



Minutes of the Twenty Ninth Annual Town Meeting held in the Drawing Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Thursday 17th April 2014 at 7 p.m., convened under the provision of the section 99 and schedule 12 of the Local Government Act, 1972.

Present : Councillor Banks (Town Mayor) (Chairman)

Councillors Brown, Corby, Cowan, Fuller, Hall, Jones, McNeill, Nicholson, Walters and 5 members of the public.

187 A PRESENTATION WAS GIVEN BY COUNCILLOR STEVE STUBBINGS, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL.

Cllr. Stubbings stated that the Localism Bill provides an opportunity for local people to have a say in what happens in their communities. The Isle of Wight Council faces a deficit of £28 million over the next three years so local Town and Parish Councils are being asked to consider providing some of these discretionary services instead – in Cowes this could be the toilets, beach and slipway cleaning, grass cutting and the Recreation Ground. Cowes Town Council were bold enough to raise the precept to have sufficient funds to provide some of these services. Cllr Stubbings advised that the new administration is keen to engage people in local politics and to work closely with Town/Parish councils for the good of the community.

Questions were asked about the Cowes Week Tented Village and charity events on the Parade which Cllr Stubbings is happy to discuss further outside of this meeting.

188 JUST A MINUTE PRESENTATIONS

The Town Council invited 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 Sports Football Club

Cowes Heritage

The Friends of Northwood Cemetery

Trinity Theatre

Ability Dogs for Young People

Cowes/ Deauville Twinning Association

189 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Matthews, Peacey-Wilcox, Robinson and Wardrop

190 MINUTES RESOLVED

That the minutes of the twenty eighth Annual Town Meeting held on 18th April 2013, be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

191 REPORT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Banks advised that at the start of the Council's year saw the then current mayor, Cllr. David Walters, not standing for re-election as Town Mayor. Through the democratic process Cllr. Geoff Banks was elected to that position and Cllr. David Jones as Deputy Town Mayor. Cllr. Walters was thanked for his valuable contribution during his term of office.

Throughout the past year our sub-committees have been most ably chaired by Cllr. David Jones, Planning and Licensing, Cllr. Linda Brown, Town Improvements and Cllr. Wendi Hall Chairman of Finance and the Northwood Recreation Ground Committees. Throughout the past year our sub-committees have been most ably chaired by Cllr. David Jones, Planning and Licensing; Cllr. Linda Brown, Town Improvements and Cllr. Wendi Hall Chairman of Finance and the Northwood Recreation Ground Committees. My thanks to them for directing their sub-committees in making decisions to the benefit and welfare of our town and its community. Additionally, thanks to those other members who have sat on various outside bodies and provided us with continuous reports whereby we have been enabled to take considered and rational decisions.

Thanks and appreciation goes to our Town Clerk, Roger Hendey and Assistant Town Clerk Sue Waters who have so ably served us throughout this period. Sue Waters has, in addition to her post with Cowes Town Council also been appointed as Parish Clerk for Gurnard. She will continue to serve Cowes Town Council on a part time basis as at present. Most regrettably, Roger Hendey will be leaving us at the end of September having served this town council so admirably and untiringly for the past fourteen plus years. Roger has served six town mayors over that period and has very much ensured that the council has performed its duties within the regulatory requirements. Roger led the Town Council in obtaining its 'Quality Town Council' status which it holds to this time. The Town Council and the residents of Cowes are indebted to Roger who has always performed his duties over and above that expected of him and has given wise counselling to those councillors entering local government for the first time. It will be very difficult to find a replacement of his equal.

My particular thanks to our Deputy Town Mayor, Cllr. David Jones, who has given me such support over this past term and has always given wise counselling and considered direction to myself as town mayor.

This past year has possibly been the most difficult for the Town Council inasmuch that the town precept, that local charge to the residents, had to be considered for a substantial uplift in the light of possible removal of funding by the Isle of Wight Council in respect to its discretionary services. Cowes Town Council, along with many local parish and town councils, decided that their precept should be raised in order to have the financial ability to deliver at least some of those services which County Hall might wish to relinquish. The 100% increase will be set aside for the sole purpose of fulfilling that need to ensure that our town retains its current status as an internationally recognised yachting town able to give both visitors and residents a worthy town in which we can be proud.

