

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Cowes Town Council held in the Drawing Room, Northwood House on Tuesday 18 August 2015 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillor Jones (Town Mayor) (Chairman)
Councillors Banks, Corby, Cowan, Fuller, Hammond, McNeill, Nicholson & Wardrop.

In attendance: Ed Hill – OC Sports; Ben Willows – UKSA; Jonathan Green – Red Funnel;
Jon Pridham – Cowes Yacht Haven; Stuart McIntosh – Cowes Harbour Commission.

Further to the Resolution at the Town Council meeting held on 16 July 2015 (Minute No 7116) it was agreed to hold a separate meeting to discuss Solitaire du Figaro.

7126 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brown & Spalding.

7127 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Banks declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Director of Cowes Town Waterfront Trust.

Prior to the presentation Councillor McNeill gave background to the Solitaire du Figaro sailing race and the idea of trying to bring it to Cowes, which had come about as a direct result of a discussion after a 'Destination Cowes' meeting. The event proposed for 2016 would be run by Town businesses and the Town Council to provide a significant family orientated event for Cowes centred around this challenging single handed international sailing event.

7128 PRESENTATION FROM ED HILL – OC SPORTS

The Solitaire du Figaro sailing race takes place in June 2016 and the proposal is that the UK stopover would take place in Cowes on 22 – 26 June 2016. The event, which could attract 20,000 visitors, would build on the heritage of Cowes as a sailing venue but also the Isle of Wight as an events venue. The race is a world class offshore race and a major public event for sailors and non-sailors and would target families and others who may not normally have access to sailing. The event would involve the local community, volunteering and education. The race is starting in Deauville, France, which is a town that is twinned with Cowes, and the first stopover would be in Cowes.

To date support has been offered from:

- Visit IOW Tourist Board who have made a cash investment pledge of £25,000 with a number of conditions, one of which is that Cowes Town Council match fund by 100%. They have also made a value in kind investment pledge of £5,000.
- Artemis Offshore Academy have made a cash investment pledge of £12,500 and a value in kind pledge to be determined.
- Red Funnel are offering financial support in 2016 of circa £5,000 - £7,500. They will also have foot passenger travel offers, provide off Island marketing of the event and free cross-Solent travel for event production and selected media.
- UKSA have made value in kind pledges of £8,250 to supply accommodation for the event and £2,400 for sailing activities for non-sailors, and a stand providing educational activities and a sailing simulator for school children.
- Cowes Business Association have made a value in kind pledge of £10,000 to use their banner and flag points in the town. They will also organise buskers, street entertainment and a window dressing competition.

- Cowes Yacht Haven have made value in kind pledges of £7,000 for berthing of the race boats and £8,000 for village support.
- Cowes Harbour Commission have offered on the water logistical support and security. There is no mandate from their Board at present, there is a meeting to follow. It is likely that value in kind will be pledged but there may not be any financial support available.
- Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd have offered a team support vehicle park and the House may be a potential venue for an official soiree.
- The Isle of Wight Council have offered Licensing and Event support.
- The County Press will publish a supplement similar to the Cowes Week 2015 guide.
- OC Sports would provide event management and overall underwrite the event. They would manage the stopover from their head office in East Cowes; delivery of Turn key event and 'Destination Marketing' product.

The minimum fund requirements for the event are £75,000 cash investment, £45,000 value in kind, totalling £120,000. The potential return on the investment is £1.8 million which is a return of 15:1. If Cowes Town Council were to make a cash pledge of £25,000 cash pledges would total £68.75k; value in kind pledges total £40.65k.

7129 OPEN DISCUSSION / QUESTIONS FROM COWES TOWN COUNCILLORS

A number of questions were raised by Councillors including the amount of money requested from the Town Council of £25,000, could the sum requested be reduced. What would be the benefit of the event for Cowes residents and local businesses? Are local schools being involved in the event? Would the Parade be involved as well as the Yacht Haven? Can a fairground be brought to the Island? Can the very popular Red Arrows provide a display in place of a firework display? The event should be sold as a 'Festival' not only a sailing event.

It was acknowledged by Ed Hill that this event has to be more than a sailing event and should include a programme of activities for the residents of Cowes. Ed is keen to work with Councillors to talk through a suitable programme of activities to reach all parts of the local community. Where possible local businesses, especially local food & drink outlets, will be given the opportunity to take part in the Village by making prices more attractive / affordable. Schools have not yet been approached at this early stage but the Year 6 programme at UKSA will be linked to the event. The Yacht Haven would be the main venue, this would be an opportunity to make the event more inclusive by encouraging families and non-sailors to visit the Yacht Haven. A communication / marketing exercise would be undertaken to ensure inclusivity. The contribution of £25,000 requested from Cowes Town Council is a realistic amount to ensure the staging of the event. Any reduction from Cowes Town Council will reduce the contribution from Visit IOW. The cash investment needs to be close to the £75k minimum fund requirement.

Cowes Yacht Haven confirmed that they could cope with 20,000 visitors as they do for Cowes Week and they are able to offer facilities for family events.

Red Funnel confirmed that they can cope with the capacity of visitors, they believe the event could really work and are 100% behind it. They will look at competitive travel prices for the event.

UKSA are fully behind the event – all stakeholders must ensure that the event is suitable for the whole community of Cowes.

A proposal will be made to the Yacht Clubs that they have an open door policy during the event.

7130 TOWN COUNCIL DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A discussion followed relating to the presentation, the earlier open discussion, questions raised, and the contribution requested from Cowes Town Council.

Councillor Cowan left the meeting at 7.37pm.

A vote was taken and it was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council, at the next Town Council meeting on 3 September 2015, consider offering funding of £25,000 on the proviso that significant community gain can be proven.

Councillor McNeill thanked the visitors for attending and for their contributions to the meeting.

The proceedings terminated at 7.42pm.

CHAIRMAN