



NEWSLETTER

Spring Edition 2014

From Cllr. Geoff Banks – Cowes Town Mayor

YOUR TOWN COUNCILLORS

Cowes Town Council, under its Quality Town Council status, has to quarterly publish details of current councillors, as below.

Geoff Banks	(Town Mayor)	Cowes West	tel. 295425
David Jones	(Deputy Town Mayor)	Cowes Medina	298445
Linda Brown		Cowes South	295222
John Corby		Cowes North	07798753962
Veronica Cowan		Cowes West	200415
Stuart Ellis		Cowes Medina	246352
Paul Fuller*		Cowes North	289595
Wendi Hall		Cowes South	07878138235
Lynn Hammond		Cowes Medina	282308
Jon Matthews		Cowes Medina	247498
Mark McNeill		Cowes North	07790777101
John Nicholson*		Cowes South	619130
Lora Peacey-Wilcox*		Cowes Medina	247177
Bob Robinson		Cowes West	294234
David Walters		Cowes North	200734
Wendy Wardrop		Cowes North	298687

* Also Isle of Wight Councillors

YOUR NEWSLETTER

This **Spring Newsletter** is now printed on a semi-gloss paper with photographs in colour. We have obtained a competitive price for this and future improved editions. There has been no further cost for the colour or the better quality paper; hopefully the result is a better read.

This edition includes articles from Cowes Business Association, Friends of St. Mary's Church Cowes and an update from Cowes Safer Neighbourhoods Team (Cowes Police). Our aim is to bring you news from other organisations based in our town. If you belong to or have knowledge of any local community organisation which could benefit from providing an article for this Newsletter, can they please let us know?

RISE IN THE COUNCIL PRECEPT

This forms part of your Council Tax bill and is payment to your Town Council for its administration and funding of projects, services and grants etc. After six hours in meetings of the Town Council's Finance Sub-Committee, deliberating over the precept for the forthcoming year, it was agreed to propose two options to the full Council; the first to hold the precept charge near to its current level with some prudent adjustments or, the second option, to add a further £20 per annum to the Band 'D' household charge. The second option was tabled due to the Isle of Wight Council's anticipated removal of financial support for what they refer to as their *discretionary services* leaving us to find funding through the Town Council if such were possibly to be retained. This rise would constitute an additional 39 pence per week on band 'D' making the total precept £42.91 per Band 'D' household. Those on a lower 'Band' would pay less. After further deliberations at the full monthly Council meeting, on the 6th February, the options were put to those Councillors present. Two of the three Town Councillors who are members of the Isle of Wight Council's ruling Independent Party, chose not to take place in the voting process and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.

Your Town Council was left with these limited options; to keep the present precept charge and manage any discretionary services, if necessary, from current balances, or to raise the precept to at least cover those which may be considered as priority for the wellbeing of the town. If the precept remained as it was then there was the

likelihood that Town and Parish Council precepts would, like the Council Tax levied from County Hall, be capped by Central Government. If such capping takes place and we retain our low precept, one of the lowest among the Island's towns, then the Town Council would not be able to raise this levy without a local referendum.

The Isle of Wight Council's budget deficit of some £28 million over the next three years is forcing them to take draconian measures in making financial savings. You will most likely, no doubt, read about the potential loss of those services which we have come to expect as our right. We have obtained a list from County Hall as to those discretionary services which can have their funding removed in whole or in part, quite legitimately. Such includes the servicing of public toilets, upkeep of the Recreation Ground., playgrounds in Brunswick Road and Park Road, the bandstand on Cowes' Parade, the public slipways, all our public car parks, school crossing patrols, Community Bus Service, Cowes Library, Cowes Youth Centre etc. Readers will find below a list of those discretionary services which may be withdrawn. The list was provided by the Isle of Wight Council and the Town Mayor has added some explanatory comments below the headings in the hope of giving some clarity.

