy and tourism.

Cowes Tourism & Events. I am hugely concerned at the massive drop in sponsorship for large events in Cowes. The 'big picture' for Cowes needs to be urgently looked at, not just for yachting events, but for other events such as Isle of Wight Literary Festival (a great success) etc.

Destination Cowes. I have attended many meetings, and am pleased to report that DC is very supportive of my 'Yachting Parade of Fame' idea, as is the Cowes Town Council. I intend forming a working party over the next few weeks.

ORP Blyskawica. The celebrations to mark the 75th Anniversary were a great success, and full marks must go to Geoff Banks for his tireless support of this event.

Cowes Week Trademark. Although this 'problem' has not gone away, it has somewhat gone onto the back-burner whilst Cowes Week Ltd. faces other priorities.

Green Initiatives. The new Conservative administration intends to hold a 'Green Summit' in the very near future to which all parties will be invited. On a personal note, I did not vote to allow 'fracking' on the Island.

Brexit. I unashamedly voted for 'Brexit' in the referendum. I am not 'anti-Europe', but I am 'anti-Brussels-red-tape'. I firmly believe that despite the difficult 2 years ahead, the Island will ultimately benefit, especially in terms of tourism.

Open for Business. The new IWC administration intends to hold a 'Digital Summit' in the near future. Without the use of modern technology, it is extremely difficult for Island businesses to compete in the present world. The regeneration of business on the Island is a priority so that all Islanders can enjoy the benefits.

An Island University? As fanciful as this may sound, I would support such an idea. We must stop the drain of young people from the Island.

Adult Social Care. The Island has a disproportionately high number of residents aged over 65 compared to mainland UK. This in itself has a huge impact on IWC resources, and new

initiatives must be urgently found. I have recently found out (because of my aging mother) that care home costs on the Island are almost twice that of Bournemouth.

Car Parking. This remains a big problem in Cowes; there are simply just too many cars for the spaces available. Overall strategy for the whole Island is being addressed, but each town has its own particular problems, so a 'one size fits all' solution is not the answer.

Local Issues. I come against very few local problems that cannot be resolved. Two problems are an ongoing bugbear, namely the lack of forward development at Alexandra House in Birmingham Road, and the barren and untidy piece of land at the bottom of Market Hill. I intend to demand from IWC officers why these latter 2 problems are not being adequately addressed.

Island Roads. Despite the inefficient management of the PFI contract over the past 3 years, Island Roads are slightly ahead of schedule for the plan to resurface all Island roads within a 7 year period. The roads that have been done in Cowes are a vast improvement, but we anxiously await the remainder to be done, especially much used roads such as Parklands etc.

Cowes Business Association. I continue to be an active member and am happy to engage with them on all local business matters.

Councillor Paul Fuller (Cowes West and Gurnard)

Hard copies of Councillor Fuller's report were circulated at the meeting, and feature on paulfullercc.blogspot.com

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

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

Despite needing to fight even harder following cutbacks to services, I am committed to ensure our Councils say 'yes', rather than no. As long as I remain your Councillor, I'll continue to listen to and fight our corner whenever and wherever necessary.

The reason I do this, is because I thoroughly love it! Because I enjoy my 'work', I hope that it shows and I'm achieving the right outcomes for our community!

Councillor John Nicholson (Cowes South and Northwood)

Nuisance Parking . The long-standing issues concerning the parking of vehicles that hold no MOT, Tax or Insurance, on the Public Highway, a problem that stems back before my time as Ward Councillor, seems to be resolved, and my thanks go to the District Steward and IWC Community Support Officer for their help in this. I am not so sure about other areas outside my Ward, though.

However, parking of legal vehicles is a widespread problem within the Ward (as illustrated in my last Round-Up Report), and, the reason, that I can see, is lack of infrastructural provision to accommodate the volume of vehicles that now exists on the Island. This is an Island-wide problem that will only get worse unless plans are laid to address this issue, and I have made representation to Planning and the new Cabinet in this regard.

