



Minutes of the Thirty seventh Annual Town Meeting held in the Drawing Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Thursday 11 May 2023 at 6.15pm, convened under the provision of the section 99 and schedule 12 of the Local Government Act, 1972

Present: Councillor Bertie (Town Mayor) (Chairman)

Councillors Adams, Nicholson, Paler and Sanders

In attendance: Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Assistant Town Clerk

245 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Wardrop.

**246 MINUTES
RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Thirty sixth Annual Town Meeting held on 5 May 2022 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

247 REPORT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Mayor had provided a written report which was circulated to attendees.

We had hoped that 2023 might see the end of all the problems caused by Covid 19, but the after-effects, plus the situation in Ukraine, continue to have a negative effect made even worse with the current cost of living crisis. CTC continues to move forward with a positive attitude.

1. Cowes & Northwood Place Plan. The Place Plan continues to be a central part of CTC's activities. Recently, a new working group, the Cowes Promotions & Marketing Group, was established and representatives from major Cowes stakeholders sit on this group including CTC, Cowes Harbour Commission, Cowes Yacht Haven, Cowes Week Ltd., Cowes Business Assoc., Red Funnel, Visit IOW, etc.

2. King's Coronation. The CTC year started on a very positive note with the celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, only to be followed just weeks later by her death, a very sad occasion. The High Street has now been decorated with bunting and new Union Jacks in preparation for the King's Coronation weekend at the beginning of May. CTC will again be making a sizeable contribution to the Northwood House 'Picnic in the Park' free community event on Sunday 7th May to celebrate the Coronation.

3. Christmas Lights & Trees. The Cowes Business Association has now 'gifted' the town's Christmas lights to CTC, who continue to pay to store, service and erect them at a cost of approximately £14,000 per year. New lights will probably be needed in the near future. New lights for the town's Christmas Tree in Francki Place were purchased in 2022; the bright LED lights were a welcome improvement on the previous lights.

4. Cowes in Bloom. Rosalie's of Cowes have again volunteered to erect hanging baskets at cost along the whole High Street area to add to the planters and Parade hanging baskets already provided by CTC. The 2022 summer was particularly hot, and it was a struggle keeping everything alive. Water usage almost doubled in cost.

- 5. Cowes Harbour Commission.** The new CHC Chief Executive, Gary Hall, now has his feet firmly under the desk and has done a splendid job in attracting cruise ships to Cowes, beginning this coming May again. Cowes now needs to work out how to keep the ships' visitors in Cowes to help boost the local economy.
- 6. Floating Bridge.** An ongoing saga!
- 7. Cowes Medical Centre.** We continue to monitor the activities of CMC and engage with them on behalf of residents.
- 8. CTC Newsletters.** Our assistant town clerk, Kate, continues to produce the newsletter on a regular basis and our thanks go to her for her efforts. I urge all Cowes residents and businesses to make sure they read these newsletters as they are full of useful information.
- 9. Cycling.** The LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) scheme continues to be implemented but illegal cycling continues to be a problem after 10am in the High Street area. An accident just waiting to happen.
- 10. Remembrance Sunday.** As Mayor, I again laid a wreath on behalf of CTC at the Sunday ceremony and afterwards attended the church service, took a march-past salute on The Parade with our Vicar, and attended a lunchtime reception hosted by The Royal British Legion.
- 11. Island Roads.** The biggest complaint we receive is about potholes. We continue to monitor with Island Roads in the Cowes area and engage when necessary.
- 12. The Cut.** The project to improve The Cut area continues to be delayed (now nearly 13 years !). The Town Council has received funding towards adding a 'Changing Places' toilet facility to the end of the existing toilet block, which would be a major boost for many Cowes' residents and visitors. Vandalism continues to be a problem in the area.
- 13. Moorgreen Road Reservoir.** CTC continues to financially support the volunteers who run this initiative and their summer open day last year was excellent. It is very disappointing to hear of repeated vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the woodland area, which has recently been opened up as a new public amenity space for public enjoyment and recreation. We continue to liaise with the Police, IW Council and Moorgreen Road Allotment Society in this regard.
- 14. Cowes Open Bowls Tournament.** CTC again sponsored this event in the summer. Sadly, as Mayor, I was unable to attend the event last year and to open the event with the first 2 woods!
- 15. Cowes Week.** This event has been in steady decline for a number of years. The general feeling amongst residents and businesses in Cowes is that the organisers need to engage more with the town.
- 16. Cowes Library.** CTC continues to support this very important facility and without the annual grant of over £22,000, the Library would probably not exist. Many thanks to all the volunteers who put on a great range of events in the Library.
- 17. Northwood Park.** CTC continues to contribute approx. £12,000 per year towards grounds maintenance costs for this important green area in Cowes, where many annual events are now being staged. Again, many thanks to all the volunteers who are out in all kinds of weather to keep the park looking excellent and give up their time to support the events.
- 18. Toilets.** CTC continues to fund the 5 toilet blocks in the Cowes area. Disappointingly they are still targeted by vandalism, especially after school closing time.
- 19. Northwood Recreation Ground.** The skate park and other areas within the 'Rec' continue to be funded by CTC. This is a very important area for the youth of Cowes.
- 20. Community Orchard.** This brand new orchard has now been installed in the corner of the recreation ground. Thanks to Red Funnel for their contribution.
- 21. Cowes Heritage & Community Group.** The grant of £10,000 made by CTC has now been used to great effect, and the Beckford Centre now runs a whole host of events to the benefit of Cowes residents.
- 22. Event Funding.** CTC is in the process of establishing new funding application procedures which will help new events such as the forthcoming Cowes Fringe to establish themselves hopefully for many years to come. Details will be available in the next few weeks.

