

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Cowes Town Council held at the IW Community Club, Park Road, Cowes on Thursday 18 December 2025 at 7pm.

Present: Councillor Ellis (Town Mayor) (Chairman).
Councillors Adams, Carter, Fuller, Hollis, Marriott, Nicholson (7.32pm),
Peacey Wilcox, Rafferty, Sanders & Wardrop.

In attendance: David Gordon, Facilities & Town Manager; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk; two members of the public.

9282 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barney, Dodwell, Walters and White.

9283 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) Councillor Marriott declared a non-pecuniary interest in Min. No. 9288a as she is a Trustee and Volunteer of Northwood House Charitable Trust Company Ltd.
- b) Written requests for dispensation were received, and granted, from Councillors Carter, Ellis, Hollis, Rafferty and Wardrop in respect of the draft budget and precept setting for 2026 / 2027, Min. No. 9288a5 refers.

9284 REPORT FROM THE LOCAL SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER

The local Safer Neighbourhood Officer did not attend the meeting but had provided a report which had been circulated to all Councillors. The report included updates on damage to The Cut toilets, the addition of two new PCSO's to the Cowes area, tackling antisocial behaviour, graffiti and the Pub-watch scheme.

Following a question regarding the damage to The Cut toilets, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that a response was awaited from our insurers.

9285 MINUTES

RESOLVED

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

9286 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions were raised from the members of the public present.

9287 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 provided an update on the Lionheart School. He had arranged a viewing at the school, which is open to all Councillors to attend. Councillors Ellis, Hollis, Marriott and Rafferty requested details of the visit to the School.

9288 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS

a) Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee

The Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meetings held on 11 November 2025 and 25 November 2025 were received and noted.

The Town Council requested that Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd allow additional time for the Town Council to consider the terms of the Town Council Office and Storeroom Lease renewal. A working party would be established to discuss the Lease terms. Councillor Barney was thanked for her work on the lease arrangements.

Due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public were asked to leave the meeting for the following confidential items as the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

It was:

RESOLVED

- 1. That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.**
- 2. That the Town Council formally accepts the resignation of Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, with effect from 30 November 2025, and records its gratitude for her long and valued service.**
- 3. This item has been redacted as it is private and confidential.**
- 4. This item has been redacted as it is private and confidential.**
- 5. This item has been redacted as it is private and confidential.**
- 6. That Cowes Town Council approves the draft budget v2, as below, which will mean that the Cowes Town Council precept for 2026 - 2027 will be £531,428.**

COWES TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2026-2027	
EXPENDITURE	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	
Town Clerks' salaries / NIC/ Tax / Pension	£ 154,500
Office Rent (Including Business Rates)	£ 9,200
Stationery / Sundry Office Expenses/Software	£ 2,000
Office Equipment / Photocopier / Computers	£ 2,000
Telephone / Broadband / Website	£ 2,500
Postage	£ 300
Conference fees & Travelling	£ 1,000
Training	£ 4,000
Hire of Meeting Rooms and / or Zoom	£ 800
Subscriptions	£ 3,500
Insurance	£ 3,500
Audit and Accountancy	£ 3,000
Mayor's Allowance	£ 2,500
Newsletter / Publicity	£ 4,000
Elections / Admin Contingency	£ 4,000

Civic Regalia	£ 500
Bank Charges	£ 300
	Sub Total
DISCRETIONARY SERVICES	
Grounds Maintenance: Northwood Rec; St Mary's Park; Moorgreen Reservoir; Arctic Park; Mornington Green; Brunswick Road playground; Park Road Rose Bed; Egypt Point; Mornington Woods	£ 17,080
Northwood Rec - Skate Park / MUGA / Outdoor Gym Maintenance	£ 7,500
Northwood Park Grounds Maintenance	£ 13,000
Friends of Northwood Cemetery	£ 4,000
Arts and Culture	£ 5,000
Dog + Litter bin emptying	£ 7,000
6 Public Toilets - Cleaning + other costs	£ 100,000
Cowes Library	£ 27,348
Cowes In Bloom	£ 12,000
Environment Officer	£ 10,400
Warmer Cowes	£ 500
Discretionary Services Contingency	£ 8,000
	Sub Total
	£ 211,828
TOWN IMPROVEMENTS / GRANTS / SPECIAL EVENTS	
Street furniture maintenance	£ 4,000
Place Plan Projects	£ 12,000
Festive lights / Xmas Tree	£ 17,000
New Projects	£ 5,000
Grants	£ 15,000
Remembrance Sunday & Charity Donations	£ 2,500
Public Toilet refurbishment & Capital Projects	£ 60,000
Picnic in the Park 2026	£ 4,000
Flags, Banners and Bunting	£ 2,500
	Sub Total
	£ 122,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	
	£ 531,428