Utility Roadworks. Throughout the year, I have been campaigning about the free-for-all that seems to exist regarding Utility Companies digging up our roads, the lack of apparent consideration, and the poor standard of workmanship therein. Many other Councillors have told me that they think the same, and, privately, I believe, Island Roads are dissatisfied with the damage that is done to their new works. Looking into this situation, I discovered that other Authorities take a more robust stance to control this issue, and that the costs for setting up and running such a regime are recoverable, so I tabled a Motion to that effect, which was accepted without debate.

Highways Public Safety Policies. Being fed up waiting for implementation of a policy to regulate the safety of scaffolding on the Public Highway, and being concerned at the liability that such lack of action left, I raised a Motion to address this, citing a best practice example

at HCC. The motion was recognised as being eminently prudent, and was accepted without debate. What, also, concerns me is the discovery that there was a whole raft of other essential operational policies that were drafted with the PFI that have just been sat on, and I have raised this issue, too.

Local Consultation Regarding Roadworks. I have demonstrated that it is to community and operational benefit to consult and work constructively with me, as the local Ward Member, on matters regarding significant roadworks; easing and resolving issues, before or as they arise. However, such consultation does not always happen, neither with the Ward Member, the Town or Parish Council, or other organisations that may be significantly affected. Again, other Ward Councillors say that they experience the same frustrations, so I have raised this with the new Administration, who say that they will act to resolve this issue to the best interest of those concerned.

Westbury Estate. Issues regarding the Highways on the Westbury Estate continue to give concern, from parking to road and pavement maintenance. Island Roads, IWC, CTC and the County Press have been very helpful in raising the profile of issues, so that they do, eventually get sorted out.

Lanesend School. Working with my colleague Cllr Peacey Wilcox, we have managed to highlight traffic issues that concern safety and the school and we are looking forward to seeing the proposed simple remedial actions implemented.

Drugs Concern. Following a visit to residents of the Love Lane area, serious concern was raised regarding the level of activity regarding the use and trading of drugs, especially anecdotes of this being done openly near a school. This concern has been reported to the Police, and, I believe that some successful action may have been taken.

Small Success. With the help of CTC facilitating, the adoption of the small piece of no-man's land, at the head of Upper Moorgreen, by residents. The piece of ground is, now, looking cared for.

Beer Busses and Walks Festival. Cowes is developing as a special destination in the annual Beer & Busses Festival, with all but 2 pubs in the wider area included, plus the inclusion of 2 sailing clubs and the Military Museum and the development of historic Town Walks, as well, it presents opportunities for local Councils to showcase.

Cowes Post Office Update. Whilst recognising that the Co-Op continues to provide essential support for Cowes, the lack of constructive, meaningful and transparent consultation from the Post Office, themselves, with local stakeholders, is disappointing, and puts into question their compliance with their own Code of Practice in serving the community, especially as it, now, appears that there has been, at least one, perfectly situated applicant, who seem to have been secretly rejected for no better reason than the presumed existence of the Mill Hill Road site!

Community Wellbeing. A huge and highly relevant subject that concerns every aspect of community life. Given CTC's and NPC's efforts to be involved in these issues, it is, therefore, difficult to understand how such willing partners could have been missed off the list when rolling out tangible, innovative implementations, such as Community Local Area Coordinators. Our health service is in disarray, and the old model of symptom based treatment is unsustainable. Community Wellbeing is about seeking to proactively address the local environmental issues that affect our community's health and wellbeing, and, to be successful, needs to sign up and involve Town and Parishes in a fractal structure. But, to do this, we need leadership, and, that leadership, I think, should come from County level, an understanding that I have been advocating for years (as many Councillors will recall), and, now, given the gravity of our situation, seems to be getting some recognition.

Joining Education and Business to Serve the Community. Being in business myself, and recognising the lack of integration with the Island's education system and the missed

opportunities to address local employment requirements in the community, I joined the IW Technical Group, and found that the same situation existed there. In fact, there seemed to be a complete ignorance of the work and opportunities that existing, and the high international standing that many of these Companies held. At first, I was a pretty lone voice in trying to raise awareness on this important matter, but, now, that awareness has spread and it has become a main focus for the development and regeneration programme for the Island, which, I believe (as I have already said) needs involvement of Town and Parish Councils, at least, in an awareness of what business are in their areas, what their needs are and how and if the local education establishments might be in recognition of this and what they are doing to support and address them.