For decades Cowes' precept has been kept low and for 2013-2014 levies stood at £20.22 (Band D rating). For that same period the national average was £50.19. Ventnor, Ryde and other Island towns, equally concerned of the pending loss of public service support, have also substantially raised their precepts in order to at least attempt to preserve some of those services which they considered essential. The new precepts are; Ventnor £77.07, Ryde £49.23, Yarmouth £53.87 with Newport raising theirs by 125%. All parish and town councils have been aware that this forthcoming year may be the last in which the precept could be raised. There is much rumormongering that the parishes may, like our Unitary Authority, be capped back to raising the precept to under 1.99%. If such was to be the case then Cowes Town Council, if the precept remained as last year, would not have the ability to find adequate funding to take on County Hall's relinquished services in future years.

The Town Council has no knowledge as to which of County Hall's *discretionary services* might be withdraw from being supported. Furthermore, there is no knowledge as to their individual annual running costs, other than our town's toilets, which we are informed by County Hall, runs at £53,950 per year, (*refer item 33 of below listing*). Unlike our larger towns, Cowes does not benefit from toilets in supermarkets and national chain retail outlets. Losing our toilets would be a major concern. There was little information available to enable even an approximate estimate as to what your Town Council might need to financially find in future.

The first option, to keep the precept as it is, was favoured initially but, after much discussion, the proposal was withdrawn. No alternative propositions were presented by any of the Council members. This left the alternative second option which, in effect, doubles the precept by adding an extra £20 per year per household, (Band D rating), bringing in an additional £79,000 per year towards taking on some of these *discretionary services*. This option was approved by nine votes 'for' and two 'against'. Those favouring this option expressed their grave concerns that without this additional funding we may well not be able to afford to take on this financial burden for more than a year if we took money from our present balances. The main issue, however, was how our internationally recognised town would be viewed by both residents and visitors if it was regarded as a socially economic backwater.

With the precept now set we will be determining as to what services the Isle of Wight Council intend to relinquish. The additional income from the rise in the precept will not only pay towards the services themselves but also the additional administration costs in delivering these.

The discretionary services/assets listed by the IWC were as follows:

The comments in *italics* are points for consideration and determination by Cowes Town Council.

1. **Park Road Recreation Ground, (The Rec).** *This would include everything within the curtilage of the designated Public Open Space, (POS). Such would include that land upon which Cowes Town Council, (CTC), has sited its MUGA, Skatepark, 'Playbuilder' facility and outside Gym equipment. The lands on which these are sited are under long term leases/agreements. Changing rooms, toilets, fences, paths etc. and attendances on the sporting facilities would also be embraced.*
2. **Park Road Toddler Playground, (The Rec).** *This relates to the equipment itself.*
3. **Brunswick Road Playground.** *This relates to the whole of the facility.*
4. **Northwood Park Playground.** *This is the playground alongside Church Road. Inasmuch that it is sited within Northwood Park, now under the governance of the Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd., (NHCTCL), it needs to be determined as to that agreement entered into between the 'Trust' and the IWC as regards to title, maintenance etc.*
5. **Arctic Park.** *This is the land at the junction of Newport Road and Arctic Road which forms the entrance to the old railway tunnel. CTC have funded projects for this amenity area.*
6. **St. Mary's Road POS.** *This is the other end of the railway tunnel and accessed off of St. Mary's Road.*
7. **Bridge Road.** *This was listed as a 'Park/Open Space'. This can only be the Brunswick Road Play Area which is on the junction of Bridge Road. The only other asset, formerly owned by the IWC, was the St. Andrew's Road Community Centre. This was transferred several years ago.*

