

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Cowes Town Council held in the Ballroom, Northwood House, Cowes on Thursday 5 September 2024 at 7pm

Present: Councillor Nicholson (Town Mayor) (Chairman)
Councillors Adams, Barney, Brown, Dodwell, Ellis, Fuller, Hollis, Rafferty, Sanders, Walters, Wardrop & White

In attendance: Debbie Faulkner, Locum Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk;
15 members of the public

8980 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carter, Oliver & Peacey Wilcox.

8981 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

8982 REPORT FROM THE LOCAL SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER

The Local Safer Neighbourhood Officer did not provide a report.

8983 MINUTES RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 18 July 2024 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8984 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Members of the public were in attendance and their input will be recorded under Minute Nos 8995 and 8996.

8985 REPORTS FROM ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCILLORS

Written reports focussing on local matters were received from Councillors Fuller, Nicholson and Peacey Wilcox and were circulated to all Town Councillors. Councillor Fuller reminded Councillors that consultations on proposals for the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) continue until 24 September 2024 and he encouraged Councillors to make comments.

Councillor Fuller also referred to the potential closure of Cowes Primary School (one of six schools being considered for closure). He will be holding surgeries and drop-ins for parents and staff that may be affected. It was pointed out that moving children from the school now further reduces the school numbers and may give grounds for the school to close.

8986 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS

a) Projects Committee

The Minutes of the Projects Committee meeting held on 13 August 2024 were received and noted. It was:

RESOLVED

1. That Cowes Town Council engages SWL Rope Lifting Testing Ltd to undertake the six month LOLER inspection and maintenance check on the Changing Places facility for the cost of £575 plus VAT, with the cost to be met from the '5 Public Toilets – Cleaning and other costs' budget heading.
2. That Cowes Town Council engages The Sign Company Ltd to provide and install a new sign on the Changing Places facility for the cost of £150 plus VAT, with the cost to be met from the '5 Public Toilets – Cleaning and other costs' budget heading.
3. That Cowes Town Council extends the contract with Island Environmental Hygiene to provide sanitary bins (12) in the Gents public toilets facilities.
4. That Cowes Town Council approves and adopts the Policy for the Logging of Complaints and Concerns relating to the Town Council's Fixed Assets and Buildings.
5. That Cowes Town Council engages Berry Electrical Ltd to supply and install two consumer units at The Parade public conveniences, for the cost of £615 plus VAT, with the cost to be met from the '5 Public Toilets – Cleaning and other costs' budget heading.

b) Planning & Licensing Committee

The Minutes of the Planning & Licensing Committee meeting held on 22 August 2024 were received and noted.

c) Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee

The Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 27 August 2024 were received and noted. It was:

RESOLVED

1. That Cowes Town Council receives, notes and approves the Financial Statement as at 30 June 2024.
2. That Cowes Town Council makes a grant of £1,000 to the Association of Sail Training Organisations (ASTO).
3. That Cowes Town Council adopts the amended Financial Regulations.
4. That Cowes Town Council adopts the amended Standing Orders in line with the amended Financial Regulations.
5. That Cowes Town Council reinvests the funds held in the Nationwide Business Fixed Rate Saver Account into a Business 1 Year Saver Account with an annual interest rate of 4.25%.
6. That Cowes Town Council retains its current funds with Lloyds Bank.
7. That Cowes Town Council places adverts in the local media, asap, for the position of Facilities Manager at 20 hours per week to include an appropriate job description and person specification. The pay scale and training requirements to be considered by the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee and approved by Full Council before placing the advert.

- d) Cowes Week Bicentenary Working Group
The Minutes of the Cowes Week Bicentenary Working Group meetings held on 11 July 2024 and 15 August 2024 were received and noted. Northwood House are keen to be involved in the event and it was agreed to advise them of any agreed plans. It was:
RESOLVED
That Cowes Town Council approves the Terms of Reference for the Cowes Week Bicentenary Working Group.
- e) Supporters of Cowes Library
The Minutes of the meeting of the Supporters of Cowes Library held on 22 July 2024 were received and noted.
- f) Place Plan / Cowes Yachting and Maritime Events Group
The Notes of the meeting of the Place Plan / Cowes Yachting and Maritime Events Group held on 21 May 2024 were received and noted.