23. Flags & Banners. CTC has now taken over the administration of the High Street flags and banners from Cowes Business Association, and several changes were made during the year (including Christmas) to always have new flags put up on a regular basis to keep the High Street looking fresh and bright.

CTC has again had a very active year and my thanks go to the Town Clerks, Debbie and Kate, and to all my fellow Councillors for their input, and to all Cowes residents and businesses who make this such a great place to live.

My tenure as Mayor comes to an end on 11th May 2023. I have had a great time and will miss the role, but perhaps not all the committee meetings !!!

Questions were invited but none were asked.

248 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 were circulated at the meeting. Ms Debbie Faulkner (Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer) was available for any questions, but none were asked. It was:

RESOLVED

That the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 be received and noted.

249 ANNUAL SUMMARY – SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting. No members of the Safer Neighbourhood Team were in attendance.

250 ANNUAL SUMMARY – IW COUNCILLORS

Written reports were received from Councillors Fuller, Nicholson, Peacey Wilcox and Quigley.

Councillor Paul Fuller (Cowes West and Gurnard)

MID-TERM REVIEW. The nine Issues which I promised to address in 2021

- **You said: Significantly reducing the annual housing figure from 1045.**
- **I did:** Within the Draft Island Planning Strategy (DIPS), I support this number could be reduced to 479. This figure is 1/3 lower than the current revised Government Isle of Wight annual housing allocation figure of 730.
- **You said: Prioritising Local Housing for Local People**
- **I did:** Within the DIPS policies have been prioritised to deliver homes affordable for local residents (Policy H5}. The local homes discount is an example of this. This remains a corporate priority for the Alliance Administration.
- **You said: Support Working Families.**
- **I did:** Support increased help for working families through Council Tax concessions from 65% support to 70%
- **You said: Support safety outside schools.**
- **I did:** New Traffic Regulation Orders were implemented as a result by the IW Council outside local schools.
- **You said: Scrap proposals to charge for car parking on Cowes/ Gurnard seafront.**
- **I did:** No ifs, no buts, no woolly compromises. These were scrapped within days by the Alliance Administration.
- **You said: Improve access to Town Centres and review car parking.**
- **I did:** Ongoing supported action of Cowes Place Plan for Town Centre regeneration. Limited car park increases.
- **You said: Supporting an IW Council that listens, is inclusive and acts on feedback.**

- **I did:** Supported new Parish Council involvement at Scrutiny and within Planning. Within IWC consultations feedback from residents, community groups and local councils have been implemented and built upon.
- **You said: Review Council Tax Expenditure**
- **I did:** Corporate expenditure is now rigorously reviewed and scrutinised.
- **You said: Ensure Government supports the extra costs needed to support the Isle of Wight.**
- **I did:** As part of the Council Leadership, An Island Deal with the support of Government remains a priority. Talks recognising our additional costs with Government have been acknowledged and progress continues to be made.