This past term saw this Council producing its own Newsletter in order to provide that fuller information to townspeople on this council's business. To date there have been three issues, the last of which delivered an eight page report with descriptive colour photographs. There remains, however, continued concerns as to the adequacy of delivery to the 5,250 households which the Town Council wants to communicate with. The recent issues have asked for residents' input on a variety of issues. Although the responses were very poor those that did highlighted their need to see this Town Council have control over toilet management, a weekly/monthly market and the upgrade and pedestrianisation of The Cut.

During the council's year two Public Meetings were held. Attendance was low, yet those attending considered that they were valuable and that the invited speakers provided a welcome appraisal of their particular organisation;

Councillors provided Island Roads with a series of questions raising concern to the performance in the delivery of their highways improvement programme. A subsequent meeting with them and their address to our recent Public Meeting allayed certain concerns; however, there remain several matters where this council considers there are areas requiring improvement and transparency.

As in past years the Town Council has provided grants to assist local organisations wherever practical. The windfall of some circa £79k from proceeds arising from the sale of property belonging to the North Medina Community Development Trust, a company partly establishment with funding from Cowes Town Council, is to be

spent on projects about the town and provides yet further resources for assisting with funding local grant applications.

Cowes Town Council has continued to invest in its well-used facilities at The Recreation Ground, Park Road. Unwelcomed vandalism continues at the park, however, the council has had the resolve to ensure that the facilities afforded to the youth of this community were returned into a usable state at the earliest date.

Opportunities were provided for the Town Council to become engaged in a new tourism initiative to bring further maritime events to Cowes and enhance the visitor shoreside experience. It was considered, however, that investment and participation in this initiative was best left with others. Another opportunity has been the engagement with administering, with others, the trademark use of "Cowes Week". Town Council representatives continued discussing such engagement direct with the organisers, Cowes Week Ltd.

The Town Council has agreed that it should work with other organisations in commemorating WW1 and to this end have agreed to encourage participation and engagement with other interested parties.

The traffic concerns in the High Street remained a constant point of both concern and frustration with councillors and residents. The police authority had taken action with cyclists who abused the traffic regulations and were becoming more vigilant in this regard. The raising and lowering of the traffic bollards remains an obstacle in that neither Island Roads nor County Hall have them registered as their responsibility for ownership or maintenance. The Town Council has registered its willingness to consider payment for the movement of the bollards once governance of them is established.

Cowes Town Council accepts that it has many challenges ahead during its next term and it is pleasing to report that its councillors have the determination, resolve and expertise to continue 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.

A question was asked about the funds from the North Medina Community Development Trust which is available for Capital projects only.

192 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2014

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013 were circulated at the Meeting. Cllr Hall (Chair of Finance Committee) was available for any questions but none were asked.

A question was raised regarding adding the previous year's figures for comparison – this will be provided with next year's accounts.

RESOLVED

That the accounts be received and noted.

193 ANNUAL SUMMARY – SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

Sargent Gary Knight was unable to attend the meeting but sent a written report which highlighted the fact that crime figures have reduced again by 13.5%. Cycling in the High Street is still a problem and the Police are issuing verbal warnings and educational letters, although repeat offenders may be prosecuted.

194 ANNUAL SUMMARY – I.W. COUNCIL

A written report was received from Councillor Bertie Ward member for Cowes North

Meetings. Since my election, I have attended all Full Council meetings, plus several Scrutiny Panel meetings including the Economy & Environment Scrutiny Panel. I am a committee member of the latter.

Scrutiny. In my E&E committee member role, we have had presentations from various bodies including Island Roads, Southern Vectis, etc. where we have the opportunity to question the various officers and representatives concerned.

Cowes Business Association. At my time of being elected, I was the Chairman of the CBA. I have stood down from this role to prevent any possible conflicts of interest, but still attend committee meetings in an advisory role. I have been involved with projects including Christmas lights, artisan market, flags & banners, highways issues, Cowes Week trademark, etc.

