

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the COWES TOWN COUNCIL held at Northwood House, Cowes on Wednesday, 19th January at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Wells (Town Mayor) (Chairman)
Councillors Banks, Birch, Ellis, Hammond, Jones, McGregor, Matthews, Peacey-Wilcox, Robinson, Sanderson, Thwaites Walters and, Wilcox and 11 members of the public

6409 PRESENTATION: NAT WEST ISLAND GAMES 2011

Keith Lane and Chris Slann from the organising committee attended. The games are to run from 25th June until 1st July with 25 Islands participating and around 3200 athletes competing. Cowes is to host both the basketball competition at Cowes High School and the closing ceremony 1st July.

The closing ceremony will involve all the participants both athletes and officials parading from Princess Green to the Yacht Haven. 39 schools across the Island have been involved in producing the carnival elements of the parades. After the formal presentations it is anticipated that people will want to celebrate in Cowes. It was suggested that businesses other than those offering food and beverages might want to stay open later for the evening.

Sponsorship for the games has come from Nat West, Isle of Wight Council (ring fencing budget over a number of years) and other island businesses.

Cllr Wells offered to liaise with Cowes Business Association. Cllr McGregor offered thanks for the presentation.

6410 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mazillius, who would be attending later due to an IW Council meeting.

RESOLVED

To change the running order of the agenda so item 9b was the first item discussed.

6411 LOCAL LIBRARY PROVISION AND RESPONSE TO IW COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CLOSURES

Cllr McGregor attended the recent public meeting as did Cllrs. Fuller, Mazillius and Peacey-Wilcox. Around 70 people were in attendance giving the clear message that they wanted the library to stay open. Several issues were raised at the public meeting

- Cost of running the library
- Potential to co-locate Town Council office in library premises
- Sharing librarians between libraries
- Suggested increase in precept to cover costs of running library
- Concerns over solely relying on volunteers to run the library

Cllr McGregor and Wells have both received a large number of emails protesting at the proposed closures and have responded to these.

Cllr Wells summarized IWC position as outlined by Cllr Mazillius' in a recent email.

- Integrated services
- Potential to share staff between libraries
- Headquarters staying

- Trained librarians available to train volunteers at no cost
- Support available – other librarians have been trained on the job
- Access to book stock
- IWC does not wish library to close, but needs local communities to run the libraries

Formal consultation will close 7th February 2011.

Councillors discussed the issue raised and made several suggestions including:

- A sub group to include members of the public
- Concern about the closure of Tourist Information Centre
- Making a formal response to the consultation from IWC
- Consider the location and timings of a service
- Recognise that volunteers have a significant role to play with professional management
- Noting that the library also houses the Maritime Museum
- Opening an early dialogue with IWC

The public were invited to ask questions or make comment as follows:

Information Details of library running costs staffing costs £66, 000 per year, running costs £17 600 with insurance costs higher for a single organisation so this would take costs to about £19,000. IWC would give books, but not DVDs, computers, IT support so it would be a lesser service. Assets would be transferred free of charge with a covenant in place to ensure it remains a library.

Question I have just been reading through today about Cowes Town Council and the things that you do and the kind of money that has been raised from the public and there's quite a lot of funds I notice that have been put aside for some brilliant causes in the town. My question is can we use some of these funds that are for not urgent causes like The Cut, be possibly put towards something that we are desperate to keep?

Answer It was explained that a lot of the reserves were ring fenced for other projects which had been saved up for over a number of years; it was capital funding and not revenue funding which would require an on-going financial commitment. In the case of The Cut this has been a project which has been consulted on over a number of years and has remained a priority for the community. The Town Council are looking at increased flexibility in the budget but are also required to hold reserves.

Question Could I raise the possibility of putting the Tourist Information in the library?

Question If you are writing a response to the IW Council there are a couple of questions I suggest that you put to them. If the running costs are estimated to around £19 000 per year plus any maintenance, what happens if no organisation is found which is willing to run a library, manage volunteers and to fund raise that amount of money every year in straitened times when people aren't prepared to give. So what will happen then? Also, what happens if a group is found and it is unable to continue to run the library – it runs out of money, what will the council do then? Will there just be no library in Cowes?

Question Funding aside, the IW Council have a legal responsibility to provide libraries under the Library Act 1964. When this question was put to Cllr Mazillius his response was that if no substantive body was found then the IW Council would have to think again. This was at the public meeting on Saturday.

RESOLVED

1). That the Town Council forms a sub-group comprising Cllrs. Birch, McGregor, Jones, Wells together with 2 members of the public with an interest in the library and 1 member of the public with

an interest in the TIC to investigate possible options for the future of both the library and Tourist Information Centre; and

2). To make a formal response to IW Council regarding their consultation on libraries.

