



Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual Town Meeting held in the Drawing Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Thursday 30 April 2015 at 7pm convened under the provision of Section 99 and Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Present: Councillor Banks (Town Mayor) (Chairman)
Councillors Brown, Corby, Cowan, Fuller (7.38pm), Hammond, Jones, Matthews, McNeill, Nicholson, Peacey-Wilcox, Robinson, Spalding and 11 members of the public / representatives from grant recipient organisations.

Councillor Banks welcomed those in attendance to the Annual Town Meeting and introduced Mr Peter Kingston & Mr Jon Pridham.

196 A PRESENTATION WAS GIVEN BY PETER KINGSTON, CHAIRMAN OF COWES TOWN WATERFRONT TRUST & JON PRIDHAM, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF COWES YACHT HAVEN LTD.

Mr Kingston reported that Cowes Town Waterfront Trust (CTWT) is a charity which was founded in 1992. The benefactor bought the Yacht Haven from the liquidators to ensure that these facilities remained for Cowes. The Charity has 6 trustees and is supported by a Secretary. CTWT support the Medina Valley Area Action Plan; make comments on any significant planning applications, ensure that their premises are improved and updated to the best quality and standard, support Cowes Heritage with funding and exhibition opportunities, accept applications for funding from good causes (although funds are limited) and provide moorings at reduced rates for charitable organisations. They have also supported Cowes Fireworks for a number of years. CTWT own 265 berths, the Events Centre, Media Centre and a number of workshops, offices and retail shops (totalling 27 tenants).

Cowes Yacht Haven Ltd (CYHL) has a small board of Directors and is the trading arm of the charity with a mandate to give any profits made back to the charity. The Yacht Haven attracts approx. 140,000 visiting yachtsmen per year which generates around £7M for Cowes businesses. The marina runs as a place for events and a bad summer can have a serious financial impact. The marina requires continual investment in maintenance. The Yacht Haven are trying to make Cowes more of a destination for visitors so that they will want to come back again. They are also trying to encourage families and the younger generation by reducing visitor rates and trying to link in with other attractions around the Island. They are also encouraging visits from French & Dutch sailors this year.

A number of questions were raised:

Q. Can cruise ships get into Cowes? A. No, but they can moor off of Cowes and bring visitors in by launch.

Q. It is very expensive to berth at the marina during Cowes Week and there were a number of empty berths last year, Have CYHL taken this on board? A. The empty berths were not just about the costs but this has been taken on board by CYHL.

Q. The marina needs to be affordable and accommodating to visitors. A. CYHL are concentrating on the image of Cowes that visitors see when they arrive and are training their staff in customer care.

Councillor Banks thanked Mr Kingston and Mr Pridham for their interesting presentation.

197 JUST A MINUTE PRESENTATIONS

The Town Council invited a selection of local organisations who had received a grant this year to make a short presentation about why they applied and how they used the funds awarded. Personal presentations were received from:

Cowes Deauville Twinning Association
Cowes Sports FC
Cowes Good Companions Club
Community First Responder Scheme
Friends of St Mary's Hospital
Alzheimer's Café Cowes.

198 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Oliver & Wardrop.

199 MINUTES

That the Minutes of the Twenty Ninth Annual Town Meeting held on 17 April 2014 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

200 REPORT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Banks reported that the last 12 months had been the busiest ever and he thanked all Town Councillors for giving up their unpaid time and always trying to do the best they can for Cowes. Councillor Banks then went on to read out his report.