Mental Health. Mental Health, more specifically, addressing the mental and emotional state issues that underlie physical health, mental wellbeing, social behaviour and integration, education, performance and ability, is, now, starting to be recognised as addressing the cause of the cause of many of our problems, because it goes behind the symptoms that are often presented to the doctor, goes behind the behaviour that often has to be dealt with by the Police, and the criminal justice system (as exemplified by the IW Serenity initiative), goes behind the issues of behaviour and learning ability at schools, and, is increasingly recognised, in the commercial world, as going behind some of the issues that restrict and enhance performance at work. All of which, is something I have been shouting about for years. The strangest anomaly, however, in this regard, is that, given the issues addressing this elephant in the room could resolve, and the performance boost that it could drive, and the inevitable scale of savings and efficiencies that such action could produce, one wonders how the very organisation that you would expect to be in the forefront of such knowledge, the Health Service, is one of the worst in dealing with it, levying severe criticism from the CQC and outrage from failure to deal with bullying.

Community and Culture. This Country, and, particularly, Isle of Wight is rich in culture, but has become poor in community and, as a whole, pretty ignorant of that local culture, which is kept in dusty archives or mothball ridden artefacts that relate to some other peoples a long time ago. Societies that are rich in community tend to be rich in a living celebration of their culture, which is included in their education in a way that they become a part of it. Celebrating culture is cohesive to community, and the few history walks that I have been involved in designing and leading have, only too clearly, illustrated this; bringing animated contribution from participants and people that we pass. Should Town and Parishes be promoting more of this type of involved activity?

Councillor Lora Peacey-Wilcox (Cowes Medina)

Firstly, many thanks to those that came out and voted at the recent elections.

I am delighted and proud to have the support of residents to continue to represent their concerns at Cowes Medina Ward.

My detailed monthly reports can be found at www.islandmagazines.co.uk

I raise queries daily for my constituents the largest problem being PARKING! or rather TOTAL LACK of space for parking.

This impacts on almost EVERY ROAD I represent. I continue to aid residents as much as I can. The bad condition of road issues are now 'slowly' being resolved under the PFI contract.

And I am thankful to say that the Amey contract/Waste has quietened down a bit.

I continue to attend and have input in Town Council issues, to help and support colleagues.

As always if anyone has any specific enquiry please get in touch.

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Peacey-Wilcox on her appointment as Chairman of the Isle of Wight Council.

A question was raised from a member of the public regarding the content of Councillor Fuller's report, which Councillor Fuller explained had been circulated early because of the local election.

Councillor Peacey-Wilcox gave a brief description of events at the launch of the new floating bridge. An engineer had been on board to work through the issues. The priority is to get the bridge working. Naming of the craft had not been decided. She updated the meeting regarding Southern Water's works at Newport Road. Councillor Fuller added that further works will require a diversion through the industrial estate lasting approximately six weeks, with commencement following the Isle of Wight Festival and the County Show.

218

QUESTIONS FROM THE MEETING

A suggestion was made from a member of the public that the Town Council could ask the public what their expectations of the Town Council are, and suggest improvements.

A question was asked if there any plans to increase ATMs in the Town. Councillors advised that there are currently several avenues being explored, which it is hoped will alleviate the current shortage of cash machines in the town.

A suggestion was made from a member of the public that as the precept has increased considerably since several services have been devolved from the Isle of Wight Council, should consideration be given to amalgamating the town and parish councils of Cowes, Gurnard and Northwood, to pool resources and share the financial burden? It was also pointed out that all three town and parish councils had not attracted sufficient candidates at the recent elections. It was felt that a future cluster meeting could look at this.

The proceedings terminated at 6.50pm.

CHAIRMAN