6412 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no further questions from members of the public.

6413 REPORTS FROM ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCILLORS

Cllr Mazillius submitted a written report summarised below:

Libraries

That a library service provided exclusively by IWC, with necessarily restricted hours of operation, can be improved by the involvement of Town and Parish Councils and trained (and supported) volunteers.

Cowes library is not suggested for closure during 2011 but it is anticipated that opening hours will be reduced. This is a very good opportunity for the Town Council to enter into positive discussions with the I.W. Council to transfer the library to local ownership (including a Community Asset Transfer). We should at the same time meet with Gurnard and Northwood Parish Councils to request input both financial and human to jointly make this change.

Other Parish and Town Councils were moving in this direction which eventually will create a five stranded library service as follows:-

Libraries Extra - ie Newport and Ryde run by the I.W. Council but open at least 50 hours per week.

Libraries Local - a range of libraries in local communities developed and run by local Councils, community groups, local businesses and existing community facilities such as schools.

Libraries Direct - mobile libraries bringing books and other material into rural communities.

Libraries Home - a commissioned service for readers unable to leave their homes.

Libraries Online - an extensive range of online services, available round the clock, from reserving books to learning up to 80 different languages.

It was anticipated that this would result in a much more locally orientated service with more suitable opening hours "owned" and valued by the local community it serves.

Public Conveniences

The IW Council currently operates 67 toilets with many having very light usage; hence, the proposal to close 32, leaving 35 open. Cowes had been identified as an area of substantial or more frequent usage and being a major Island Town and port they would remain open.

Cllr Fuller submitted a written report summarised below:

Budget Proposals 2011/2

The government had outlined that its grant for the Island would leave a shortfall of almost £900k. The Council highlighted the need for £17m of savings, due to the IW Council overspending its budget by £7.5m last year and not just the cut in central government grant. Once he know more, I would outline the steps he intended to take to challenge current proposals.

Libraries

From March the IW Council intends to only open Cowes Library for one day per week. In 2012 libraries are due to close permanently unless volunteers can be found to operate them. I consider the Library Service, to be an essential service; I will therefore be doing everything possible to support the campaign to save this important resource.

Subsidised Bus Routes

Cowes, Gurnard & Northwood are discussing the pros and costs of establishing a Community Transport Bus, after the funding for subsidised bus services ends in August.

Winter Snow

The IW Council seemed better prepared for the snow fall in December. Primary routes were kept open and secondary routes seemed to be gritted promptly. There were problems at Egypt Hill, whilst Cockleton Lane remained closed for some time due to ice.

Cowes Enterprise College

Work had now started on the new school. He had received complaints concerning the loss of trees and hedges from the site.

Thefts from vehicles

PC Mark Thomas had advised of further incidents of thefts from cars; most thefts had occurred from vehicles that have been left unlocked overnight.

Residents are asked to ensure that vehicles are secured and that valuables are removed from site.

Last Month:

- I attended a Cross-Solent Gas Main meeting with SGN, where I am hopeful that the PR branch of the company will talk to youngsters about this project, and will talk to Cowes High School about career opportunities in the company.
- Received several complaints/ suggestions about Council cutbacks to Bus Services (11); the Library Service (9); Adult Services (2); Tourist Information Centres (1); Public Toilets (1); Floating Bridge fees (1).
- Attended a meeting with Trading Standards and helped to resolve a long standing issue with a resident.

Cllr Brown apologised for not having written a report

Cllr Peacey Wilcox had nothing further to add but did state that she has received 3 letters and 10 emails from across the Isle of Wight expressing concern about the proposed library closures.

Following a question to Cllr Peacey Wilcox about the shortfall in pension contributions versus payouts highlighting a shortfall of around £1.4m per annum she said that she would take up the issue with the Chief Executive.

6414 REPORT FROM SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER

Local Action Group has established 3 priorities:

- Road Safety outside Schools
- The closure of Artic Road Youth Club
- Vandalism and graffiti on bus shelters – especially at Co-op

All crime figures were down year on year for Cowes.

Christmas and New Years Eve passed without major. Bus service worked well but at 4am there were still people around but no buses. Drugs were seized and there was an assault at the Yacht Haven and a knife incident.

Spot checks has taken place at local businesses checking the sale of alcohol to underage youngsters.

Thefts from motor vehicles have stopped following 6 arrests

Graffiti at Northwood House has stopped following work with a suspect and his parents.