8. **Children's Centre Library.** *This is listed under 'Park/Open Space'. Presumably this refers to the Public Library which contains both a Children's' Room and Maritime Museum and is in Consort Road. (Also refer to item 36).*
9. **Youth Centre.** *This is listed under 'Park/Open Space'. This presumably is Cowes Youth Centre in Arctic Road.*
10. **The Cut.** *This is listed under 'Park/Open Space'.*
11. **Egypt Point.** *This is listed under 'Parks/Open Space'. This could possibly mean the land on which Egypt light is sited and the light itself. CTC were requested to adopt this many years ago but refused due to maintenance costs, however, they had provided some financial assistance with its upkeep in the past.*
12. **Love Lane.** *This is listed under 'Parks and Open Spaces'. There are no amenity spaces in Love Lane. Therefore, this reference must be relating to those areas within the school site and such need to be clearly defined.*
13. **Moorgreen Reservoir.** *This is managed by the Moorgreen Road Allotment Association, (MRAA), under a lease agreement with the IWC on a peppercorn rent. CTC have provided elements of grant funding to the Association in the past. The site was offered to CTC by the then Medina BC but such was the subject of prolonged negotiations which resulted in the MRAA taking it on.*
14. **Mornington Green.** *This is the area which has 'Village Green' status and contains the public toilets. No mention is made of the woodland area adjacent to Baring Road which is being managed by Cowes Community Partnership with CTC's support. This, along with the Zig Zag path, is in the ownership of the IWC. Refer also item 26.*
15. **Parade Bandstand.** *This has 'Village Green' status.*
16. **Prince's Green.** *This area is covered by various restrictive covenants and its use is governed by such.*
17. **St. Mary's Church Cemetery.** *This is referred to as a "closed" cemetery in that there is no available internment space available. The IWC currently maintain the churchyard. Such maintenance would include walls, paths, trees, boundaries etc.*
18. **St. Faith's Church Cemetery.** *This is a "closed" cemetery. The IWC currently maintain the cemetery. The church is most likely to be transferred and the maintenance liability may be passed on.*
19. **Chain Ferry Slipway.** *This is designated as having a 'Beach Award'; it needs to be defined as to liabilities in this regard. The County Press, page 4 of 13th December, states that the chain ferry itself is on the list of discretionary assets which the IWC consider could be taken over by the parishes. However, the schedule does not necessarily identify such in that it comes under the heading "Harbours/Slipways" and most likely relates to the slipways both sides of the chain ferry.*
20. **Egypt Point Slipway.** *This is designated as to having 'Beach Cleaning'; it needs to be defined as to what this means.*
21. **Watchouse Lane Slipway.** *This is designated as having 'Bathing Water Quality'; it needs to be defined as to what this means.*
22. **Post Office Slipway.** *This is that at the bottom of Market Hill.*
23. **High Street Slipway.** *This is that alongside HSBC.*
24. **Thetis Wharf Slipway.**
25. **Brunswick Road Car Park.**
26. **Mornington Road Car Park.** *This is not surfaced.*
27. **Cross Street Car Park.** *We usually refer this as being St Mary's Road Car Park.*
28. **Esplanade Car Park.** *Here they mean Cowes Parade.*
29. **Northwood Park Car Park.** *This is Park Road Car Park under the governance of NHCTCL.*
30. **Baring Road School Crossing Patrol.** *This serves Gurnard Primary School which is in Gurnard. The boundary between the parishes of Cowes and Gurnard lies in the centre of Baring Road. The provision of a school crossing patrol officer is currently being reviewed by the IWC.*
31. **Mill Hill Road School Crossing Patrol.** *This is a.m. only the crossing is near the Mill Hill Road Co-op.*
32. **Park Road School Crossing patrol.**
33. **Public Toilets – 4 in number.** *These relate to the following toilets where the annual servicing costs are shown: The Cut (£13,700), The Parade (£14,500), Medina Road (£15,300) and Mornington Road (£9,400).*
34. **Community Bus Service.** *CTC part finances this with the adjunct parishes.*
35. **Bring Bank Recycling Sites.** *These are in St. Mary's Road Car Park, (Cross St.) and Mill Hill Road Co-op.*
36. **Library.** *In Beckford Road.(Also refer to item 8)*
37. **Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways.** *The schedule states there to be 27 of these. However, the 'Rights of Way Map' for Cowes identifies only 4. These are footpaths and are as follows:*

