

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Cowes Town Council held in the Drawing Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Thursday 3 April 2025 at 7pm.

Present: Councillor Ellis (Deputy Town Mayor) (Chairman)
Councillors Adams, Fuller, Hollis, Oliver, Peacey Wilcox, Rafferty, Sanders, Walters & White.

In attendance: Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk; one representative from Community Action IW; one representative from the Classic Boat Museum.

9119 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barney, Brown, Dodwell, Nicholson & Wardrop.

9120 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

9121 REPORT FROM THE LOCAL SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER

The Local Safer Neighbourhood Officer did not attend the meeting and did not provide a report.

9122 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 6 March 2025 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9123 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

9124 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 is chasing up a response from the IW Council regarding a query raised about Council Tax valuations and the variations between properties.

9125 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS

a) Projects Committee

The Minutes of the Projects Committee meeting held on 11 March 2025 were received and noted.

b) Planning & Licensing Committee

The Minutes of the Planning & Licensing Committee meeting held on 19 March 2025 were received and noted.

c) Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee

The Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 25 March 2025 were received and noted. It was:

RESOLVED

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 thirty baskets for the sum of £360.
6. 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.
7. That Cowes Town Council requests regular updates as the project progresses and an invitation to visit the site.
8. 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.
9. Subject to the above 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).
10. That Cowes Town Council approve and adopt the Flexible Working Policy.
11. That Cowes Town Council approve and adopt the amended Lone Worker Policy.
12. That Cowes Town Council purchases four personal attack alarms for staff use.

d) Supporters of Cowes Library

The Minutes of the meeting of the Supporters of Cowes Library held on 28 February 2025 were received and noted.

9126 MAYOR'S UPDATE

The Mayor reported on his activities; gave a Place Plan update; referred to a Place Plan Improvement Strategy, a Cowes 200 update, Nao Santa Maria Visit and Community Stakeholder Representation.

9127 FUTURE USE OF COWES METHODIST CHURCH

Councillors discussed whether there could be grants and / or loans available for the Town Council to make use of the empty Cowes Methodist Church as a hub for the Town and to give Cowes Town Council a presence in the town. It was agreed to investigate whether the property is being sold as freehold or leasehold. It was agreed:

ACTION

This matter will be passed to the Projects Committee for further investigation.

9128 EMPTY PROPERTIES IN COWES

Councillors discussed whether an empty property in Cowes could be used as a banking hub as the hub established in East Cowes is only for a 12-month period. It was agreed:

ACTION

This matter will be passed to the Projects Committee for further investigation.

9129 FINANCIAL REVIEW – QUARTER 3

Councillors Adams and Sanders undertook a review of the Town Council's Financial Records for Quarter 3. After examining a random sample of financial transactions during the quarter the standard of book-keeping continues to be very good. The Deputy Mayor thanked Councillors Adams and Sanders for their time in this matter.

9130 CHEQUE PAYMENTS AND PETTY CASH PAYMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2025

The Town Clerk had circulated details of cheque and petty cash payments for the month of March 2025. Cheque payments totalled £26,316.71; petty cash payments totalled £72.95. It was:

RESOLVED

That the cheque payments of £26,316.71 and petty cash payments of £72.95 be received, noted and approved.

9131 ENGAGEMENT LETTER FROM THE INTERNAL AUDITOR, BRIGHT BROWN (MIN NO 9017 REFERS)

Due to matters arising from the external audit as at 31 March 2024, the Town Clerk asked the internal auditor, Bright Brown, to provide an updated engagement letter which sets out the specific services that they will provide and the respective responsibilities of each party.

It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council approve and sign the Bright Brown engagement letter.

9132 APPOINTMENT OF BRIGHT BROWN AS INTERNAL AUDITOR (MIN NO 9017 REFERS)

Following the signing of the engagement letter, it was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council appoints Bright Brown as the internal auditor until further notice.

9133 UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

A report outlining the activities of the Environment Officer (EO) in Cowes was circulated to all Town Councillors. Areas covered included fly tipping; dogs on beaches / Public Space Protection Orders; dog fouling; general play park inspections; graffiti. The EO asked Councillors to consider whether monthly reports are necessary as these eat into the time allocated to patrolling the town. The reports could be changed to quarterly or six-monthly. It was agreed:

ACTION

That any available Councillors and the Facilities and Town Manager meet with the Environment Officer when she is next in the town.

It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council wish to retain monthly reports from the Environment Officer for the time being.

9134 MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

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

9135 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Northwood House Park Forum

Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, Councillor Ellis thanked Councillors for their support of his position of Deputy Mayor for the last two years. He also thanked Councillors Brown and Oliver for their time on the Town Council; they have not stood for the forthcoming election.

The proceedings terminated at 7.41pm

CHAIRMAN