Front desk at Cowes would be curtailed from 1st April, would try and get cover for the summer season.

Question: Has the CCTV been of use around the area of the bus shelter outside the Co-op?

Answer: CCTV has been very useful, but there was a lack of lighting in that particular area.

6415 REPORT FROM ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

The Environment Officer submitted the following written report:

- Had a broken gully outside the Fountain Hotel (repaired)

- Medina Road toilets had a fire in one of the wall gates (Gents); this had to be locked off till an electrician could repair it. On Friday last it was given a deep clean. We seem to have a graffiti person going in there at present some of this is quite offensive but being removed straight away. The same happened on the shelter wall bottom of Watchouse Lane.
- A lot of problems with people putting out waste before time and on wrong week over the holiday period (Letters issued).
- Small amount of dog fouling but not a real problem around town.

6416 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2010 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6417 MATTERS ARISING

a). Shoreline Management Plan.

The final plan has been published and is available at www.coastalwight.gov.uk/smp/publications.htm

RESOLVED

No need to respond to the final shoreline management plan.

b). New Council Offices.

Clerks were now in the office and the phone installed, it was intended that the office would be open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings to the public with a computer and photocopier available. Once this facility is up and running it will be advertised on the Town Council notice board, the website and in the Beacon.

Office furniture was still required – Cllr Peacey-Wlicox stated that the IWC may have some unused furniture in store which could be made available to Cowes Town Council and that she would look into this further.

RESOLVED

To release the budget for Town Clerks to purchase any necessary office furniture and IT equipment if an offer from the IW Council is not forthcoming.

6418 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS

a) Northwood House

Councillor Thwaites gave a report in her capacity as chairman of the Northwood House Charitable Trust referring to the following:

That between 1st September and 12th November the Trust had basically only received £5k income per month from the IW Council as a licence fee to operate the car park. They had to spend £24k on insurance and there were miscellaneous ‘start up’ costs when Euro Car Parks took over the management of car parking in mid November. Net income for December was expected to be £7k and there would be some revenue from renting office space renovated following the Registrar’s departure. The Trust had spent £10k on essential roof repairs and further improvement work on the interior had been, and continued to be undertaken by enthusiastic and skilled volunteers.

To get the Events business off the ground the Trust had to undertake urgent work in the kitchen, provide a disabled toilet and upgrade toilet facilities and replace the existing heating system in the public rooms. However, interest had been generated in a number of events; the appointment of ‘All About’ Catering was having a beneficial effect.

Costs associated with the Play area, dog and litter bin emptying and grass cutting were being met and volunteers had been leaf collecting. Electricity charges were estimated to be £25k per annum with additional charges of approximately £1.3k per month for security and caretaking.

The aim was to protect the integrity of the House, bring events to the public rooms to generate income, maintain and develop the Park as the Pleasure Gardens it was designed to be, and to generate income via the car parks to assist with funding the Trust.

The Trust was currently operating at a substantial deficit and was likely to increase; they did not anticipate this would be reversed until later in the year as car park revenues increased and the Events business took off.

Any assistance from the Town Council with any aspects of the Park as requested by the Trust would be welcomed.

The full report is attached to these minutes or can be viewed at www.northwoodhouse.org/news and click on 19th January 2011.

b) IW Council meeting with IWALC

The Assistant Town Clerk reported that the meeting was well attended

c). Finance Committee

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Finance Committee held on 11th and 18th January 2011 were received.

RESOLVED

1). That the following budget for the financial year 2011/12 in the sum of £99,800 be approved:

TOWN CLERK		
Salary of Town Clerk/ Employer NI	22,000	
Town Clerks Gratuity Fund/Superannuation	2,000	
Town Clerks attendance at National Conference	500	24,500
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION		
Telephone (Line rental/calls/broadband)	600	
Postages	200	
Travelling	400	
Training (including councillor training)	400	
Office/hire of meeting rooms/stationery and Office equipment	9,000	10,600
SUBSCRIPTIONS - General subscriptions	400	400
HIRE OF HALLS	700	700
INSURANCE	2,500	2,500
AUDIT AND ACCOUNTANCY FEES	1,200	1,200
TOWN MAYORS ALLOWANCE	1,200	1,200
COWES IN BLOOM		
Plants and equipment	1,500	
Watering	1,900	
Competition prizes/engraving of trophies	0	3,400
SKATE PARK & PLAYPARK		
Cost of cleaner	2,900	
Annual Safety Inspection	100	
Floodlight electricity costs	150	
Maintenance and repair	3,000	
Dog/litter bin emptying, new playpark, Northwood Rec.	1,000	7,150
GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS	5,500	5,500
SPECIAL EVENTS	5,500	5,500
TOWN IMPROVEMENTS		
Christmas trees	1,750	
Clock maintenance	200	
Seat and benches maintenance/)	
Cowes signs, information boards and fingerposts maintenance) 2,500	
Decorative lighting maintenance/electricity	800	
New projects and other services	24,000	29,250
NEWSLETTER AND WEB SITE	1,500	1,500
CCTV		
Licence Fee	4,400	4,400
ELECTION EXPENSES	1,000	1,000