- a) No. 4. Battery Road to Egypt Esplanade.
- b) No. 6. The north east entrance to Northwood Recreation Ground leading to Love Lane at its junction with the reservoir site.
- c) No. 7. From the cricket club in Northwood Rec. to Three Gates Road alongside the school playing fields.
- d) No. 30. From the junction of Love Lane with Ash Grove leading to Newport Road

PARK ROAD RECREATION GROUND (*The Rec*)

Cowes Town Council currently manages and services the Park Road Recreation Ground toilets which it leases from the Isle of Wight Council. The Skatepark, Playbuilder Park, (slide etc. the other side of the driveway), the MUGA, (multi-use games area), and the outdoor exercise equipment are all owned and maintained by the Town Council. The park, as a whole, is still owned by the County Council; Cowes Town Council are but tenants of that area where our play and sports equipment has been provided. The upkeep of the equipment and toilets is an expensive item; however, your Town Council sees great benefit derived by its use by the children and youth of our community.

The Town Mayor met with several of those using the facilities and it is from suggestions they made that your Town Council is, hopefully, providing an additional 12 person seated shelter and bike rack for 6 bikes. Attention was drawn to areas of the 'tarmac' surfacing in the Skatepark which needed attention and this work is being put in hand. Concern has been raised regarding the 'zip-wire' where the surfacing below has deteriorated badly and a similar situation has manifested itself about the very popular slide. In liaison with the Isle of Wight Council, which is willing to share the cost, a specialist matting material will be laid to these exposed areas. Below is a picture of the shelter envisaged.

The costs of daily cleaning of our managed toilet block have been reviewed. Our current cleaner who for many years has kept clean, and regularly maintained, our recreational facilities has been appointed as the new cleaner. This has provided a monetary saving and we feel assured an improved service and level of cleanliness.



For walkers and dog owners it has been recognised that there is a lack of general seating. The Town Council has provided three oak seats sited on the grass verge facing the football pitches where running alongside the car parking area. These seats will be dedicated to three past and valuable servants of Cowes Town Council. The late John Pearcey, the town's first town Clerk who did so much for our Council and our community in those early informative years will be recognised. Our late Town mayor, John Leigh will also be acknowledged for his valuable contribution over many years which saw the establishment of the Skatepark. Paul Birch, a Councillor who sadly passed away when in mid-life, will also be remembered. He gave an invaluable input in steering of the Finance Committee when under his chairmanship.

NO COLD CALLING ZONE

Numerous complaints were received from residents back in 2009 regarding 'cold calling'. The Town Council created a 'No Cold Calling' zone around the town in order to help reduce the fear of doorstep crime and give confidence to residents to deal with cold callers. The Trading Standard Authority has asked that these current 'No Cold Calling' zones are strengthened following figures received from around the country showed that doorstep sellers were ignoring the signs. Consequently, a new sticker has been designed and the Town Council now includes this with this Newsletter. If you know of anyone who has not received either of these can they please let our Town Clerks know.

COWES IN BLOOM

Over the past years the Town Council has continued to provide hanging baskets and planters about the town. These have been planted out and maintained by Cllr. David Jones, our Deputy Town Mayor, and Bill Rogers, with the exception of the regular watering which has been undertaken by an outside contractor. This burden on these two volunteers has to draw to a close and it is with this in mind that we ask as to whether there are any other volunteers who can take on this task. Both David and Bill will give that initial help to anyone willing to assist. Unless the Town Council finds such volunteers then it will have to engage a commercial contractor. If there is anyone willing to assist can they please contact the Town Clerks.

MEDINA VALLEY AREA ACTION PLAN (MVAAP)

For those who filled in the questionnaire in the previous Newsletter can we offer our thanks and appreciation. At this time we have over 201 responders giving their views which are invaluable to our consultation process. Your council has collated and reviewed these responses and determine the consensus views as below. The fuller results are being forwarded to those at County Hall who are managing the Cowes area Action Plan.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS. *Comments post receipt is in italics*

Question 1 - Are you a permanent resident of Cowes? Yes=181, No=15, did not reply=5.

