Minutes of the **Cowes Town Council Extraordinary Meeting** held in the Town Hall, East Cowes on **Monday 05 October 2026** at 6pm.

Present
Councillor Ellis (Town Mayor) (Chair).
Councillors Hollis, Paler, Peacey-Wilcox, Rafferty and Reen.

In Attendance
Patrick Jolin (Town Clerk), 10 members of the East Cowes Town Council Chamber and Office, 3 IWC Councillors, 3 members of the press and a large number of members of the public.

9454 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marriott, Moore, Nicholson, Southwell, Wardrop, Walters and White.

9455 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

9456 MINUTES

RESOLVED

Minutes of the 01 October 2026 Town Council meeting were taken as read and approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9457 PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES TO FLOATING BRIDGE FARES AND CHARGES

A written report from East Cowes Town Council on the Isle of Wight Council proposals for changes to Floating Bridge fares and charges and the potential impact upon residents, young people, businesses and the local economy of East Cowes and Cowes Town was received and noted. Following presentation of the written report, the East Cowes Mayor invited comments from individual East Cowes Town and Cowes Town Councillors.

Following all Councillors present representations, members of the public were invited to add further comments on the Isle of Wight Council proposals.

After a lengthy debate involving all parties present, the following significant summary points were recorded:

- There has been a long history of performance and reliability failures with floating bridge 6 when compared to floating bridge 5 which it replaced.
- Floating bridge 5 was financially profitable whereas floating bridge 6 reports heavy financial losses.
- The floating bridge is critical transport infrastructure for not only East and West Cowes but also for onward travel into the Isle of Wight as a whole.
- As such, why does the UK Department of Transport not class the floating bridge as public highway so protecting the critical nature of the service?

- Why have these proposals only just been communicated to Councillors and the public alike and why at such short notice. Many concerns were raised regarding the perceived secrecy, non-engagement and long-term motives of IWC officers involved in the current process?
- What was the rational behind using the Dartmouth lower ferry as the price proposals reference point as this ferry service bears no relation to the Floating Bridge service?
- As a second vehicle access point into Cowes Town, the Floating Bridge is a critical element of traffic management and the severity of the price increases proposed could force drivers to overuse the other Newport rout and as such, vastly increase traffic congestion and
- Has an Economic Impact Assessment across the Cowes Town/East Cowes region been undertaken and if so, what are the full details of that assessment?
- What are the IWC future plans for the Floating Bridge service, specifically in regard to replacement and how that will be funded?

9458 SUBMISSION TO THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL ECONOMY, REGENERATION, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Following the debate recorded under Minute number 9457 and noting written submissions received from Cowes Town Councillors unable to attend the meeting, it was proposed by:

Councillor Ellis

- That Cowes Town Council rejects the proposed increases in Floating Bridge fares (Dartmouth alignment) for motorists, foot passengers and under-19s and considers that any proposed significant increase in charges is unjustified. Concerns remain regarding the reliability, performance and affordability of the service. Cowes Town Council therefore requests the ERTI Committee reject the officer recommendation to increase fares and instead refer the matter to the ERTI Working Group to consider alternative, viable operating solutions and options and to refer back recommendations that minimise the impact on residents, businesses and other users of the service.

Councillor Paler

- That Cowes Town Council requests the ERTI Committee recommend to the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee that priority be given to developing a long-term solution to cross-Medina transport including implementation of its policy agreement to replace the current floating bridge and in order to deliver a reliable, affordable and financially sustainable service that meets the investment requirements and funding committed by the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership and in doing so meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors on both sides of the Medina and without placing an unreasonable financial burden on users of the service.

Councillor Reen

- What is the rationale behind using the Dartmouth Lower Ferry crossing as a benchmark comparator for the proposals, specifically giving an answer that addresses how floating bridge usage volumes and user demographics have been derived in relation to the Dartmouth service and how these benchmark figures specifically take into account the economically and socially vulnerable users of the floating bridge service, local high volume employer employee commuting requirements, local schooling transport expectations and tourist visitor volumes?

Councillor Hollis

- Where is the Economic Impact Assessment across the Cowes Town/East Cowes region for this proposal and what are the full details of that assessment?

Councillor White

- (Written submission) What is the full committed budget for the floating bridge and how will this change because of the proposals currently under discussion?

A named vote by Cowes Town Councillors present on these proposals was requested by the Cowes Town Council Mayor and Chair and recorded the following outcome:

For the Resolution – Councillors Ellis, Hollis, Paler, Peacey-Wilcox and Reen.
Against the Resolution – None.
Abstentions – Councillor Rafferty.

Following the named vote, it was:
RESOLVED
That Cowes Town Council submit formal responses and questions as shown and on the IWC proposals and that these representations are submitted to the Isle of Wight Council Economy, Regeneration, Transport and Infrastructure Committee meeting on 06 October 2026 for consideration and response.

9459 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

No items were received.

The proceedings terminated at 7.30pm.

CHAIR