

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Dining Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 27 January 2026 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors Ellis (Chair), Hollis, Marriott, Nicholson & Walters.

In attendance: Patrick Jolin, Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk and Richard Shaul, Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Ellis took the Chair.

1110 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carter and Peacey Wilcox.

1111 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Walters declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 1115iii. as he knows members of the Royal London Yacht Club that organises the Cowes Classic Day 2026.

1112 MINUTES RESOLVED

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

1113 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

The RFO submitted a financial statement for the quarter ending 31 December 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 31 December 2025 were £740,671. After adjustments of £177,177 for ring fenced reserves and £234,171 for budget expenditure for the remainder of the year the (projected) reserves calculated at 31 December 2025 were £329,383. This 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 31 December 2025.

1114 DRAFT RESERVES POLICY

Councillors discussed the draft reserves policy that had been circulated to the Committee. Councillors were concerned as to whether the policy would address the points raised by the external auditors, BDO, in relation to the 2024/2025 annual return. The Town Clerk and RFO expressed their belief that the reserves stated in the return were fully compliant with the relevant requirements and would query this with the external auditors as part of the 2025/2026 returns process. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That approval of the draft reserves policy would be deferred pending further instructions from the RFO.

1115 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS

The RFO advised that £2,690 remains in the budget heading 'Grants' for the financial year 2025 / 2026. Councillors were asked to consider the following applications for grants:

- i. IW Community Club – Fully Accessible Playpark - £1,500.
- ii. Feeding Isle of Wight – Relocation Costs – £5,000.

The RFO advised confirmation of the relocation had not yet been received.

- iii. Cowes Classics Day 2026 - £1,500.

After a full discussion about each application, it was:

RECOMMENDED

1. That the decision regarding the grant for Feeding Isle of Wight be deferred pending certainty that the relocation would take place.
2. That Cowes Town Council makes a grant of £1,000 to IW Community Club, but the payment of the grant would be subject to draw down and would only be paid when the target funds for the project had been achieved.
3. That Cowes Town Council makes a grant of £1,500 to Cowes Classics Day 2026. This grant to be used to facilitate the event by providing parking.

1116 STRAIN TESTING OF FLAGS AND BANNER FIXINGS

The Projects Committee recommended allocating a budget of £10,000 for the purposes of strain testing of flags and banner fixings (Minute No 717a refers). This is a health and safety issue. The RFO recommended the cost could be allocated to the budget heading of Facilities Management that currently has £70,000 available. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council approves up to £10,000 in relation to strain testing of flags and banner fixings, with the cost to be met from the Facilities Management budget heading.

1117 UPDATE ON EXISTING HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND OF £5,000

The RFO 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 had handed out 87 vouchers from the 100 Aldi vouchers purchased, 13 remained available for issue.

1118 STAFF MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS (SLCC)

Details of cost of membership of the SLCC and obtaining the CiLCA qualification were circulated to Councillors and considered by the Committee. It is necessary for the Town Clerk to be CiLCA qualified in order for the Town Council to retain the General Power of Competence. Councillors also generally thought it desirable that all Council staff should be CiLCA qualified. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council approves the Town Clerk becoming a member of the SLCC.

1119 DRAFT CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR TOWN CLERK AND RFO

The draft Contracts of Employment for the Town Clerk and RFO were reviewed. It was:

RECOMMENDED

1. That Cowes Town Council approves the Town Clerk's Contract of Employment, subject to amendment that the Town Clerk should report to the Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee rather than the Chair of the Committee.
2. That Cowes Town Council approves the RFO's Contract of Employment.

1120 TEAM BUILDING AND ALIGNMENT PLAN

The draft team building and alignment plan was re-circulated to Councillors together with an update from Councillor Marriott. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council agree with this proposal in order that further detailed work can continue.

1121 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

No staff matters have been raised with the Town Clerk.

1122 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

Councillors discussed the adequacy of evening lighting within Northwood Park and the replacement of tarmacadam path surfaces with gravel.

It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk agreed to take this up with Northwood House management.

1123 STAFF CONCERNS

No staff concerns have been raised with the Town Clerk.

1124 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

- Experience Cowes – future presentation
- Electronic banking

The proceedings terminated at 19:13.

CHAIRMAN