Question 2 - If you were not born in Cowes why did you move here? Employment =56, Retirement=24

Recreation=8, others=55, did not reply=58

We are not sure how this question helped. It can be assumed that those that did not reply were born in Cowes, but there is no evidence to support this assumption. Many of those that ticked "other" cited quality of life; a good place to bring up children. A sense of appreciation for what Cowes has to offer as a place to live was evident.

Question 3 - How do you think Cowes can be improved?

A question that produced a great variety of comments.

Question 4 - What type of housing do you think is needed in Cowes? *There were 303 responders indicating replies from more than one family member. Top of the list was affordable first time houses with 29%. Next were small family homes at 16.8%. Twenty per cent did not want any more houses at all.*

Question 5 - Where do you think this housing should go?

As the answers below indicate a strong desire to retain green & open spaces where to build new houses is difficult to answer.

Question 6 - Do you think Cowes needs other types of development? *248 responders said "Yes" whereas 196 responders said "No". Approximately 55.5% said yes to some development while 44.5% were against any development. Many replies ticked several boxes, for & against. Of those that said yes 23.8% would like more retail; 28.6% industrial; 30.6% marine related; 13.7% various other developments.*

Question 7 - If your answer to question 6 was yes, where should it be located?

The Harrison (J S Whites) site was the choice for most industrial & marine related developments & some retail. The redevelopment of this site for employment was a common reply.

Question 8 - Are the areas of green space important to you?

90.5% of those asked agreed that the areas of green space are important to them.

Question 9 - If your answer to question 8 was yes, explain what green & open spaces are important to you & why? *Responses were too variable.*

Question 10 - The green & open spaces between Cowes, Northwood & Gurnard are important.

How much do you agree with this statement?

87.5% of those that responded agree or strongly agree that the green & open spaces between Cowes, Northwood & Gurnard are important.

Question 11 - How do you think the retail experience in Cowes could be improved? *Responses were too various to record*

Question 12 - Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your Town that might help in shaping its future? *Responses were too various to record*

OUTDOOR GYM

The Town Council has, through its Town Improvements Sub-Committee, has been considering the provision of an outdoor gym. These are becoming ever more popular and can be seen along seafronts and in leisure parks as well as commercial holiday sites. They are used by adults and children and not only provide that essential exercise but are also great fun. Below is a photograph of a typical installation. The thoughts were



to establish such a recreational facility on the grassed area between Queen's Road and Mornington Road. This area is designated as a 'Village Green' whereby its use is designated for public pleasure exempt from commercial interest or development. At the request of the Isle of Wight Council, which is the landowner, the Town Council has delivered information sheets to immediate local residents to seek their views. Those responders are, in the majority, against the proposal. Below are some photographs which give an indication of the equipment which could be installed. The Chairman of the Sub-Committee, Cllr. Linda Brown, whose phone number is listed among those Town Councillors at the head of the Newsletter, would welcome

comments from townspeople generally.

WORLD WAR 1 – CENTENARY

This year sees the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I. An umbrella organisation has been formed to see the co-ordination of Island events over the next four years, the period of the war. The Town Council has agreed to determine, with any other interested local organisations, what it can do to commemorate this tragic period in history which took the lives of many of Cowes' servicemen. There will be funding available towards any acceptable events and for the establishment of any permanent commemoration of the

Great War. If any organizations wish to work with the Town Council in providing a meaningful recognition of that tragic war, can they please make contact with our Town Clerks.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Thanks to those who came out in the cold to attend the annual Lights of Love Carol Service in aid of The Earl Mountbatten Hospice. Thanks go to Cowes Methodist Church, Birmingham Road, who kindly allowed not only the use of the church but provided the organist and welcome hospitality. Those attending considered the event, in the warmth of the church, to be far preferable to holding the service on a cold bleak corner. The church has kindly agreed to our being with them for Christmas Carols this year.

