



Minutes of the Fortieth Annual Town Meeting held in the Drawing Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Thursday 14 May 2026 at 6.15pm, convened under the provision of the section 99 and schedule 12 of the Local Government Act, 1972

Present: Councillor Ellis (Town Mayor) (Chairman)

Councillors Adams, Barney, Dodwell, Fuller, Hollis, Marriott, Peacey Wilcox, Rafferty, Walters and White

In attendance: Patrick Jolin, Town Clerk; Tracy Jones, Deputy Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk; David Gordon, Facilities and Town Manager; Sarah Preston, Communications and Funding Manager; a representative from Community Action IOW; 3 representatives from Hampshire and IW Police; 3 members of the public

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Mayor read out a statement extending the Council's deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Mr. James, and all those affected by the tragic incident that had recently occurred within one of the Council's public buildings.

#### **267 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nicholson.

#### **268 MINUTES RESOLVED**

**hat the Minutes of the thirty ninth Annual Town Meeting held on 29 May 2025 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

#### **269 REPORT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

The Mayor provided a written report which was circulated to attendees.

The Town Council has had a busy and productive year, undertaking a wide range of initiatives and activities:

##### **Town Office and Staff Changes**

At the end of 2025, we said goodbye to Debbie Faulkner, our Town Clerk/RFO, after many years of outstanding service. Following a recruitment process, the Council appointed:

- Mr Patrick Jolin as Town Clerk.
- Mr Richard Shaul as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

We also said farewell to Andrea Young, our Administrative Assistant in early 2026.

After nine years of dedicated service, our Deputy Town Clerk, Kate, decided to retire. This led to a review of staffing and following a recruitment process, the Council appointed:

- Mrs Tracy Jones – Deputy Town Clerk.
- Ms Sarah Preston – Communications and Funding Manager.

## **Precept 2026/27**

We managed to keep the precept for the 2026/27 financial year largely the same as the previous year, in order to minimise the burden on taxpayers. As a result, a Band D property in Cowes will see a small decrease of £0.89 for 2026/27.

## **Support for Flood Resilience**

The Town Council has successfully secured grant funding to support residents in cleaning up after flooding incidents. This funding has been awarded by Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Distribution through its *Powering Communities to Net Zero Fund*. It will be used to purchase clean-up equipment and a storage unit. We are currently progressing the permissions required to locate the unit within the town.

## **Cowes Youth Voice**

The Town Council is committed to engaging with young people in Cowes to better understand how we can support them.

Two Youth Voice meetings have been held to gather feedback. The most recent meeting was attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, alongside:

- 16 students from Cowes Enterprise College
- A youth representative from the IW Biosphere Group
- The Youth Trust
- Together for Mission Zero
- Representatives from the Cowes and Northwood Place Plan.

A wide range of ideas were discussed, and these are now under consideration by the Council.

## **Daisy Ring Bus**

Volunteer drivers for Daisy Ring Bus C.I.C. benefit from free parking in Cowes, thanks to the support of the Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd. Volunteers park in Park Road Car Park using a complimentary permit. The Trust already provides free parking for NHS patients travelling to the mainland, and Cowes Town Council is pleased to administer this scheme on their behalf.

## **Grant Funding**

The Town Council continues to support local organisations through its annual grant funding programme. Grants may be awarded for events, projects, activities or equipment that benefit the Cowes community. Recently supported organisations include:

- Isle of Wight Community Club
- Cowes Classics Day 2026
- Cowes Men's Shed
- Vectis Corps of Drums Marching Band
- Isle of Wight Literary Festival
- Friends of Northwood Cemetery
- Supporters of Cowes Library
- Association of Sail Training Organisations (ASTO)
- Angel Radio Isle of Wight
- Cowes Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society

## **Cowes Week 2026**

Preparations are well underway for Cowes Week 2026, which marks the 200th anniversary of the regatta. We have shared feedback from last year with organisers, including requests for more

provision for young people and families. The Town Council is also developing its own plans to support the event. For the second year running, we will have a gazebo on The Parade, and we encourage residents and visitors to come along, speak with us, and share their views.

### **High Street Improvements**

The Town Council has been working in partnership with:

- Isle of Wight Council's Regeneration Officer
- Cowes and Northwood Place Plan Group (renamed the Connecting Cowes Group)
- University of Southampton's Future Towns Innovation Hub.

This collaboration is delivering a long-term programme of improvements to the High Street. Recent work includes:

- Installation of Corten steel planters (sourced locally from ISM Solutions)
- Planting by Care in the Garden
- Removal of the old BT phone box.