8987 MAYOR'S UPDATE

The Mayor reported on the current review of staffing which has shown that there is an immediate requirement for more Town Council staff. The proposal to split the role of Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer will enable greater flexibility, employing junior admin staff will help to dissipate the workload.

8988 CCTV POLICY

Councillors were asked to consider the draft CCTV Policy to ensure that the Town Council's current CCTV systems safeguard the Town Council's property, employees, contractors and members of the public, while supporting law enforcement, following repeated vandalism and antisocial behaviour at our public conveniences / facilities. The policy ensures compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. To ensure that all individuals using the CCTV system, as well as the designated responsible person, undergo comprehensive General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) training, to ensure that the operation and management of CCTV footage are fully compliant with data protection laws.
2. To introduce a mandatory request form for any access to, or disclosure of, CCTV footage. The form will standardise the process, ensuring that all requests are documented, justified and processed in compliance with the CCTV Policy and GDPR requirements.

It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council adopts the CCTV Policy.

8989 POLICE & COWES WEEK

Councillors discussed the lack of accessibility at the High Street Police Hub. The Hub is only open to the public for a few hours on one weekday afternoon per week; little signage is present to advise of opening hours. Equally it is difficult to get a response when dialling 101. However, since writing the report the list of opening times and dates for September has now been displayed.

8990 CHEQUE PAYMENTS AND PETTY CASH PAYMENTS FOR THE MONTHS OF JULY 2024 AND AUGUST 2024

The Town Clerk had circulated details of cheque and petty cash payments for the months of July 2024 and August 2024. Cheque payments for July totalled £19,253.68; petty cash payments for July totalled £437.14. Cheque payments for August totalled £12,870.64; petty cash payments for August totalled £133.97. It was:
RESOLVED

That the cheque payments for July of £19,253.68 and August of £12,870.64 and the petty cash payments for July of £437.14 and August of £133.97 be received, noted and approved.

8991 CONCLUSION OF THE EXTERNAL AUDIT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

At the time of the Town Council meeting this information has not been received from the external auditor, BDO LLP. This item will be carried over to the October Town Council meeting.

8992 TO REVIEW AND CONFIRM THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE INTERNAL AUDITOR, BRIGHT BROWN LTD

At the request of the external auditor, BDO LLP, Cowes Town Council have been asked to confirm and minute the independence of the internal auditor, Bright Brown Ltd. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council confirm that Bright Brown Ltd are an independent internal auditor for Cowes Town Council.

8993 REVIEW OF COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

A review of Cowes Town Council's Equality and Diversity Policy was carried out and no amendments were required. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council approves the Equality and Diversity Policy.

8994 REVIEW OF COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

A review of Cowes Town Council's Website Accessibility Statement was carried out and no amendments were required. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council approves the Website Accessibility Statement.

8995 INTELIPORTS DRONE TRIAL AT MORNINGTON ROAD CAR PARK

A proposal to trial drone flights from the mainland to Mornington Road Car park was discussed. Those present were disappointed about the IW Council's lack of public consultation before approving the trial; the start date has currently been deferred until the end of the summer holidays. Residents at the meeting expressed their concerns regarding the lack of planning permission; flying the drones over a residential area; taking away a useful car parking resource, all being done without suitable consultation with residents. Councillors were also asked to consider the long-term effects on the Place Plan and whether Cowes Town Council could make a request to take ownership of the Car Park as the income to the IW Council is minimal. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Projects Committee will consider making a bid to the IW Council to take ownership of Mornington Road Car Park.

It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council writes to the IW Council to object to the drone trial at Mornington Road Car Park as due process has not been undertaken by the IW Council in relation to resident consultation, planning permission, Cabinet discussion and approval and appropriate CAA licenses for the trial. The letter will include input from local residents and Town Councillors.

