

## COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Dining Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 6.15pm.

**Present:** Councillors Carter (Chair), Brown, Ellis, Nicholson, Oliver, Rafferty & Walters.

**In attendance:** Councillors Peacey Wilcox and Wardrop (non-voting); Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; one representative from the Classic Boat Museum; one representative from Community Action IW.

### 977 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

### 978 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Peacey Wilcox declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 980 as she is an IW Councillor.

### 979 MINUTES RESOLVED

**That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 25 February 2025 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

### 980 IW COUNCIL'S INVOICE AND CREDIT NOTE FOR COWES LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP COSTS FOR 2023 – 2024 (MIN NO 966 REFERS)

The Town Council received an invoice for Cowes Library partnership costs for 2023 / 2024 in the sum of £40,900.17 plus VAT; the Town Council had only budgeted for £22,400. Following a meeting with IW Council Officers, the invoice was sent back to the IW Council and has now been credited. Amended figures for 2023 – 2024 have now been received and total £35,519.35 plus VAT which is still significantly higher than the budgeted amount of £22,400. The IW Council will not raise a new invoice until Councillors have discussed the amended figures. The IW Council have also provided figures for Q1 and Q2 for 2024 – 2025 which totals £16,114.77; the budget for 2024 – 2025 is £26,500. It was agreed:

#### ACTIONS

1. The Town Clerk will advise the IW Council that, for the year 2023 – 2024, Cowes Town Council will make a contribution of £22,400 towards the costs of running Cowes Library.
2. The Town Clerk will advise the IW Council that, for the year 2024 – 2025, Cowes Town Council will make a contribution of £26,500 towards the costs of running Cowes Library.
3. The Town Clerk will advise the IW Council that, for the year 2025 – 2026, Cowes Town Council will make a contribution of £26,500 towards the costs of running Cowes Library.

### 981 DRAFT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FOR COWES LIBRARY

Councillors have been asked to consider the IW Council's draft Partnership Agreement for Cowes Library which will help to govern the partnership and finances moving forward. The agreement is scheduled to start on 1 April 2025 and remain in force until 31 March 2028 unless terminated or extended in accordance with the agreement. The aim being to enable

the Authority and the Town Council to work together to retain a library service in the community for the benefit of residents in Cowes. The partnership arrangement will be reviewed on an annual basis. A Party can terminate the arrangement forthwith upon 6 months' written notice to the other Party. The costs, which will be invoiced at 6 monthly intervals, required to be paid by the Town Council are:

- An experienced member of library staff (Senior Library Assistant grade 6E @ 22 hours per week)
- Utility costs – electricity, gas, water
- Building cleaning

It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will advise the IW Council that Cowes Town Council will not consider entering into a partnership agreement until the above financial issues are resolved.

**982 SUMMER PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE IN COWES**

Councillors were asked to suspend Financial Regulation 10.4 as only one quotation from Care in the Garden has been received for the summer planting and maintenance in Cowes. Their quotation for the summer planting of the troughs and planters is for the sum of £1,310. The filling of hanging baskets is for the sum of £1,500 and for maintenance, weeding, dead heading and removal of the plants at the end of the season the sum is £900. The installation of 30 baskets is £360. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That Cowes Town Council suspend Financial Regulation 10.4 to consider one quotation for summer planting and maintenance in Cowes.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council engages Care in the Garden for the summer planting of the troughs and planters in Cowes for the sum of £1,310.**
- 3. That Cowes Town Council engages Care in the Garden for the filling of hanging baskets in Cowes for the sum of £1,500.**
- 4. That Cowes Town Council engages Care in the Garden for the maintenance, weeding, dead heading and removal of the plants at the end of the season in Cowes for £900.**
- 5. That Cowes Town Council engage Care in the Garden for the installation of 30 baskets for the sum of £360.**

**983 PLACE PLAN 'PROJECT SCORING MATRIX'**

Councillors discussed the Place Plan 'Project Scoring Matrix' which is used to evaluate whether projects meet the required criteria for financial support. It has emerged that the Place Plan Advisory Group have modified the matrix and this does not now align with the matrix that Cowes Town Council is using when considering grant applications. It was agreed:

ACTION

At the next Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee meeting, Councillors will compare both matrices and combine them into one agreed final matrix document for use by all.

