

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Dining Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 28 October 2025 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors Carter (Chair), Ellis, Peacey Wilcox, Rafferty & Walters.

In attendance: Councillor Wardrop (non-voting); Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk.

1060 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Marriott.

1061 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Peacey Wilcox declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 1067 as she is a Vice President of the Friends of Northwood Cemetery.

Councillor Carter declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 1067 as she is a member of the Friends of Northwood Cemetery.

Councillor Peacey Wilcox declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 1071 as she is an IW Councillor and the IW Council have overall responsibility for Cowes Library.

1062 MINUTES RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 23 September 2025 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1063 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2025

The Town Clerk submitted a financial statement for the quarter ending 30 September 2025 giving details of income and expenditure. Councillors looked at spend against the budget headings and the ring fenced and ear marked balances. The balances in the Town Council's bank accounts and petty cash as at 30 September 2025 were £865,776.97 of which £182,125.33 is ring fenced / ear marked expenditure. The Reserves as at 30 September 2025 were £334,259.46 which represents approximately seven and a half months operating costs. This falls within the recommended 3 to 12 months reserves as set by the National Association of Local Councils. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council receive, note and approve the Financial Statement as at 30 September 2025.

1064 COMMENTS RAISED BY BDO, THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR

Councillors raised concerns about the comments that the external auditor BDO made at the end of the external audit for the year ended 31 March 2025. BDO said that the Town Council's ear marked amounts and reserves were excessive; the Town Council acknowledge BDO's comments. However, the Town Clerk advised that the ear marked funds are being held for future projects which required extensive funding. The reserves meet the recommendations of the National Association of Local Councils.

1065 GRANT APPLICATION CAP OF £1,500

Councillors discussed whether to raise the amount of grant that could be applied for. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council retain the cap of £1,500.

1066 PROCESS FOR FUNDING FROM THE 'PLACE PLAN PROJECTS' BUDGET HEADING

The process for granting funding from the 'Place Plan' projects budget heading was discussed. It was agreed that as this can be a complex issue it requires further detailed consideration. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. This matter will be discussed at a Chairs and Clerks meeting before the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee on 25 November 2025.
2. Councillor Carter will provide a discussion paper prior to the meeting.

1067 FRIENDS OF NORTHWOOD CEMETERY (FoNC)

The Friends of Northwood Cemetery have requested that Cowes Town Council consider providing annual funding to support their voluntary activities. The FoNC had requested £4,000 but had been awarded £1,500 through the grant funding process. It was agreed:

ACTION

The FoNC request will be discussed along with consideration of providing annual funding for the Isle of Wight Literary Festival at the next Chairs and Clerks meeting.

1068 APPLICATION FOR GRANT

The Town Clerk advised that £3,950 remains in the budget heading 'Grants' for the financial year 2025 / 2026. Councillors were asked to consider the following application for grant:

- UKSA - Test the water programme – £1,260.

After a discussion about the application, it was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council makes a grant of £1,260 to UKSA.

1069 ASTO GRANT AWARDED OF £1,250

Councillors awarded a grant of £1,250 for the ASTO small ships race 2025. Unfortunately, due to inclement weather, the race had to be cancelled. Councillors discussed whether the funding should be returned. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council allows ASTO to keep the funding of £1,250 to put towards the small ships race in 2026.

1070 PROVISION OF A DEBIT CARD FOR TOWN COUNCIL STAFF

Councillors were asked to consider whether to provide Town Council staff with a debit card to enable purchases from companies that we do not have business accounts with. It was:

RECOMMENDED

1. **That Cowes Town Council procures a Debit Card from Lloyds Bank with a maximum spend of £1,000.**
2. **The Town Clerk will authorise all expenditure made on the Debit Card prior to any purchases.**

1071 ACTIVITIES OF COWES LIBRARY AND FUTURE COSTS

Councillors received details of the varied activities of Cowes Library; the future costs to support the Library being:

2026 / 2027 £27,348

2027 / 2028 £28,223

2028 / 2029 £29,126

It was agreed:

ACTION

The 2026 / 2027 costs will be included in the next Town Council budget for consideration by all Councillors.

1072 REVIEW OF CURRENT CONTRACTORS, CONTRACTS AND FUTURE TENDERS / CONTRACTS

This item has been redacted as it is commercially sensitive.

1073 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 full value of the £5,000. The Clerks have handed out 84 vouchers from the 100 Aldi vouchers purchased, 16 remain available for issue.

1074 PROBATIONARY REVIEW FOR THE FACILITIES AND TOWN MANAGER

This item has been redacted as it is private and confidential.

Councillor Wardrop left the meeting at 7.58pm.

1075 DEPUTY TOWN CLERK'S APPRAISAL

This item has been redacted as it is private and confidential.

1076 ADMIN ASSISTANT'S APPRAISAL

This item has been redacted as it is private and confidential.

1077 ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE FORTHCOMING VACANCY OF DEPUTY TOWN CLERK

This item has been redacted as it is private and confidential.

1078 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

This item has been redacted as it is private and confidential.

1079 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

The Facilities and Town Manager advises the team if there are any health and safety matters that need to be addressed.

1080 STAFF CONCERNS

No staff concerns have been raised with the Town Clerk.

1081 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

No items were raised for inclusion on a future agenda.

The proceedings terminated at 8.40pm

CHAIRMAN