Our forthcoming Annual Council Meeting on the 21st May sees the standing down of the current Town Mayor, Cllr. Geoff Banks, having been re-appointed at the Annual Council Meeting last May and having served the maximum two years in that office. Cllr. David Jones was re-appointed as Deputy Town Mayor at that meeting. At this time of writing the Town Council is at full strength with sixteen members. Throughout the past year our sub-committees and working groups have been chaired by the following councillors: Cllr. David Jones, *Planning and Licensing, Finance and Medina Valley Area Action Plan Sub Committees*, Cllr. Linda Brown, *Town Improvements Committee*, Cllr. John Nicholson, *Northwood Recreation Ground Committee*, Cllr. Mark McNeill, *Acquisitions Committee* and Cllr. Banks, *World War One Commemoration Working Group*. Councillors continue as representatives on various external bodies. Throughout the year those Isle of Wight Councillors provided monthly reports on their activities and deliberations concerning town matters and those issues being wrestled with at County Hall. Their reports continued to be invaluable in raising and dealing with local matters of concern.

During the year we have seen the resignation of Wendi Hall who had chaired both the Finance and Northwood Recreation Ground Committees. It was during her watch that she steered the Town Council in the decision making process in those difficult considerations with the raising of the precept in the previous year. Later this year saw David Walters, who wished not to continue as Town Mayor at the start of our 2014/2015 term, resign as a town councillor in January. David made a valuable contribution to the Town Council and robustly challenged on behalf of the community during his term as mayor and as a forthright councillor. His vacancy in the Cowes North Ward was successfully taken by the process of co-option by Joe Oliver in March. Joe is, at 22, the Town Council's youngest ever appointed councillor who brings with him those interests and concerns of his peer group.

Roger Hendeby, our Town Clerk for sixteen years, retired on the 31st October. Having served no fewer than six mayors, Roger always ensured that the council has performed its duties within the regulatory framework which governs Parish and Town Councils. Roger led the Town Council in obtaining its 'Quality Town Council' status which it holds to this time. On his retirement Roger was presented with a clock and an inscribed bowl, made from the trunk of the Umbrella Tree which stood on Prince's Green, in recognition of his valued term of office. Following interviews, the councillors welcomed the appointment of Debbie Faulkner as the new Town

Clerk. Debbie has most ably satisfied her role and, with the experienced and capable help of the Assistant Town Clerk, Sue Waters, has brought to the administration a high level of efficiency and that respect from all councillors.

The Town Council moved offices during the year from Denmark Road to Northwood House. The decision was made having regards to the historic connection which the past Town Council had with the building since its inception and that the rent would assist the Northwood House Managing Trust Co. Ltd. rather than a private landlord. The Trust were, however, most generous in their offer of rent which was below that for the Denmark Road premises. With the invaluable help of the clerks the transition was seamless and the accommodation found much larger. In April, having gone out to tender, the IT equipment for the use of the clerks has been considerably upgraded. This had become essential due to the difficulty for the clerks to undertake many duties in a timely and controlled manner.

On the 31st March Rodney Williams retired following his appointment back in August 2001 as the Town Council's cleaner of the Skate Park at Northwood Recreation Ground. Rodney, in 2001, also took on the duties of cleaning and maintenance of aspects of the Multi-Use-Games-Area, (MUGA), and in 2014 the cleaning of the toilet block. The Town Council showed their appreciation of the dedication and service by Rodney by way of a presentation of a barometer. Those duties undertaken by Rodney were tendered for and successfully won by *All Round Cleaners*.

Throughout the year reports were received from the Safer Neighbourhood Team; (Cowes Police). PC Knight regularly submitted a written report detailing crime statistics which mainly gave an indication that crime figures were consistently low and detection and prosecution was robust. Reports continued as to the policing of the High Street with particular regards to cyclists, many of whom had been stopped, warned and given educational leaflets.

A regular report is received from The Supporters of Cowes Library Group which continues to ensure that our library remains an important asset to Cowes and, with the input of the supporters, sees a positive and sustained future ahead.

The Town Council continued to give support to those community volunteers who manage Mornington Woods. Surplus funds generated by that organisation as part of the former Cowes Community Partnership were transferred to Cowes Town Council and continue to provide funding for their on-going and much appreciated work.