**984 FUNDING REQUEST FROM MARITIME ISLE, CLASSIC BOAT MUSEUM AND HAMMERHEAD CRANE HERITAGE PROJECT**

Councillors have been asked to consider a match funding request of £3,000 for the Maritime Isle – Classic Boat Museum and Hammerhead Crane Heritage Project, from the Place Plan Promotion Budget heading. The project is to fund a scoping study to assess the viability of transforming the historic Medina Village and its Hammerhead Crane into a new

maritime museum, skills and activity centre. The total project cost being £48,000. After a discussion it was:

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That Cowes Town Council awards the sum of £3,000 for the Maritime Isle – Classic Boat Museum and Hammerhead Crane Heritage Project, with the funds to be met from the ‘Cowes and Northwood Place Plan Promotion’ budget heading.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council requests regular updates as the project progresses and an invitation to visit the site.**

**985 REQUEST FOR FUNDING FROM COWES200 (MIN NO 972 REFERS)**

Cowes200 have written to the Town Council requesting financial support for their project. The project has been set up to launch a new era for Cowes events planning across the entire season, introducing a whole new approach starting in 2026. Cowes200 will unite event calendars and bring everyone together to create a 200-day, season long festival of sail and power, both on land and water. Cowes200 are asking organisations to pledge up to £15,000; the intention being to invoice each partner equally on a quarterly basis the actual costs for each quarter rather than a fixed quarterly sum. The Town Clerk wrote to Cowes200 to seek further financial information for consideration before any recommendation can be made to Full Council. It was advised that Cowes Harbour Commission, Cowes Town Waterfront Trust and East Cowes Town Council had committed £15,000 each to support the project. The Town Council has also been asked to give a small contribution before the end of March to cover the costs of the launch event on 28 March. Councillors are given to understand that, in due course, Cowes200 will form a Community Interest Company (CIC). It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That Cowes Town Council sets aside a sum of £15,000 for the Cowes200 project, on the proviso that all other stakeholders commit the requested amount of £15,000 each for the Cowes200 project.**
- 2. Subject to the proviso being met, the funds will be taken from the ear marked amount held from Cowes Business Association (£11,120.56) and topped up with unspent grants for 2024 / 2025 (£3,879.44).**

**986 UPDATE ON EXISTING HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND OF £5,000**

The Town Clerk gave Councillors an update on the Household Support Fund. Cowes Town Council had received £5,000; the Clerks have purchased vouchers to the value of £4,000, leaving £1,000 remaining for the purchase of further vouchers. The Clerks have handed out 62 vouchers from the 80 purchased, 18 remain available for issue.

**987 INTERVIEWS FOR A FACILITIES AND TOWN MANAGER**

The Town Clerk advised that a panel of Councillors interviewed two candidates for the position of a full time Facilities and Town Manager. The successful applicant is David Gordon who will be starting his employment on 1 April 2025, to include a three-month probationary period.

Councillors Brown & Peacey Wilcox left the meeting at 7.31pm.

**988 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY (MIN NO 975 REFERS)**

Councillors were asked to consider the draft Flexible Working Policy which takes account of employees' preferences, interests and non-work responsibilities, whilst also meeting the needs of the Town Council. Common examples of flexible working include having flexible

start and finish times, working from home, job sharing, hybrid working, part-time working, compressed hours, annualised hours, term-time working, career breaks, sabbaticals and phased retirement. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council approve and adopt the Flexible Working Policy.**

**989 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS**

Councillors asked whether staff holidays are recorded anywhere to ensure that staffing levels are maintained. The Town Clerk advised that there is a holiday chart on the office noticeboard which records all holidays and has been in place since 2014.

**990 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S DRAFT LONE WORKING POLICY (MIN NO 954 REFERS)**

The Town Clerk presented Councillors with an amended Lone Worker Policy for consideration. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That Cowes Town Council approve and adopt the amended Lone Worker Policy.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council purchases four personal attack alarms for staff use.**

**991 OTHER HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

There were no other health and safety matters to consider.

**992 CLERKS' CONCERNS**

No Clerks concerns were raised. It was agreed:

**ACTION**

This item will be renamed 'Staff Concerns' on future agendas.

**993 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

- Review the Place Plan & Grants Project Scoring Matrices.

The proceedings terminated at 7.49pm.

**CHAIRMAN**