“DESTINATION COWES”

This is a new tourism initiative aimed at bringing further regattas and rallies to Cowes and developing shoreside events and facilities which would add to the town's prosperity. Funding for such would be from local interested organisations/stakeholders already engaged in the promotion of Cowes as a tourist and investment area. Cowes Town Council has been asked to be party to this initiative which would require funding for a two year period. At our council's November meeting the majority voted that this Council would play no part in this initiative.

HIGH STREET TRAFFIC CONCERNS

At a meeting with Island Roads, issues were again raised as to the unregulated traffic flows through our pedestrianised areas. The Town Council had asked that the period of pedestrianisation was changed whereby access would only be allowed between 7am and 10am daily. This request was made in the light of the restrictions to through traffic where several commercial premises had obtained permission for siting tables and chairs onto the footway areas. The Town Council considered that with traffic currently being able to drive through the pedestrian precincts from 6pm, when of an evening the town could be at its busiest, was a safety issue and not in the interests of residents, visitors or the commercial outlets. Regrettably, this request has been denied on the grounds that there was no evidence that people had been injured or considered at risk. However, the Town Council will be challenging this.

A major concern has been the raising and lowering of the traffic bollards. At present there is no body accepting responsibility for such. Amazingly, when the Isle of Wight Council determined along with Island Roads as to which assets should be transferred, both parties failed to notice the bollards. Currently the Town Council is requesting that this issue needs to urgently be resolved. Not only are these bollards not being operated but there is also the issue of maintenance, repair and the provision of an additional bollard. Until such time as the matter of ownership and responsibility is resolved, the Town Council is not able to seek quotations for their operation.

ISLAND ROADS (*Ringway Island Roads Ltd, Horsham, West Sussex*)

There has been considerable media comments as regards to the performance of our Island's appointed contractor to undertake the delivery of the multi-million pound highway improvements; a contract for a 25 year term. Cowes Councillors have met at Island Road's offices having requested clarification on a list of 21 issues which they had raised. Those present were told that the delivery of the contract was very much financially led. A question raised was as to why certain roads had been resurfaced, such as Cockleton Lane, whereas Park Road, at its junction towards Ward Avenue and Ward Avenue itself, is disintegrating daily. Apparently the prioritisation is related to programming by a computer determined modelling system based on expediency. Island Roads look to undertaking stretches of re-surfacing within towns of a minimum tranche of 250m lengths and 500m where in rural areas. Added to this they intend only undertaking resurfacing of our poorer roads partway through their delivery contract in order that they don't have to repeat their resurfacing more than once during their contract period. A question was raised as to how vigilant they were as regards to determining whether a carriageway needed resurfacing or complete reconstruction. In this regards they purport to having undertaken and reviewing their investigations on the carriageways before implementing any works. When resurfacing takes place to the roads there will not necessarily be any replacement or remodelling of the kerb line. The kerbs will be replaced, as will any castings, on a needs only basis and the resurfacing will not lessen the upstand to the kerb. The matter of the condition and functioning of the drainage channels in the High Street was raised. Particular Town Council concern was their lack of maintenance whereby metal covers had corroded leaving them in a danger to the public. This particular issue was raised with the highway authority many months ago. Island Roads recognised the safety issue and, when asked as regards to the cleaning of these drainage channels, have since responded to say that they were last cleaned in May 2013. Responses were given to the Town Council's full list of questions albeit those responses were enlightening but not all were welcome or expected. Your Town Council will continue to press Island Roads to give further consideration to works on those carriageways in most need of immediate attention and to have particular regard to the commuter traffic and the forthcoming holiday traffic.

POSSIBLE FUTURE INITIATIVES

We received only 79 responses, (about 1.5% return), to our questionnaire in our Winter Newsletter asking you to vote on which of a possible 25 projects you considered we should prioritise.