These past months has seen the resolve to amalgamate several of the Town Council's sub-committees and working groups. It is considered that this would bring about not only fewer meetings but enable, with the combining of several committees and groups, an improved synergy which will benefit the effectiveness and efficiency of the council.

A 'Dignity at Work – Bullying and Harassment' policy has been agreed by members. This is now included in the Town Council's Standing Orders.

This past year has seen many challenges for the Town Council both within and outside of the council chamber.

Those external challenges have been brought about by the Isle of Wight Council's on-going endeavours to reduce their budget deficit. It has been falling on Parish and Town Councils to wrestle with the vagaries of what, if any, discretionary services the Isle of Wight Council may wish to forgo.

The Cowes Town council had, last year, doubled its precept to council tax payers in anticipation of a raft of services which they would feel obliged to retain and maintain in order to have our town functional and presenting the right image to those all-important visitors. However, due in part to the reduction of staffing levels at County Hall, the determination as to which services the parishes would be expected to be manage was protracted and without that degree of qualification needed to enable our Town Council to make any early

commitments. Without such directives and those important financial services' costs the Town Council had difficulties in deliberating over their budget for the forthcoming year. It was thought important to be prudent but with that degree of anticipation as to what financial burden the council might find itself engaged in. The debate determined to keep the precept slightly reduced from the previous year. Albeit the year did not see that expected overburdening of services having to come under their control, it was felt that, knowing such costs of toilet maintenance alone at £54,000 per annum, it was expedient to at least build up some reserves. Within the past weeks progress has been made in deliberations with County Hall and it has been agreed that the Town Council contributes towards the upkeep of community sites by way of ground maintenance. Such relates to Park Road Recreation Ground, Moorgreen Road Reservoir, Mornington Green, Arctic Park, St Mary's Road Park, Egypt Point and The Parade Bandstand.

A Public Meeting was held in late October at which The Friends of Northwood Cemetery, through their chairman and Cowes Town Councillor Jon Matthews, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 'Northwood Cemetery Heritage Project'. The Friends of Northwood Cemetery (FONC) had for the last 7 years been getting to a position where the Heritage Lottery Fund showed an interest with the renovation and improvement of the cemetery and chapels. The Cemetery was more than an area reserved for burials and included a vast array of flora and fauna. The Heritage Lottery Fund have granted £75,300 for the development phase which has been match funded by FONC who will contribute £4,000 cash and £6,000 worth of volunteer hours.

Cyclists in the pedestrianised areas were much debated. It was reiterated that it was illegal for any vehicles, including cyclists, to drive through the High Street during the pedestrianisation times. A dedicated cycle route through the High Street was suggested, however, it was stated that such would not receive the Town Council's support. The Town Council continues to work with Island Roads and the Isle of Wight Council to lessen the perceived intrusion.

Pedestrian charges on the floating bridge were debated. The East Cowes Town Mayor spoke out against such an imposition and sought the support of Cowes Town Council. Those Cowes Town Councillors present gave support for the stance by East Cowes Town Council.

Residents voiced their support for the Town Council's Newsletter and considered the publication as being most informative and of interest to readers.

Cowes Week was a much debated event during the year and with initially that concern as to the cleanliness of the public toilets. The Town Council consequently provided £500 being a 25% contribution towards a share of the cost of providing a dedicated cleaner over extended hours. Concerns were also latterly expressed with regards to the fixed seating within the Parade Village and such debates brought about a request by the Cowes Town Council that it took on the responsibility of governance over the Village. Following meetings and discussions with both the Isle of Wight Council and Taylor Events, the contracted operator of the Village, it was agreed by the latter that a schedule of improvements, suggested by the Town Council, were considered. A presentation by Taylor Events at our June meeting did not wholly allay fears as to the forthcoming event. However, Taylor Events showed considerable willingness to change aspects of the Cowes Week Village and such ultimately met the satisfaction of council members.