GENERAL CONTINGENCIES	1,000	1,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON TOWN AFFAIRS		99,800
LESS		
From Reserves		13,100
TOTAL PRECEPT		<u>86,700</u>

2). That the Town Council make a precept on the Isle of Wight Council in the sum of £86,700.

d). Community Transport Forum

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Transport Forum held on 13th January 2011 were received.

As Councillor Hammond had been unable to attend the meeting it was agreed that the Assistant Town Clerk would circulate a copy of the minutes of the meeting to all members.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Ellis be appointed as Deputy to Councillor Hammond on the Community Transport Forum.

e) Town Improvements Committee

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Improvements Committee held on 18th January 2011 were received.

i). The Cut.

A new mural for the wall in The Cut to represent the Island Games 2011.

RESOLVED

That the Town Council accepts the proposal from Mrs. Popov and commence the mural work in line with her timescales and costings.

ii). Basketball Court.

RESOLVED

1). That the Town Council engage MJ Hayles Architectural Services to prepare a schedule of works for the new basketball court and undertake the tendering process on condition that the total cost for his work was less than £1,000;

2). That the Assistant Town Clerk be authorised to appoint a solicitor to act for the Town Council regarding the lease agreement with the I.W. Council for the land at Northwood Recreation Ground; and

3). That the Town Council approves Councillor Bank's design for a 'dog hitching post' and obtains quotations for its manufacture and installation.

iii). Additional bench, Egypt Light.

RESOLVED

1). That the Town Council accepts the offer from Mrs. Effemey for the funding of a new bench to be installed at Egypt Light;

2). That providing permission can be obtained from the I.W. Council, a plaque be fixed to the bench at the Crossfield/Ward Avenue junction dedicating this bench to the memory of her late husband; and

3). That a plaque be fixed to the bench at Egypt Light stating it was provided by Cowes Town Council.

6419 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

RESOLVED

That in accordance with SO 9.1.8, Standing Orders be suspended to enable the remaining items of business listed on the agenda to be transacted.

6420 ITEM SUBMITTED AT THE REQUEST OF COUNCILLORS

a) Timing and receipt of reports for Town Council meetings.

The Town Mayor had circulated a report to all members regarding the timing for the receipt of papers in connection with Council meetings; papers were often received too late for them to be suitably studied. The proposal was that all reports be received by the Town Clerk for distribution with the summons for the meeting; if there were very exceptional circumstances it would be for the Chairman to decide whether to allow late reports or financial information to be submitted and considered.

RESOLVED

That the above proposal regarding the issue of reports and paperwork for meetings be adopted and implemented by the Town Council.

b). Consultation regarding the local library.

Concluded under minute no. 6411.

c). Closure of public conveniences, Cowes.

Concerns were expressed by members regarding a proposal by the I.W. Council to close the toilets in the Park Road Recreation Ground particularly in the light of the significant investment that the Town Council had made in the area – children’s play park, skate park and the planned basketball court. Members agreed that it was essential the toilets remained open to the public and in principle the Town Council welcomed the idea of assuming responsibility; however, prior to any final decision the Town Council would need to establish the condition of the toilets, terms of the transfer, costs etc. It was agreed that the transfer of responsibility for the Park Road Recreation Ground toilets to the Town Council be referred to the Town Improvements Committee for further consideration.

d). Queens Diamond Jubilee.

The Town Mayor reported that he had been approached by the Commodore of the RYS on behalf of Cowes Sailing Clubs requesting that the Town Council work with them and the Cowes Business Association to help promote a major 5 day event between 1st and 5th June 2012 to celebrate the Queens Diamond Jubilee.

The Sailing Clubs were arranging a 5 day Regatta on the water; the request was for the Town Council to assist in bringing together partners who would be able to run a shoreside programme in support of the Regatta. It was intended that this would be a ‘no cost’ event as the Committee, whilst having an overseeing and communication role, would bring together partners who would tender to run the various services that would be required.