7. That Cowes Town Council notes the review of reserves, confirms the current level is appropriate in light of identified risks and forthcoming expenditure, and agrees that reserves will continue to be reviewed annually as part of the budget-setting process.
8. That a working group be established to consider the Lease renewal terms for the Town Council Office and Storeroom at Northwood House.
9. That the following members be appointed to serve on the Lease Renewal Working Group until the Annual Town Council meeting in 2026: Councillors Barney, Ellis, Hollis, Rafferty, Peacey Wilcox, Sanders and Wardrop.
10. That the recommendation from the Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee meeting on 25 November 2025, to extend the Lease for the Town Council Office and Storeroom at Northwood House until 31 March 2027, be deferred until the Lease Renewal Working Group has concluded consideration of the lease terms.

11. That the Town Council Office rental charge for December 2025 and January 2026 be paid, without forming a new lease.
12. That Cowes Town Council pays £13,000 for the grounds maintenance of Northwood Park for the 2026 / 27 financial year.
13. That Cowes Town Council accepts the grant funding from SSE's Powering Communities to Net Zero Fund.
14. That a Deputy Chair of the Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee is not appointed.

b) Planning & Licensing Committee

The Minutes of the Planning & Licensing Committee meetings held on 12 November 2025 and 10 December 2025 were received and noted.

c) Projects Committee

The Minutes of the Projects Committee meetings held on 11 November 2025 and 2 December 2025 were received and noted. It was:

RESOLVED

1. That Financial Regulation 5.8 be suspended to allow consideration of one quotation for project management services, as the architect was familiar with the project, having been engaged for Stages 0-4 previously.
2. That Cowes Town Council appoints JH Architecture to undertake Project Management (Stages 5-6) of the construction, contract administration and defects inspections for The Parade public conveniences refurbishment, for the cost of £2,400, with the cost to be met from the 'Public Toilet refurbishment & Capital Projects' budget heading.
3. That Cowes Town Council approves the Specification Note for The Parade Toilet Refurbishment.
4. That Financial Regulation 5.8 be suspended to allow consideration of one quotation for architectural design services, as the architect was familiar with the area and had previously worked on a draft design concept.
5. That Cowes Town Council approves the engagement of JH Architecture for architectural design services relating to RIBA Stages 2 – 4 for the High Street area outside of Sainsbury's Cowes, for the sum of £2,000, with the cost to be met from the 'Place Plan Projects' budget heading.

d) Website Working Group

The Minutes of the Website Working Group meeting held on 9 December 2025 were received and noted. It was:

RESOLVED

1. Cowes Town Council agrees to rename the Website Working Group to 'Website and IT Working Group'.
2. That Cowes Town Council approves the draft Terms of Reference, as amended.
3. That the following members be appointed to serve on the Website and IT Working Group until the Annual Town Council meeting in 2026: Councillors Adams, Ellis, Peacey Wilcox and Marriott. There remained five vacancies on this Working Group.

e) Supporters of Cowes Library

The Minutes of the Supporters of Cowes Library meeting held on 18 October 2025 were received and noted. It was agreed:

ACTION

Councillor Wardrop would pass on the Town Council's thanks to the Supporters for their ongoing hard work.

f) Place Plan Advisory Group

The Minutes of the Place Plan Advisory Group meeting held on 10 November 2025 were received and noted.

g) IWALC Executive

The Minutes of the IWALC Executive meeting held on 30 October 2025 were received and noted. Councillors were advised that a new County Officer had been appointed.

9289 MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor provided a written report regarding the Town's Day of Christmas event, invitations to visit the Apex Church and St Mary's Church and attendance at meetings regarding the Floating Bridge, Cowes Week 2026 and various projects. He provided an update on meetings with Experience Cowes and advised that East Cowes Town Council had withdrawn their funding due to changes in the business plan. Experience Cowes had been requested to give a presentation on their full business plan to a future Cowes Town Council meeting.

9290 IMPACT OF DOG EXCREMENT

Councillor Nicholson's report was received and noted.

9291 CHEQUE PAYMENTS AND PETTY CASH PAYMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 2025

The Deputy Town Clerk presented Councillors with details of cheque and petty cash payments for the month of November 2025. Cheque payments totalled £28,013.50; petty cash payments totalled £249.93. It was:

RESOLVED

That the cheque payments for November of £28,013.50; and the petty cash payments of £249.93 are received, noted and approved.

