

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Cowes Town Council held in the Library, Northwood House, Cowes on Thursday 6 February 2025 at 7pm

Present: Councillor Ellis (Deputy Town Mayor) (Chairman)
Councillors Adams (7.04pm), Brown, Dodwell, Hollis (7.04pm), Oliver, Peacey Wilcox, Rafferty, Walters & Wardrop.

In attendance: Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk; Andrea Young, Admin Assistant; one representative from Community Action Isle of Wight; two representatives from Cowes Harbour Commission; Ross Edmunds, IW Council Regeneration Officer; Alec Broome, IW Council's Sports Development and Events Officer.

In the absence of the Chairman, the Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Ellis took the Chair.

PRESENTATION FROM COWES HARBOUR COMMISSION REGARDING COWES 200

Gary Hall from Cowes Harbour Commission explained that Cowes 200 is to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Cowes Week in 2026, and the new Cowes 200 team will be exploring how to use this unique opportunity to change the way that regattas and events are managed in Cowes across the season. He reiterated that this is not about Cowes Week itself which will be planning their own anniversary celebrations, but they are an integral part of the Cowes 200 team.

The Cowes 200 team is made up of representatives from the town councils, yacht clubs, Cowes Harbour Commission and other stakeholders, the aim being to have 200 days of sailing (sail and power) in 2026 filling the schedule from April to October. Conversations are being held to entice old and new regattas into Cowes, including the J Class boats.

Cowes 200 aims to act as an umbrella organisation. Gary Hall chairs the group and discussions are already underway with very large companies such as PayPal and Mastercard. The ambition is to attract one or more of these major companies to look at sponsoring the whole season in 2026. If funding is secured, some of the funds would be used to manage Cowes 200 but a good proportion would be put back into the yacht clubs and the town. Cowes 200 will also need to appoint an event specialist with experience in putting together very large events. The assets available in Cowes will be assessed in order to plan how shoreside events can be wrapped around the various regattas across the season.

Another appointment would be a strong marketing and PR person, again to be recruited externally. Gary Hall made it very clear that the group's job is not to manage any of the regattas but to provide umbrella support to help the regattas going forward and beyond 2026.

To get the project started, the group is looking to raise £170k seed funding. It was reiterated that Cowes 200 is a completely separate organisation from Cowes Harbour Commission and whilst Gary Hall is part of both, Cowes Harbour Commission is a member of Cowes 200. A recent advert for a marketing and PR specialist commissioner is not related to Cowes 200. Cowes 200 are asking Cowes Town Council, along with other funding partners, to pledge £15,000 towards the project.

Councillor Ellis thanked Gary for his informative presentation. It was agreed:

ACTION

Cowes 200 will be added to the Agenda for discussion at the next meeting of Cowes Town Council's Projects Committee.

9078 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barney, Fuller, Nicholson, Sanders & White.

9079 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

9080 REPORT FROM THE LOCAL SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER

The Local Safer Neighbourhood Officer provided a brief report covering police staff working in Cowes; the opening times of Cowes Police Station; checking the town's accessible toilets for rough sleepers.

9081 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 12 December 2024 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9082 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

9083 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.

In Councillor Fuller's absence, Councillor Walters thanked him for his comprehensive reply in request for information about the 'Prevent' programme on the Island.

Councillor Walters addressed IW Councillor Peacey Wilcox in regard to the IW Council's 2025 – 2026 budget and the grant of £27m awarded for Sandown Town Hall. Councillor Peacey Wilcox was also asked of her opinion about the proposed school closure. Councillor Peacey Wilcox declined to make any comment as this matter is still going through the consultation process.