Future plans include improvements to the area outside Sainsbury's, providing new seating and additional planting.

### **The Parade Toilets Refurbishment**

The Town Council continues its programme of upgrading its public conveniences. Following the refurbishment of the Medina Road toilets in 2024, work has now begun on The Parade toilets, which are currently closed while refurbishment is underway.

Finally, I would like to thank all Councillors for their support over the past year, and to extend my gratitude to the residents of Cowes.

Questions were invited but none were asked.

## **270 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026**

Copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026 were circulated at the meeting. No questions were asked. It was:

### **RESOLVED**

**That the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026 be received and noted.**

## **271 ANNUAL SUMMARY – SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM**

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Three members of the Safer Neighbourhood Team were in attendance.

Since taking over Cowes and East Cowes area, PC Manning has been familiarising himself with the area, engaging with businesses, schools, local services and members of the public to show as much visibility as possible. Whilst the main bulk of work in the neighbourhood team is engagement and multiagency work, the crime reports made are dealt with by an investigations team located in Newport. They review every crime and intelligence report that is received by Hampshire Police for the Cowes, Northwood and Gurnard area, however, they work on the long-term problem solving as opposed to investigating many crimes as this would reduce their visibility. The neighbourhood team aims for 80% visibility in the community, be it through being on foot patrol or actively engaging with the many services they work alongside.

The wider neighbourhood policing team will attend events such as the County Show, Cowes Week and IOW Takeover, showing a visible presence, taking into account when the team are on duty. They aim to attend as many of the public facing multi agency events as possible.

There is an ongoing effort to educate and enforce the no cycling direction in the precinct. Whilst this is not complied with 100%, it has been said that there has been a noticeable decline in the amount of cyclists. It should be noted that when cyclists have been spoken to, due to the amount of wording on the signage, most people didn't take notice of the sign thinking this was for motor vehicles only.

The Floating Bridge has been the subject of attention by local officers for many reasons; public reassurance and good police visibility, and also at the request of staff as they like to see officers travel over regularly. The no cycling notice was advertised on the advertisement board on the chain ferry, which has assisted greatly in lowering the number of cyclists on the High Street.

The night time economy has been reinvigorated through the PubWatch scheme.

There is now a PCSO stationed in Cowes and the station will be open to the public far more and more engagements such as beat surgeries will be advertised on social media to allow Cowes residents to be able to see the PCSO as specific times.

Cowes still remains a safe location, with low crime in relation to other areas of the Island.

As a team we are aware from reports made, where to concentrate on for the antisocial behaviour matters; patrols are directed towards these areas and are based on both current and historical information.

There is ongoing crime prevention work with the many companies and clubs linked to marine work and activity; there has been a spate of burglaries where flares were stolen. Every report of burglary is investigated, taking into account how many viable lines of enquiry there are.

A question was asked about antisocial behaviour on Cowes seafront. PC Manning advised that no reports of antisocial behaviour for Cowes seafront had been officially made to them via the appropriate channels.

## **272 ANNUAL SUMMARY – IW COUNCILLORS**

Written reports were received from Councillors Fuller, Nicholson and Peacey Wilcox.

### **Councillor Paul Fuller (Cowes West and Gurnard)**

Councillor Fuller provided his 17th Annual Report as Independent Councillor for Cowes West and Gurnard. He has been ward Councillor for Cowes West and Gurnard since 2009. As an Independent Isle of Wight Councillor this is his sixth term of office, since being first elected for Ryde in 1995.

Summary of ward work in Cowes over the last year:

- Following perseverance the Northwood Cemetery Wall was repaired.
- Repairs locally took place following the Island being lashed by storms.
- Worked with residents and businesses concerned by cycling in Cowes High Street. As a result, signage was made clearer and enforcement improved.
- As Cabinet Member, hosted a number of meetings with residents impacted by flooding and coastal erosion.
- Proposals to charge businesses for advertising by A-Boards were abandoned. In addition, supported Car Parking Charges being frozen for a third year.
- Met with Cash Access UK, to create a banking hub for Cowes; continuing to seek a Cowes location for a hub.