Results of survey returns

1. The most favoured being:
 - a) Managing toilet facilities about town.
 - b) Establishing a weekly/monthly market.
 - c) Refurbishment and upgrade of The Cut to become a pedestrianized area.
 - d) Taking over the management of car parks in the ownership of the IWC
2. The least favoured being:
 - a) Cowes Deauville Twinning 50th anniversary 2014
 - b) Provision of flagpoles on Cowes Parade
 - c) Provision of a pay-to-view telescope on Cowes Parade.
 - d) Provision of inset heritage tablets to the Parade's paved promenade.

With such a small percentage return it is difficult to evaluate the constituents' preferred projects. However, the top four chosen priorities may give a general indication of needs.

NEWS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS.

COWES SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM.

We have included a short report from A/PS 22028 Gary Knight of the Cowes Safer Neighbourhood Team for the month of January 2014.

“In terms of crime, this year we are down 15% on total crime for January 2014 from 46 crimes 2012/13 down to 39 crimes 2013/14. Also in terms of year to date crime figures we are down 16% from 476 crimes 2012/13 down to 398 crimes 2013/14. This represents 78 fewer victims of crime compared to this time last year, which I hope you'll agree is very encouraging news.

The 1 priority identified by the Local Action Group is cycling and cars using the High Street during the times of prohibition. In relation to this priority police have continued to actively patrol the High Street to prevent incidents re-occurring. Police have stopped 2 cyclists whilst on patrol during January 2014, those stopped have had their details taken and given a verbal warning as well as an educational letter. If the same persons are seen cycling again during the prohibited time then formal action will be taken.

I would like to remind everyone that the beat surgeries will take place on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at Cowes Police Station between 1800hrs - 2000hrs. Anyone is welcome to attend and speak with their local Safer Neighbourhood Team on any matter that they feel the police can assist with.

There are no crimes of note to bring to the attention of the Cowes Town Council”.

FRIENDS OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, COWES

The Friends of St. Mary's Church is a group of people from Cowes and the wider community who are interested in the preservation and use of this historic building.

St. Mary's Church has been part of the Cowes community for over 350 years. West Cowes Chappell was founded in the 1657. The Ward family of Northwood House enlarged the church in 1811. The tower was designed by the famous regency architect John Nash and is considered to be particularly elegant with its restrained design.

In 1867 the Church with the exception of the new tower was taken down and rebuilt. The church was enlarged further in 1907.

English Heritage have Listed the building as Grade 2*.

Within the church and churchyard there are strong links to the history of the town. The memorials record life in the town through 3 centuries.

The building is one of the foundations of town life. Cowes families have celebrated christenings, weddings and lives remembered. It hosts civic activity at Remembrance Sunday. It is an accessible and affordable venue for community groups of all ages.

St. Mary's has good music acoustics and the organ is a fine example of a Father Willis organ. The building is popular with musicians for the quality and response of the sound. 2 choirs and 2 bands rehearse and perform there. It is one of the largest venues in the town and can seat 600 people.

In the mid-1990s major repairs were required. The stone of the tower was eroding, the bell house timbers were rotten. The roof to the chancel and north side needed re-slating.

To help raise funds for this work the Friends of St. Mary's Church was founded. The Friends are a Registered Charity. All funds are used for the betterment and up-keep of the building and grounds.

The Friends organize fund raising events. These include concerts, suppers, talks and an annual sponsored walk. Other activities include churchyard gardening and painting.

To date over £60,000 has been raised. This has been used (together with funding from the Joint Heritage Fund and the PCC) for the tower repairs and re-roofing. Help has also been given to smaller repairs to the fabric, heating, churchyard wall and a new water supply. The next major project will be the re-roofing of the south roof.

The Friends welcome new members. Please support our work to preserve this building for future generations. Single membership is £10.00 or £15.00 per year for 2 people sharing the same address. Please contact: Simon Bean, Chairman at 44 Coronation Road, Cowes, PO31 7JY. e-mail beansofcowes@onwight.net

COWES BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

What's New At The Cowes Business Association?