RESOLVED

- 1). That the Town Council supports the event and as the Civic Authority in the town leads on a shoreside programme bringing together the relevant parties wishing to be involved; and
- 2). That Councillor Wells takes the lead role on behalf of the Town Council on this project.

e). Cowes Town Council – Mayoral appointments.

Councillor Ellis had proposed that the annual appointment of the Mayor be made by local residents in the town; having researched the subject regarding Mayoral appointments it appeared that the Town Council could hold a formal referendum or Parish poll either of which would cost in excess of £2,000 and neither result would be binding on the Town Council.

The Town Clerk reported that section 15 of the LGA 1972 stated that ‘the Chairman of a parish council shall be elected annually by the Council from among the Councillors’ – it was ultimately a statutory duty for Town Councillors to elect the Mayor.

In view of the information provided, Councillor Ellis agreed to withdraw his proposal.

6421 MATTERS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN CLERK

- a). Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk’s membership of the SLCC.
- b). Town Council associate membership of the Cowes Business Association.
- c). Notification of the I.W. Council surface dressing of roads programme.
- d). Variation to premises licence, Toninos, 8-9 Shooters Hill.

e). *Details of accounts and petty cash payments for the period October to December 2010.

* details circulated to all members

RESOLVED

- 1). That the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk's membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks be paid by the Town Council;
- 2). That the Town Council renews their associate membership of the Cowes Business Association in the sum of £8.75;
- 3). That the Town Council has no objection to the minor variation to the premises licence for Toninos, 8-9 Shooters Hill; and
- 4). That the following accounts and petty cash payments for the period October to December 2010 be noted and confirmed:

R. Williams	Skatepark cleaner (Min No 4999f)	200.00
IW Council	CCTV Licence Fee (Min No 6265)	3,050.00
Mr R H Hendey	Salary	903.20
Mrs J Randall	"	344.73
HMRC		395.38
Brighstone Landscape	Watering of summer baskets & troughs	1,606.50
Petty Cash		300.00
R. Williams	Skatepark Cleaner (Min. No. 4999f and 6387c)	220.00
Ryde House Nursery	Winter bedding plants	298.55
M.J. Hayles Architectural	Revised plans The Cut – past payment (Min No 6323e)	250.00
IW Council	Planning Application fee The Cut (Min No 6313c)	167.50
SLCC	Working With Your Council (Course book)	195.00
Edward Watts & Son	Stain for benches – Northwood Park (Min No 6354i)	60.38
IW Beacon	Newsletter (Min No 6157e)	110.00
RBL Poppy Appeal	Contribution to Poppy Appeal (Min No	100.00
Wight Business Services	Copier Paper	18.00
Gurnard PC	Emptying dog bins (Min No 6243a)	6.00
Colin Newnham Services	Bin and post repairs, new playpark	120.00
Wight Stonemasonry	Plaques for War Memorial (Min No 6362g)	2,914.30
Mr R H Hendey	Salary	903.20
Mrs J Randall	"	344.53
Earl Mountbatten Hospice	Grant (Min No 6389f)	300.00
HM Revenue & Customs		395.58
R. Williams	Skatepark Cleaner (Min No 4999f)	200.00
IW Beacon	Newsletter (Min No 6157e)	110.00
IW Council	New seat o/s Baileys (Min No 6372d)	760.80
M J Hayles Architectural	Revised scheme The Cut (Min No 6323e)	325.00
Cheap Skips	Clear Council Store, Northwood House	85.11
Wight Business Services	Service photocopier	100.00
R Williams	Skatepark Cleaner (Min No 4999f & 6387c)	220.00
Mr R H Hendey	Salary	903.20
Mrs J Randall	"	344.53
HM Revenue & Customs		395.58
GJ Banks (IW) Ltd	Refurbishment and upgrading War Memorial (Min No. 6362g)	4,515.80
Petty Cash Payments October to December 2010		
Mr R H Hendey	Telephone Line rental 1.10.10 to 31.12.10	29.35
Mr R H Hendey	Telephone calls, " "	10.90
Mr R H Hendey	Postage " "	13.53
Mr R H Hendey	Travelling " "	16.70

6422 VACANCY, COWES SOUTH WARD

The Town Clerk reported that ten electors from the Cowes South Ward had requested an election to fill the vacancy on the Town Council; nominations had to be received by noon on 4th February and should there be more than one nomination, an election would be held on Thursday, 3rd March.

The IW Council wished to know whether the Town Council would require Poll Cards to be issued should an election be necessary.

RESOLVED

That should an election be required to fill the vacancy in the Cowes South Ward, the Town Council requests that the IW Council issues poll cards.

(The proceedings terminated at 9.51pm)

CHAIRMAN