9084 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS

a) Projects Committee

The Minutes of the Projects Committee meeting held on 14 January 2025 were received and noted. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council engages Vectis Group Security Ltd for the provision of an Out of hours Call-out Service for our public conveniences at a cost of £35 plus VAT per call-out and a monthly charge of £18 plus VAT for key holding, 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 meetings held on 9 January 2025 and 30 January 2025 were received and noted.

c) Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee

The Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 28 January 2025 were received and noted. It was:

RESOLVED

- 1. That Cowes Town Council receive, note and approve the Financial Statement as at 31 December 2024.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council approves Ring fencing the following budget headings as at 31 March 2025: Subscriptions; Elections / Admin Contingency; Dog and Litter Bin emptying; Cowes Library; Cowes in Bloom; Park Road Crossing Patrol; and Earmark the following budget balances as at 31 March 2025: Flags and Banners (difference between income and expenditure); Northwood Rec/ Skate Park/ MUGA/ Outdoor Gym Maintenance; Cowes and Northwood Place Plan Promotion; Street Furniture Maintenance; New Projects; Public toilet refurbishment & Capital Projects; Picnic in the Park 2024. To include whether the Town Council continues to earmark funds for the Route 32 Community Bus.**
- 3. Due to an unexpected increase in the quotation from Contractor E, a resolution cannot be made and a review of all five tenders received will be reconsidered, asap, for the toilet cleaning and litter picking contract as from 1 April 2025.**
- 4. That Cowes Town Council make a grant to Cowes Medina Bowling Club in the sum of £1,000.**
- 5. That the Clerks are authorised to purchase a suitable pay monthly smart phone and take out a direct debit payment scheme.**
- 6. That Cowes Town Council approves the job description, person specification and advertisement for a full time Facilities and Town Manager and places the advertisement in the local media asap.**
- 7. That Cowes Town Council approves and signs the Admin Assistant's Contract of Employment.**
- 8. That the Locum Town Clerk be reinstated to her former permanent position of Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer on the same contractual terms and conditions as before.**

d) Supporters of Cowes Library

The Minutes of the meeting of the Supporters of Cowes Library held on 9 December 2024 were received and noted. Councillors noted that the recent partnership invoice for the Library sent to Cowes Town Council was being reviewed by the IW Council. It was also noted that the house next door to the Library was suffering from some structural issues; the IW Council have been informed.

e) Cowes Harbour Advisory Committee

The Minutes of the meeting of Cowes Harbour Advisory Committee held on 8 January 2025 were received and noted.

9085 MAYOR'S UPDATE

The Mayor reported that businesses in the town would welcome the employment of a Town Manager; he referred to Town Council premises and collaborative working.

9086 MEMBER REVIEW OF FINANCIAL RECORDS

Councillors Adams and Sanders undertook a review of the Town Council's Financial Records for Quarters 1 and 2. After examining a random sample of financial transactions during these two quarters the standard of book-keeping continues to be very good.

9087 ADVISORY GROUPS

In the absence of the report writer this matter will be carried over to the next Town Council meeting.

9088 PARK ROAD CAR PARK TOILET BLOCK

It was noted that the unused Park Road toilet block has received planning permission to change the use of the building to a café including a toilet. Councillors questioned whether the Town Council may be able to purchase this facility. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. The Town Council will ask the Estate Agent for the approximate cost of the property and the deadline for sealed bids.
2. Subject to this information being received, this matter will be referred to the Projects Committee for consideration

9089 TOURISM LACK OF INFORMATION

Councillors discussed the lack of tourist information in the town. The last Tourist Information Office has closed and the racks at the Red Funnel terminal hold no specific information relating to Cowes. The racks belong to a separate company and therefore Red Funnel cannot put any unsolicited information into those racks. However, after a discussion with Councillor Peacey Wilcox, Red Funnel's Chief Executive has agreed to display Cowes maps on their walls in Cowes and possibly Southampton too. Possibly a display stand could be placed in a busy tourist spot on The Parade. It was agreed:

ACTION

The placement of town maps and a display case will be referred for discussion at the Projects Committee.

9090 CHEQUE PAYMENTS AND PETTY CASH PAYMENTS FOR THE MONTHS OF DECEMBER 2024 AND JANUARY 2025

The Town Clerk had circulated details of cheque and petty cash payments for the months of December 2024 and January 2025. Cheque payments for December totalled £25,013.93; petty cash payments for December totalled £26.49. Cheque payments for January totalled £28,551.76; petty cash payments for January totalled £270.11.