9292 APPOINTMENT OF THE TOWN CLERK

Following interviews on 17 December, the Mayor advised that a job offer had been made and we were awaiting the return of references. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council confirms the appointment of the new Town Clerk, subject to the receipt of satisfactory references.

It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk's Contract of Employment would be reviewed by an HR Expert.

9293 APPOINTMENT OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

Following interviews on 17 December, the Mayor advised that a job offer had been made and we were awaiting the return of references. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council confirms the appointment of the new Responsible Financial Officer, subject to the receipt of satisfactory references.

It was agreed:

ACTION

The Responsible Financial Officer's Contract of Employment would be reviewed by an HR Expert.

9294 RESPONSE TO IWALC'S NEWS / NEWSLETTER SURVEY

The Town Council was requested by IWALC to complete a survey on whether they should reintroduce a regular newsletter or other news sharing mechanisms.

Councillors felt the newsletter was extremely useful but requested details of the likely additional costs. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Deputy Town Clerk would write to IWALC to request details of the costs to produce a regular newsletter and the likely cost implications to member councils.

9295 REVIEW OF COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S MEMORIAL BENCH POLICY

A review of Cowes Town Council's Memorial Bench Policy was undertaken and found to not need any amendments. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council approves the Memorial Bench Policy.

9296 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES EMERGENCY CALL SYSTEMS

Councillors were asked to consider a quotation for the supply, installation and annual maintenance of Emergency Call Systems for our accessible public conveniences. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that funding had already been approved for the supply, installation and ongoing maintenance of the system; the quotation received was within the agreed budget. It was:

RESOLVED

- 1. That Financial Regulation 5.8 be suspended to allow consideration of one quotation, as the contractor was already engaged by the Town Council for other security services in our public conveniences.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council appoints Lifeline Alarms to supply and install emergency call systems in the Town Council's accessible public conveniences for the sum of £4,227.00, along with maintenance costs of £1,518.00 per annum, with the cost to be met from the money set aside for this system, Min. Nos. 9226c1 & 9226c2 refer.**

9297 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE EXPANSION OF LIONHEART SCHOOL

Councillors were asked to consider making a response to the consultation on the expansion of the Lionheart School. It was:

RESOLVED

That Cowes Town Council supports in principle the work that the Lionheart School are doing and the proposed expansion of student numbers.

9298 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE MAKING OF NEW ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS (PSPO's)

Councillors were asked to consider making a response to the consultation on new additional Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO's). Following discussion, it was suggested that Councillors submit individual responses. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. The Deputy Town Clerk would circulate the Consultation to all Councillors.
2. Councillors would send individual responses to the Consultation.

9299 UPDATE FROM THE FACILITIES AND TOWN MANAGER

The Facilities and Town Manager provided a written a report of his activities during November 2025.

Facilities Management - A number of fluorescent lighting tubes had been updated to LED at The Cut. Ventilation works had been completed and the drinking water tap replaced at The Parade public conveniences.

Electrical Installation Condition inspections on the public conveniences had been undertaken by FW Marsh and a number of electrical improvements were identified in their reports. The sump pump in The Cut was not working and needed to be replaced. Electrical issues with the Wallgates at The Cut were being investigated by Focus Plumbing, under the maintenance contract.

Fire risk assessments on the public conveniences and a review of the Accessible Audit Report were carried out with Councillor Rafferty. Monthly toilet inspections were carried out on 1 December 2025. The Facilities and Town Manager was thanked for his excellent work on the Fire Risk Assessments.

The Horizon plaque on the Parade had been cleaned and repainted by the signwriter, Emma Goss.

Projects - Meetings were held with JH Architecture regarding The Parade Toilets and the area outside Sainsbury. Installation of planters on the High Street was completed by Care in the Garden. Correspondence with Island Roads continues regarding the delay to the barrier installation at Medina Road accessible facility.

Events – The Christmas Celebration Day was a great success. Despite the weather, it was well attended with comments from some traders that it was their busiest day since the summer.

Out of Hours Call Outs - There was one call-out on 8 November 2025 for vandalism at Mornington Road public conveniences.

9300 UPDATE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM OFFICER

The Public Realm Officer (formerly the Environment Officer) provided a report of her activities in Cowes which included fly tipping, issuing of fixed penalty charge notices and general inspections of play parks and beaches.

9301 MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

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

9302 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

No items were raised for inclusion on a future meeting.

The proceedings terminated at 8.23pm.

CHAIRMAN