The wishing well on Shooters Hill was of concern as to its ownership and deterioration. Although not formally resolved, it was thought that the Isle of Wight Council had ownership. Cowes Town Council has undertaken elements of repair in the interests of safety.

A stainless steel 'Horizon Plaque', an interpretation of views and historic happenings in the Solent, was erected on Cowes Parade without formal ceremony.

Due to the degradation of the plaques sited on the Bandstand wall, it was agreed that the Town Council took responsibility for their annual clean. The missing enamelled Croix de Lorraine on the plaque commemorating that part played by the Free French in the Second World War was purchased by the council for locating.

The Town Council through its World War One Commemoration Working Group, (in respect of the Armistice Day Parade), provided a public address system and a temporary flagpole adjacent to the war memorial. At the Working Group's suggestion the names of the First World War dead were read out and the Archdeacon, Revd. Peter Sutton, emphasised the part played by the Cowes servicemen in the Great War. Remembrance Sunday saw around 900 people in attendance. A special 'poppy candle', provided by Cowes Town Council, was lit for the service which followed in St. Mary's Church in remembrance of those 148 Cowes combatants who forfeited their lives. The Town Council purchased poppy seeds which were distributed to local schools for children to plant. As part of the centenary commemorations of the First World War the Town Council will be taking over the Park Road Rose Garden from the I.W. Council in order that it becomes a centenary commemorative area. The Cowes branch of the Royal British Legion will work with the council in providing a suitable epitaph. It was agreed that on 4th August each year of the war's centenary the Town Council lays a wreath at the War memorial and that the Town Council holds an evening discourse of war poetry in Northwood House which could include prints of paintings and photographs by war artists and photographers from the time possibly incorporating it as a part of the Isle of Wight Literacy Festival.

Following an item in the Winter Newsletter there was only one comment received on how long the wreaths should remain on the war memorial following their laying on Remembrance Sunday. People using the park were asked their opinions and, following a debate in the Council Chamber, it was resolved to retain the wreaths until the end of October, prior to Remembrance Day in November.

Consideration was once again given as to the possible pedestrianisation of The Cut as an extension to the High Street traffic free precinct. The Town Council had previously set aside funding annually towards the circa £50k cost of the scheme prior to it eventually being shelved some two years ago. A more recent survey in the Spring Newsletter identified the establishment of regular markets closely followed by the pedestrianisation of The Cut as most favoured from 25 possible options, albeit by way of limited response. It was agreed that the pedestrianisation of The Cut should be reconsidered and costs for the design input are presently being sought.

The Town Council has agreed sketch proposals for the erection of a seaside shelter sited on one of the groynes set midway between those nearest shelters, a near mile apart, on Egypt Esplanade. The shelter, which now has Planning Permission, is in the style of those two painted shelters sited nearer to Cowes and would be in natural oak. The council has now instructed the technical design to be carried out in order to go out to tender for its erection.

The Town Council, as of 16th March, has placed a service skip in the St. Mary's Road central car park. This is for general waste and not for waste which can be recycled in the existing recycling bins. The intention is to provide a convenient means of depositing general household waste in particular for those weekend homes and visitors. There are, regrettably, those who contravene the "NO FLY TIPPING" signage displayed. The Town Council is providing altered signage to best inform users as to the use of this skip. The skips will remain there and be regularly serviced over a three month trial period.

A presentation on the Solent Gateway Project was made at our February meeting by Mr Murray Carter (Red Funnel) and Mr John Roseveare of Parose Projects. On the Southampton side, planning permission was being applied for with the aim of providing a new terminal building and marshalling yard by March 2017. On the East Cowes side, they are currently consulting with stakeholders and hope to apply for planning permission in July this year for new marshalling yards and terminal. Public money is pledged to provide the infrastructure for the commercial development for the Floating Bridge, parking and highways. The rumour of the Red Jet leaving Cowes was stated as not happening but they may extend the service to include East Cowes if this is commercially viable.