8996 SOLENT CO2 PIPELINE PROJECT CONSULTATION

Councillors discussed ExxonMobil's consultation to install an underground pipeline to transport Carbon Dioxide (CO2) from the Fawley Manufacturing Complex to a safe, secure and permanent storage location in the English Channel. This would require significant works to the landscape of the Island if it came to fruition. The deadline for responses was 12 September; this has now been extended to 6pm on 30 September 2024. Residents raised their concerns as the science is unproven and leaks from pipes could cause explosions / fires and cause significant environmental damage under the sea. The instability of the Island has not been considered along with the devastation this would cause for the West Wight. The effect on future tourism and the AONB has also not been considered; it would take 10 – 15 years for the scars on the landscape to go away. A petition has been started and Councillors were encouraged to sign. A working group has also been established by IW Councillors Critchison and Stuart and Town Councillors were asked to get involved. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will contact Councillors Critchison and Stuart and ask for a Cowes Town Councillor to be invited to attend the working group meetings.

It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council strongly objects to this proposal on the grounds of the impact on the landscape, the disruption to landowners, the unproven technology and instability of the Island.

8997 IW COUNCIL'S LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SCHEME CONSULTATION (LCTS) 2025 / 2026

Councillors have been asked to consider commenting on the consultation for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme being a major precepting authority. Views are sought in relation to the options that should be considered in developing a local scheme and the volatility of the council tax base and council tax yield in future years. In 2025 / 2026 the IW Council will keep approximately 80% of the Council Tax it collects. The Police and Crime Commissioner will keep approximately 11%, the Isle of Wight Fire Authority will keep 4% and Town & Parish Councils will keep approximately 5%. The LCTS affects the amount that is due to be collected and so impacts on the finances for delivering services for the Police and Crime Commissioner, the IW Council and Town and Parish Councils. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council supports the current LCTS as it stands.

8998 HIRE OF A DIGGER FOR WORKS AT ARCTIC PARK

Councillors were asked to consider the cost of £350 plus VAT for the hire of a digger for works at Arctic Park, subject to permission from the IW Council. However, the IW Council has currently removed permission for any voluntary works to take place at Arctic Park. Councillors felt that the volunteers had been disrespected and expressed their concerns that works cannot continue in this area. It was:

RESOLVED

That, subject to IW Council permission being given, Cowes Town Council authorises the cost of £350 for the use of a digger at Arctic Park.

8999 PLACE PLAN PROJECT PROPOSAL FROM THE ISLE OF WIGHT LITERARY FESTIVAL IN THE SUM OF £5,000

The IW Literary Festival have applied for a grant of £5,000 under the Place Plan Project Proposal scheme. It was:

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Place Plan Group will not consider this project proposal.**
- 2. That the IW Literary Festival will be advised to submit a grant application to the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee for retrospective consideration.**

9000 RESPONSE FROM NORTHWOOD HOUSE REGARDING THE STEPS FROM THE ROTUNDA TO THE PARK (MIN NO 8966 REFERS)

At the Town Council meeting on 18 July 2024, a member of the public reported that there had been several incidents / falls by elderly residents using the steps leading from the Rotunda to the Park. The Town Clerk wrote to Northwood House Charitable Trust Co Ltd (NHCTCL) to ask whether a central handrail could be installed on these steps. NHCTCL replied saying that they have never had any reports of accidents on these steps. They are currently not considering a handrail, but they will bring it up with their insurance company's Risk Management Consultant on his visit later this year. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will ask NHCTCL for an update once their Risk Management Consultant has visited.

9001 UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

The Environment Officer provided a written report of her activities in Cowes which included dog fouling patrols; skate park inspections; beach inspections; liaison with the local PC. The Environment Officer has agreed to attend a future Town Council meeting.

9002 MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Details of miscellaneous publications and correspondence were circulated to all Town Councillors.

9003 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Northwood House noise complaints – Councillor Barney
- A presentation to the October Town Council meeting from Gary Hall, Cowes Harbour Commission, regarding the new marina in East Cowes

The proceedings terminated at 9.03pm.

CHAIRMAN