With a new Chairman in place the Cowes Business Association is moving on with great gusto with 2013 being a very eventful year! The CBA introduced the new Artisan Markets to the High Street whilst working together with Red Funnel and their Food Festivals we were able to bring an increased footfall into the High Street. The Cowes Christmas Festivals was a huge success with the high packed especially on the Saturday with over 50 stalls 3 Santa's and so much more. One retailer reporting that they had had their best day trading ever in over 3 years! Sadly the weather was not on our side for the Sunday.

Working with the IWCC and Island Roads the CBA are working on a policy for the safe installation of flags and banners across highways. This will be implemented Islandwide.

It is only of the main ethos' in business that people will buy from people they like irrelevant of price and the CBA has started a new business to business networking group which will meet monthly at various members venues. The inaugural meeting was held at the Cowes RNLI Headquarters with the first of 2014 being held at Villa Rothsay. The February meeting is being held at Becalmed in Birmingham Road and March's will be at The Coast. For more details or to book your place please email sue@opensaucesystems.com or contact cowesbusiness@yahoo.com ! Members of the CBA are able to put forward their business as a venue for an event! 2014 will see the CBA continuing to bring regular events to the town including a Cowes Showcase, a Celebration of the Sea and of course a stunning Cowes Christmas Festival

What is the CBA doing and what can it do for businesses throughout Cowes, Gurnard and Northwood? Here are just some of the organisations the CBA is working with for the good of the whole town and not just the High Street.

1. The CBA Chairman is on the committee for the Island Business Forum. This group is made up of all Business Associations and other associations, The Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses. It has the full support of Andrew Turner and the IoW County Council. The aim is to ensure a flow of information and if required to form pressure groups to ensure that businesses on the island get a fair deal for example with the Ferry Groups.

2. The CBA has a voice on the Cowes Week Limited (CWL) Shoreside Committee. We are working closely with CWL on the recent acquisition of the Intellectual Property Rights of the words 'Cowes Week'. Together with the Cowes Town Council we will be drawing up a frame for a document which will ensure that legally over the next 10 years no one organisation can charge any local company to use the phrase 'Cowes Week'. There is planned an Open Meeting to fill in the details of the document so that all parties can reach a satisfactory conclusion to this. Details of this will be posted on the CBA webpage and sent out to members via email.

3. The CBA are also on the committee of the Cowes Harbour Commission. We are able to raise any points of concern a Cowes based business may have.

4. We work with the Town Council and Police to ensure the safety of visitors to Cowes.

5. We would urge you to keep a close eye on the CBA webpage or Facebook Page where there will be updates of upcoming events, news and information of Cruise Liners landing passengers in Cowes.

6. Sainsbury's are sponsoring Window Dressing competitions with some great prizes on offer! The CBA is striving to increase footfall to the High Street whilst working with the Marinas, Cowes Harbour Commission, Cowes Town Council, Cowes Week Ltd, and other organisations to ensure that existing sailing and other events stay in Cowes and new we attract new ones.

We look forward to welcoming members and non-members to the CBA Annual General Meeting on 1st April at the prestigious Royal Yacht Squadron and any other Open Meetings that are planned throughout the year in an effort to keep the town aware of any developments and information.

The CBA office is opened every Wednesday morning 0900 – 1300 in the lobby of the Cowes Harbour Commission building.

MEETINGS

Our next full council meeting is at 7pm on Thursday 3rd April. Our Annual Town Meeting Thursday 17th April and Annual Council Meeting on Thursday 1st May. Meetings are in the Parish Hall at St. Mary's Church. All are most welcome to attend.

Office & Communications – R. H. Hendey, The Town Clerk Cowes Town Council, Office 7, Baring Chambers, 13, Denmark Road, Cowes PO31 7SY. tel. 209022, email roger.hendey@btconnect.com. Opening hours generally Mon. – Fri 9.30 to 12.00 (except Bank Holidays). Why not visit our website at www.cowestowncouncil.org.uk for updated news, minutes of meetings and an introduction to your Town Council.