- Seafront railings and notices were repaired, refurbished and replaced.
- New local Parish/Town Councillors were elected at Local Elections.
- Acted as a conduit for residents following the partial closure of Horsebridge Hill. Whilst not successful in all feedback, as a result of Councillor Fuller's input, bus access was maintained and regular updates were provided.
- Meetings took place with Gurnard School to respond to increased pupil numbers and traffic following the closure of Cowes Primary School.
- Southern Water resurrected its offer of Free Water Butts to local residents.
- Spoke to a number of residents concerning proposals to build homes in Westwood Close. This application was eventually approved with mitigation to improve parking and waste collection for residents.
- Met with businesses and residents following flooding in Cowes and Gurnard. Following meetings, solutions are pending to those impacted by floods.
- Continued to lobby for improved better ferry connectivity as the IW Council's representative for the Transport for the SE.
- Support was given to residents impacted by security lighting and vehicle noise.
- Support was provided, enforcement action taken and signage put up following parking incidents adjacent to the newly expanded Gurnard Primary School.
- The Police gave support to residents following calls to use of off-road parking.
- Continued to support a full replacement of the Floating Bridge.
- Met with and am full of admiration for volunteers for the Daisy Bus Charity. Promised to offer further support to the charity and its volunteers.
- Successfully campaigned to see buses again diverted from Park Road during Gas street works.
- Drains and gullies were cleared in advance of pending roadworks.
- Arranged a meeting to take place with Cowes Town Councillors and leaders of the new Lionheart School. A community event will follow.
- The IW Council resurrected parking charge proposals to areas currently free. Plans again include Cowes/ Gurnard Seafront.
- Updates and support were provided on the impact of floods. Liaising with the Environment Agency concerning its lack of warnings for residents.

### **Councillor John Nicholson (Cowes South and Northwood)**

#### Achievements and Advances Roundup:

- Being an active member of Cowes Town Council.
- Leading in the development implementation of Cowes & Northwood Place Plan, supporting others to take lead rolls.
- Member of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Adult Social Care, challenging health partners and being supportive and critical where needed.
- Supporting, representing and advising residents in various local and personal issues and concerns, from planning matters to parking issues and social concerns.
- Liaising with Island Roads and Utilities regarding issues and works.
- Acting as representative on Island Roads Health and Safety Forum.
- Liaising with the Spanish Galleon organisation concerning visits to the Isle of Wight and being part of bringing 1588 Isle of Wight Armada Coast into being.
- Helping to promote awareness of local heritage and culture.
- Actively promoting health and wellbeing and its wider determinates.
- Being outspoken, when needed, to represent and voice concerns that have caused local concern.

An expression of thanks was given for Councillor Nicholson, in recognition of his work as IW Councillor for Cowes South and Northwood.

**Councillor Lora Peacey Wilcox (Cowes Medina)**

Monthly reports are written for both the Town Council and the [Cowes magazine](#).

The issues of the past year have been varied and at times complex.

Predominately highways issues and concerns. Double yellow lines, disabled bays, safety issues.

Lack of parking - permanently lack of parking is a MASSIVE issue in Cowes Medina Ward.

Also getting in disabled facilities for some of my older residents.

The new bays for the cycles and scooters is becoming a hot topic.

Much of my IW Cllr work is sensitive.

Questions were invited for IW Ward Councillors, but none were asked.

**273 REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK**

**Summary**

Having joined the Council at the start of January this year, I have found the Town Clerk role to be both challenging and fulfilling and am enthusiastic about the opportunity to lead and develop an effective and efficient Town Council Office operation.

The Town Office will continue to ensure the highest standards of service and support for the Council and the Cowes Town community.

I am extremely grateful for the encouragement, guidance and support received from both Town Councillors and Town Office staff on and since my arrival and am very much looking forward to working collaboratively with all involved in the years ahead.

**Headline Activities**

- Conducted an in-depth review of the Town Office operations including working procedures, staffing requirements, technology, commercial and legal processes.
- Working with the also newly appointed Responsible Financial Officer, conducted a high-level review of current financial operations covering governance processes and procedures, reporting and management information systems, budgeting and financial monitoring capabilities and including a review of the current Chart of Account and budgeting categories and classifications.
- Revised the Office staff organisation, job roles and job descriptions and on the agreement of the Council Chamber, implemented a new Town Office organisation structure through additional recruitment and current role optimisation.
- Identified an implementation plan to deliver critical upgrades to key office and Council infrastructure services and covering:
  - Upgrading current Office IT systems and processes.
  - Upgrading current Council financial reporting and supplier management processes and procedures through the greater use of technology and IT services.
  - Through a defined communications policy, helping the Council Chamber in continuing to enhance the Council's reputation and interaction with the Cowes Town residents and businesses.
  - Promoting the quality and effectiveness of the Council's services and facilities through further use of technology and qualified supplier management.

**274 QUESTIONS FROM THE MEETING**

No questions were raised.

The proceedings terminated at 6.24pm.

**CHAIRMAN**