Representing our Community in County Hall, rather than County Hall in our Community:

This is my fourteenth annual report as Councillor for Cowes West and Gurnard.

I have been ward Councillor for Cowes West and Gurnard since 2009, and as a Isle of Wight Councillor this is my sixth term of office, since being first elected as an Isle of Wight Councillor for Ryde in 1995.

As an Independent, I continue putting the needs of our Cowes and Gurnard community first.

As an Independent, having no activists, no sponsors, no political party line, or leader shadowing me, my loyalty to represent every resident in Gurnard and Cowes is absolute.

Within my role, I'm committed to being a transparent, hardworking, effective and enthusiastic councillor.

If you feel that I, or the Councils where I represent your views get things wrong, please tell me. Unless I am aware, I'm not in a position to listen, ask questions, put things right and fight on your behalf! If I cannot achieve the outcomes you desire, I will explain why.

Campaigning to protect vital services, I am committed to ensure our Councils say yes, rather than no. It remains in the forefront of my mind that I am only here because you re-elect me. As Councillor my priority is simply to put our community first.

I do this, because I thoroughly love it! Because I enjoy my 'work', I hope that it shows and I achieve the very best outcomes possible for residents.

Monthly Reports.

Each month I write a report. These provide regular updates of my work, and can be found at Cowes Library.

- Reports are edited for the Gurnard News, the Cowes Magazine and The Beacon. Alternatively Full Monthly Reports can be found on my website at: <https://paulfullercc.blogspot.com>. Each month provides details of between 30-50 items which I am dealing with, alongside matters which are of importance.

Organisations and Outside Bodies that I am a member and support:

- **Cowes Town Council.** Town Councillor for Cowes North 2001-2005; from 2009- ; Mayor 2017-2019;
- **Gurnard Parish Council.** Councillor from 2005; Chairman from 2022;
- **Northwood Parish Councillor.** Founding member of the Parish Council. Councillor since 2007;
- **Local Access Forum.** Chairman (2020-). This statutory body oversees Rights of Ways matters. The Forum works closely with landowners and user groups to improve access to the right of way network. Since 2019 I have been actively working on the Isle of Wight section of the English Coastal Path.
- **Footprint Trust.** Chairman. The Trust supports lifting residents (often vulnerable) out of fuel poverty
- **Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (SIFCA).** Acting Vice-Chairman. Funded by DEFRA, SIFCA regulates marine conservation and fisheries for Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.
- **Solent Forum.** This organisation oversees Economic and Environmental challenges within the Solent.

- **Isle of Wight AONB Partnership.** This group manages and oversees challenges faced to the Isle of Wight's Countryside.

I am a longstanding **Justice of the Peace** serving the Isle of Wight Adult and Youth courts since 2001.

Within the **Isle of Wight Council**, I was appointed cabinet member for Planning & Enforcement, since re-election in 2021. As a Councillor with cabinet responsibilities I have overview on all aspects of the Council's activities.