It was:

RESOLVED

That the cheque payments for December of £25,013.93 and petty cash payments for December of £26.49 and the cheque payments for January of £28,551.76 and petty cash payments for January of £270.11 be received, noted and approved.

9091 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S LETTER IN RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF COWES PRIMARY SCHOOL

Councillors received and noted Cowes Town Council's letter to the IW Council in response to the consultation on the proposed closure of Cowes Primary School; a response is awaited.

9092 TO CONSIDER WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE IW COUNCIL TO ENHANCE PLAY PROVISION IN COWES

Councillors were asked to consider whether to work in partnership with the IW Council to enhance play park provision in Cowes. Councillors agreed that the ongoing toilet refurbishment programme and works to The Cut were the current priorities for the Town Council. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will advise the IW Council that they cannot pursue their request at this time as the Town Council has other priorities.

9093 TO CONSIDER WHETHER COWES TOWN COUNCIL WOULD SUPPORT THE INVESTIGATION TO INSTALL A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ON PARK ROAD

Councillors discussed a suggestion from a local resident to place a pedestrian crossing on Park Road near to the junction with Parklands Avenue. The resident has contacted Island Roads and will also be contacting the IW Council. Councillors know how hard it has been in the past to arrange for any additional crossings to be installed in Cowes. Accident statistics have an influence over whether an additional crossing will be considered. It was agreed:

ACTION

1. The Town Council will write to Island Roads and ask for accident statistics in this area and include the resident's photos for clarification about the requested position.
2. Subject to the information received, Councillors will consider whether this proposal can be progressed.

9094 TO CONSIDER MOVING THE TOWN COUNCIL'S WEBSITE AND EMAILS TO A .GOV.UK DOMAIN

Councillors were asked to consider whether to move the Town Council's website and emails on to a .gov.uk domain. There is not an obligation to move and there are set up costs and ongoing monthly charges. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council will not move to a .gov.uk domain at this time, but will reconsider when the Town Council's website is being upgraded.

9095 HIGH STREET IMPROVEMENTS – PHASE 1

The Town Council is holding funds of £6,000 to be used for High Street improvements (£5,000) and wild flower planting (£1,000). The original plan was to place street furniture outside of Sainsbury's. However, due to the amount of street furniture already in place this may take some time to come to fruition. Another suitable option will be to place planters in the High Street area near to the SALT shop. Investigations into the ownership of the land and subsequent permissions are being obtained, it was:

RESOLVED

That, in principle, Cowes Town Council agrees to the placement of planters in the High Street area around the SALT shop.

It was agreed:

ACTION

The final details and permissions for the project will be reported back to the Projects Committee for consideration before any works take place.

9096 WARMER COWES QUARTER 3 REPORT

Councillors received Warmer Cowes Quarter 3 report which showed that in the period of October 2024 to December 2024, 24 people had received advice / help from Warmer Cowes.

9097 TO REVIEW COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S AMENDED WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Councillors were asked to consider approving the amended Website Accessibility Statement which has been amended following the changes in guidance as from October 2024. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council approves and adopts the amended Website Accessibility Statement.

9098 TO CONSIDER ADOPTING COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT POLICY

Councillors considered whether to adopt Cowes Town Council's draft Display Screen Equipment Policy. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council adopts the Display Screen Equipment Policy.

9099 TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE THE COSTS FOR AN ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT AT THE PARADE PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

Councillors were asked to consider the cost of obtaining an accessibility assessment at the Parade Public Conveniences from Evans Jones for the sum of £1,550.00 plus VAT. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council engages Evan Jones for an Accessibility Assessment at The Parade public conveniences for the sum of £1,550.00 plus VAT.

9100 UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

The Environment Officer provided a report of her activities in Cowes which included dog fouling patrols; dealing with an abandoned cycle; general inspections and following up on a rough sleeper in Cowes.

9101 MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

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

9102 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Advisory Groups – Councillor Carter
- Northwood House – Councillor Oliver

The proceedings terminated at 8.35pm

CHAIRMAN