Residents Issues. I have engaged with residents on several issues, including:

Chapel Site Market Hill; ongoing

Victoria Road back development; resolved

Waterside Pub Site Development; ongoing

Bus Stop Issue; ongoing

Flytipping; this continues to be a problem

PFI/Highways issues; both myself and Cowes Town Council are not receiving satisfactory answers to our questions. Gratings in Cowes High Street are of particular concern.

Tourism. I attended The Big Tourism Ticket presentation in January, and was disappointed at how little Cowes features in the overall Destination Management Organisation's plans. I fully support the marketing initiative being proposed by CHC, CYH, Red Funnel, CBA, to set up our own 'Destination Cowes' committee to help promote Cowes.

Car Parking. I will not be supporting any blanket increase in car parking charges being proposed. I shall seek local opinion.

Local Economy. I see this as my main priority. 2013 was a very tough year for everyone. We must do all we can to re-energise Cowes, and I shall be working with various bodies and authorities to do all I can to this end.

A written report was also received from Councillor Fuller – Ward member for Cowes West and Gurnard

As part of the Island Independent administration, it remains my commitment to see all 40 Councillors working together for the betterment of the Island, regardless of political or non- political affiliations.

In this last year the Council has welcomed the opportunity to work alongside Town & Parish Councils, Businesses, Schools and the Voluntary Sector.

In Gurnard and Cowes, Planning continues to be a considerable challenge.

Within Cowes, challenges have met, particularly within and adjacent to Cowes' Conservation Area, whilst pressure remain ongoing from applicants to develop within the green gap which separates Cowes and the adjacent community of Gurnard.

I re-joined Cowes Enterprise College's Governing Body. Since being appointed I continue to witness improvements within the school, and am very proud to be part of a team of people dedicated to underpinning the challenge of raising standards for our children's education.

Last year, was the third successive year in which I attended more IW Council meetings than any other member. As Chairman of the Economy & Environment Scrutiny Panel, I've been involved in liaising with Island Roads, Ferry Operators and supporting a Parking Strategy which will seek to improve the sustainability of Town Centres. Following this Panel being disbanded, I've been appointed as the new Chairman of the IW Council's Planning Committee

My aim continues to be a transparent and hardworking Councillor. This is a job I thoroughly enjoy, and because I enjoy my work, I hope that it shows, and I am achieving the right outcomes for our community. For further information over my work over the last 12 months, please visit paulfullercc.blogspot.com.

A written report was also received from Councillor Nicholson – Ward member for Cowes South

1. The nuisance parking of untaxed and uninsured vehicles around Place Side took more than my term to resolve, as it was first notified to my predecessor, then to me in May. It has taken considerable effort and resilience to resolve.
2. The issue with sensible use of the former primary school site in Love Lane, raised in June, has taken from July until now to be resolved, thanks to the robust efforts of my colleague Cllr Peacey-Wilcox.

3. Issues raised by me following concerns expressed by locals on reported excessive behaviour by security, who appeared not to be SIA registered, on Cowes Parade, a fact, which we are now assured that all security personnel are in fact registered with the SIA, has spread to other concerns regarding the deprivation of free public seating in contravention to the Village Green status that the Parade holds and failure to provide additional toilet facilities to match the increased commercial activity continue to be a point of contention.
4. Concerns with the lack of IW Council supervision or management of the new Cowes School, heightened by the demise of Pihl, have not gone away due to serious defects in the building that will have to be addressed or the building will not be fit for purpose. The question of the relationship, conduct and professionalism of people responsible for overseeing the project remains very much in the air.
5. Yellow lines at Place side, that appeared last summer, but not wanted by a consensus of the residents, continue to be a problem.
6. Initial complaints to me from a resident parking legally in another road and receiving direct abuse and intimidation for doing so, have, now been acknowledged and supported by local Police, who pledged to support the legal right for someone to park legally with intimidation. You would, of course, expect this to be the case anyway, but sometimes; the wheels of natural justice just need a little help to work properly.
7. The New Year flooding that affected Northwood Recreation Ground and neighbouring residents in the NE and NW corners, with the local knowledge of the Mayor and a meeting with Parks department a simple direct drainage solution has been agreed in each location. But, with catching up and dealing with all the work that the rains brought, this has still to be implemented, simple and quick as it will be.
8. The unfinished and un-adopted status if the roads and pavements in the Persimmon estate (Seaview Road and spurs) continue to cause concern, following a nasty fall suffered by one of the residents due to long outstanding incomplete surfacing work. IW Council and Island Roads have taken up the issue with Persimmon.
9. After many months of campaigning from all quarters, including a group of highly professional locals from a wide variety of business backgrounds, and a new deal between Eurovia and Bardon Vectis that resulted in a merger for the purposes of providing materials, including asphalt, from the St George's Down base, the controversial planning application for the proposed plant on the banks of the Medina, in Cowes, was withdrawn. My view was always that if you want to put a hub in a wheel, you put it in the centre.