One year in numbers. As your Councillor:

- I am contactable 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- I work between 40 and 65 hours each week.
- I attended 299 meetings associated with my role.
- In addition, I've attended 27 informal/ associated meetings, events, briefings, exhibitions & site visits.
- I attended 26 Isle of Wight Council Meetings.
- I've received 4196 emails, 1008 telephone calls, 693 texts and 5 letters. I aim to respond within 3 days and attempt to prioritise calls from Cowes West and Gurnard residents within 12 hours of receipt.
- I've resolved/ relayed 1843 enquiries. 40% of these relate to Gurnard residents; 27% to Cowes West residents; 17% from other Cowes/ Northwood residents and 16% to residents living elsewhere.
- In the last year I've arranged 95 surgeries. Supporting 348 enquiries to completion for residents.
- This year I received a Gross Councillors Allowance of: **£16,658.**

Councillor John Nicholson (Cowes South and Northwood)

Achievements and Advances Roundup

- Chairmanship of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Adult Social Care, coordinating and liaising between Health partners and other authorities, encouraging and supporting examples of good practice and case for change, holding poor service to account, giving constructive feedback in support of illustrations of real patient experience, attending Health Service partner's meetings, making introductions, constructive observations and suggestions.
- Supporting, representing and advising residents in various local and personal issues and concerns, from planning matters to parking issues and social concerns.
- Advocating more streamlined working between Town and Parish Councils and also Isle of Wight Council, particularly, driving the development of the Cowes and Northwood Place Plan.
- Negotiating and being actively engaged with Island Roads with regards to road works quality and impact mitigation. Campaigning against unnecessary disruption and inconvenience caused by poor consideration in Utility roadworks, including calling out unlicensed works.
- Holding local police services to account for response rates to reported incidents and concerns.
- Acting as representative on Island Roads Health and Safety Forum.
- Helping to promote awareness of local heritage and culture.
- Being outspoken, when needed, to represent and voice concerns that have caused local outrage.
- Being an actively involved member of Northwood Parish Council and Cowes Town Council, particularly in Cowes Town Council committees and workgroups.
- Being chairman of Cowes Town Council Projects Committee.
- Being Cowes Town Council Deputy Mayor.

Councillor Lora Peacey Wilcox (Cowes Medina)

My apologies for not writing a full report but as you are aware it's been another busy year. After 24 years on Cowes Town Council, these past 2 years have seen me not taking lead roles, but the town and its people continue to be important to me. I began volunteering over 51 years ago when I started the National Saving Scheme for my fellow school friends at Love Lane and I have not really stopped.

My reports that I have written for the past year can be found on the link below. As fellow town councillors you receive these each month.

It has been a difficult year with losing Cllr David Jones, such a pro-active councillor and real gentleman.

Also Cllr Lynn Hammond - a fighting force on the Town Council for almost 23 years. They are sorely missed.

I pay tribute to the many wonderful Cowes Medina Residents that too have passed during this year.

My thanks as always to the huge numbers of volunteers (including fellow Town Councillors) who do so much to keep our Island going.

My reports <http://www.islandmagazines.co.uk/>

Councillor Richard Quigley (Cowes North)

Over the last 12 months I have helped residents with housing issues, helping them to find accommodation when landlords have sold properties. I have been in constant contact with southern water, Katy Taylor (chief customer officer) asked me if drop-in information sessions were a good idea. I agreed, but can't take any credit for the organisation etc. I have also got SW to agree to help a landowner near the crematorium as a mains sewer pipe has been leaking on his land. They have now admitted the issue and are working to a resolution. I also keep pushing the issue of sewage outflows into our sea. There is an admission it is awful, some mitigation is taking place, but it needs to go further.

I have worked with Cllr Stephens to set up a cross party housing group, focused on delivering homes for Islanders.

I had a cost of living motion passed. With council officers, we have pushed the community wealth building project forward. Officers have grasped it straight away.

With parking services, we initiated a residents parking permit review. Residents voted against. I chaired the Corporate Scrutiny and Children's Scrutiny Committees.

I haven't been able to make much progress on the housing issue or the issue of poverty, especially child poverty.

Despite regular contact with both ferry CEO's, very little progress has been made.

I hope to move the community wealth building project much further forward, by recruiting an officer with specific responsibility for CWB, get movement on housebuilding (council owned), make a meaningful difference to child poverty and an improvement in ferry services.

Questions were invited but none were asked.

251 QUESTIONS FROM THE MEETING

There were no members of the public present therefore no questions were raised.

The proceedings terminated at 6.17pm.

CHAIRMAN