An internal report was circulated to all Councillors to raise awareness of existing and future developments within the Medina basin area and the environs of Cowes and the effect of such on the town's future having regards to its importance as a gateway to the Island. It also raised the issue as to how best to sustain its

position as an internationally acclaimed yachting mecca and major gateway to and from the mainland. It was agreed that Cowes Town Council should take a proactive role in developing a future strategy for Cowes and that Cowes Town Council invites stakeholders of and about the Fountain Yard area to a meeting to discuss / clarify the future of Cowes as a gateway to the Island.

Discussion took place as regards to introducing possible 20mph speed limits in Cowes following consultation with residents via our Winter Newsletter. Two responses from residents in Market Hill & Union Road had been received. Cowes Town Council considered if it needed to give consideration as to whether certain roads should be speed regulated to 20mph. However, due to a large amount of on-going business, councillors agreed to re-visit this subject in six months' time.

Presentations were made at our March and April meetings regarding Islandwide health care initiatives. The first presentation was by Anita Cameron-Smith, Head of Public Health Strategy for the IW Council, along with Bryan Hurley, Health Improvement Manager on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). ABCD is a strategy for sustainable community-driven development whereby communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilising existing assets, talents and skills and thereby respond to local needs within the community. People can stay independent and feel that they can contribute to the community for longer.

A presentation was made by Paul Savill, Voluntary Sector Locality Link Officer, Community Action Isle of Wight, at our April meeting, on the project 'My Life A Full Life'. The aim is to deliver truly integrated care and support on the Isle of Wight and to allow as many people as possible to stay independent and in their own homes for as long as possible.

There was concern expressed as to the apparent number of health care initiatives which were being promoted on the Island. It was stated, by the latest presenter, that the Health & Wellbeing Board are taking the lead over their project and money will be saved through health care savings. The speaker was asked that these various organisations worked together to provide the best possible provision for the community and that the public were better informed as to their more collective remits.

Town Councillors attended several public meetings, held by the land owner's agents, whereby plans for the development of the former JS White's site were announced. Such is now commonly known as the Medina Yard project. There remained concern with councillors that the phasing of the site might result in the eventual loss of adequate commercial marine related land if the residential development became financially unviable. There was also concern that unless phasing of the development is not adequately designated and controlled, that the relocation of existing industries away from the site may lessen their return. An issue also is as to whether commercial rates for any contained marine usage area would be affordable. The Town Council has met with the Planning Authority and written to them to express its concern and has requested that any Planning Permissions binds the developer into making full provision for affordable marine related industrial development within an adequately designated site space.

Trisha Lewington, Secretary of the Royal Yacht Squadron (RYS) attended our January meeting and set out the RYS's plans for their bicentenary year. A synopsis of the RYS's schedule of events included a start in London on the 1st June followed in Cowes from the 2nd June which will include various regattas and races. The general public will be able to view these spectacles arranged by the RYS both on and off the water.

Town Councillors have continued to give their invaluable free input into Cowes matters this past year which has seen an unprecedented degree of business being undertaken through its clerks and within the community. Those many challenges ahead during its next term will continue to engender that determination, resolve and expertise from councillors and staff to ensure that it provides the best service it can for the town and delivers any services it takes on as expeditiously as possible giving the best financial value on any expenditure in doing so.

201 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 were circulated at the meeting. The Town Clerk was available for questions but none were raised.

RESOLVED

That the accounts be received and noted.

202 ANNUAL SUMMARY – SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

PC Gary Knight was unable to attend the meeting but sent a written report which was circulated at the meeting. It was reported that for 2014 / 2015 crime figures had gone up by 9.6% and antisocial behaviour figures are up 2.8%. The community priority for Cowes is cyclists and cars using the High Street during times of prohibition and police continue to actively patrol the High Street. Police have also created two new additional community priorities: 1. Theft, Terminus Road, Cowes – due to a rise in reported crime (shop lifting) & 2. Criminal damage, Arctic Road, Cowes – due to a rise in reported crime (criminal damage to motor vehicles).