County

1. 1 year for the Health and Wellbeing Board's existence. A year, basically, of settling in to the new responsibility for local health and wellbeing issues. There needs to be some significant changes to cope with the challenges. I have proposed the inclusion of complimentary practitioners, as is done in other advanced countries, and this is being considered at national level, with a meeting of the Complimentary and Natural Health Council (CNHC) with the Public Health England Board. I am also driving an initiative to better deal with mental state issues, and have wide support and interest on this difficult but enormously significant issue.
2. As highlighted in my Police Motion, restructuring of the police force has begun, and they are seeking greater involvement and cross cooperation with the community. The drive for police realignment with the community is very much in focus, with police now recruiting members of the public to act in Independent Advisor Groups.
3. The parking abuse at Medina Theatre that I highlighted, where innocent people attending booked events at Medina where being penalised because of the lack of provision of adequate parking facilities has opened an enquiry into the circumstances.
4. Following the Beer Motion and subsequent uptake by the MP, the newly formed licensees group, Fight 4 Wight Licensees, is having an event on 24th April, where people will be given the opportunity to put, previously logged and written questions or concerns to various

authoritative bodies in the space of 60 second turns. These will then be tracked to ensure that they are properly fielded and answered.

Councillor Peacey-Wilcox submitted a written report:

I represent the constituents of Cowes Medina who are extremely good at keeping in contact with me, and raising issues with me. I produce reports every month for town council AND in the Cowes Magazine, and am now permitted a twice yearly beacon article.

My remit at the IWC is still being responsible for Housing and homelessness. Since taking on this role I have been trying to strengthen the IW connection with regard to re homing local people in our VERY LIMITED social housing stock. To that end, I now have the draft paper which will ensure this happens.

I am also working to 'drill down' on the numbers of homes that are currently being built on the Island - In the region of 520 homes a year. This number is calculated by pretty much the office of national statistics. They 'number crunch' and come up with the total. I am working with Jonathan Bacon at the IWC as it comes under his remit. I am also the conduit and go between leasing between groups and organisations and the IWC to bring issues to a mutual conclusion. Should any members of the public have questions or wish to contact me you have my details.

1943 QUESTIONS FROM THE MEETING

An opportunity to raise issues and concerns was given by the Mayor who reminded those people present about the monthly council and committee meetings which members of the public can always attend. He also reminded people that the councillors are all unpaid volunteers.

One member asked about the cruise ships that now come into Cowes and how to find out any information about them – he was advised that the Cowes Harbour Commission should know. Also Cllr Banks advised that he would like a leaflet to be produced regarding both the cruise ships and details of the yachting classes that can be seen on the Solent. This will be considered by the Town Improvement Committee.

Another question was asked about the future of the Cowes/East Cowes Floating Bridge. Cllr Fuller advised that after investigation, it appears that it will not need replacing in 2015, so the IW Council have time to look at various options. It operates at a small profit so IW Council will continue to operate it.

Another member commented that the stone plaque outside Rosetta Cottage is damaged. This again will be dealt with at the Town Improvement Committee.

Cllr Hall provided an update into the rationale for the increase in the precept to raise a fund to allow the Town Council to take on some of the services from Isle of Wight Council.

Cllr Jones thanked Cllr Banks for his time during the last year as Mayor.

(Meeting ended at 8.10 pm)

CHAIRMAN