203 ANNUAL SUMMARIES – ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCILLORS

A written report was received from Councillor Lora Peacey-Wilcox, Isle of Wight Councillor for Cowes Medina, which was circulated at the meeting.

So far this year I have been kept very busy with constituents asking me to sort a number of different items; from abandoned cars, planning issues, dog fouling, parking issues including permit problems, double yellow lines to mention a few. There are few days in the week that I am not contacted and have to chase items.

I continue with my volunteer housing role at the Isle of Wight Council. We have now agreed the terms to strengthen the Isle of Wight connection on our housing register. We have also begun using our powers to force property developers who sit on land/brown/derelict sights to ‘work with them’ to bring them to fruition. This has been slow progress, but finally the sites are moving.

I was delighted that the Town Council financially supported ‘Jack’ the tree sculpture on Newport Road; celebrating our Ship building history. Every day I see people standing and looking, and people commenting on how wonderful it is, and where the next one is going to be.....!!!

The public know I am approachable and will listen to their concerns.

I thank the Town Councillors for their support over the past 19 months while I have been REALLY busy with Cowes Sea Cadets; dare I say, we are almost there now.....which should free up some of my time.

Councillor Peacey-Wilcox also commented that she is now writing more frequently for the Beacon and is getting a good response.

A written report was received from Councillor John Nicholson, Isle of Wight Councillor for Cowes South, which was circulated at the meeting.

1. After some slight and occasional recurrence, the parking of untaxed and unlicensed vehicles along **Place Side** has now completely ceased.

2. After a period that traces back, like the Place Side parking issues, to before my term, I have managed to oversee a constructive and pragmatic review, and agreeable resolution (yet to be implemented) regarding the alteration and reduction of yellow lines around the **Place Side/ Broadfields/ Highfield Road** junction.

3. Concerns raised by me about the operation of **Cowes Parade Village** (in the previous year), that were added to and expanded on by fellow CTC Councillors, over the year, have culminated in the Town Council attaining a very concessionary revision of facilities and services that are heavily in favour of the Town and its people.

4. After years of pressure, dating back before my term again, working with Island Roads, IW Council and the MP's backing, we finally got the unfinished footpaths in the **Persimmon estate** completed, but not before someone was injured on them; which we used as a lever.

5. The bizarre closing off of a pavement in **Seaview Road**, by the HCA, has now been resolved with the renewal of a pavement that was better than most others in the region. This has, I believe, only been achieved, in a timely manner, by the supportive intervention of the IW County Press, Island Roads and the MP. We are told, latterly, however, that this is part of the works planned to bring the road up to standard for adoption, taking a lead for the rest of the estate to be brought up to standard by Persimmon.

6. The flooding that affected **Northwood Recreation Ground** last year, has now been addressed with the installation of a shallow bund alongside the path to the NE corner and drainage bore holes to the ground in the NW corner.

7. **Community Wellbeing** has been introduced as an occasional, if not regular, agenda item with presentations from various actively interested parties. There is much to do to develop this in full and we have the support of IW Council Public Health and other agencies to do so.

Councillor Paul Fuller, Isle of Wight Councillor for Cowes West & Gurnard, provided a copy of his Annual Report April 2015, which was circulated at the meeting.

The report gave details of Councillor Fuller's activities over the last 12 months; details of the Isle of Wight Council's budget for 2015 / 2016 and a month by month list of key local issues that he has been pursuing over the last 12 months. To see full details of Councillor Fuller's report please visit: paulfullercc.blogspot.com

204 QUESTIONS FROM THE MEETING

An opportunity was given by the Mayor to raise any questions in relation to the meeting or any other public matters that the Town Council could address but none were raised.

(The proceedings terminated at 8.28pm)

CHAIRMAN