



East Cowes Town Council

Town Hall, York Avenue, East Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO32 6R
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Minutes of a meeting of **East Cowes Town Council** held at East Cowes Town Hall, York Avenue, East Cowes **Thursday 21st September 2023 at 6pm**

Present

Chair: Cllr Reardon (Mayor)

Councillors: Packham, Palin, Hendry, Webster, Lake, Love

Clerk: S Chilton **Business Apprentice:** C Marshall

Also present: 11 members of the public

Public Forum

- Will the Esplanade Centenary in June 2024 be celebrated as part of the regeneration project? Celebrations are already planned for the R.N.L.I anniversary, but this could be seriously considered too. Perhaps with a commemoration or a plaque.
- What plans are there for the maintenance of Cadets Walk? Care in the Garden are now contracted to undertake a regular maintenance programme there.
- Is the BMX track going to be reopened? Negotiations are going forward with the IW Council. There are complications as it is an extension of the cemetery and may be needed as a burial ground in the future. The Council have not formally discussed the possibility of taking this area over but will be doing so soon. KL stressed that there may be wildlife in the area which may complicate matters, and asked the attendees to write down their ideas which may assist them in getting grants. Cllr Hendry will help to take this forward.
- What is happening about adoption of Kingston Rd and what will be done to stop it becoming a rat run? SH stated that the legal issues were still being dealt with and that for the 1st year the developers are responsible, after which it is passed to the local authority. The IWC have no budget for this, and SH will undertake to speak to the new Cabinet Member about this.
- Road Safety issues were raised by Sarah Burdett regarding pedestrians trying to cross Castle Street between Jade Garden, Dover Road, and Waitrose corner. Despite the triangular white paint hatching in the centre of the road, they are vulnerable when trying to cross both lines of traffic, coming from four directions. SB suggested a Traffic Island refuge in the centre of the road. TR stated that they were aware of this and had raised the issue with Red Funnel and would continue to discuss at the next meeting. SB was advised to send her letter to Alan White IW Council.
- Was there any news on the propeller being moved. KL stated that he had sent many emails to the Hovercraft Museum but had no response to date. He was planning to make a personal visit to bring a resolution to the outstanding parts needed before it could be moved.

Meeting opened at 6.00pm

101/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
There were no apologies.

102/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

2.1 Cllr Reardon declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the East Cowes Community Partnership and East Cowes Business Association. Cllr Hendry declared a non-pecuniary interest as an IW Councillor. Cllr Love declared a non-pecuniary interest as an IW Councillor and as a member of the East Cowes Community Partnership and East Cowes Business Association. Cllr Webster declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 – grant application from EC Crafters

2.2 No written requests for dispensations were received.

103/23 MINUTES

The minutes of a meeting held on 20th July 2023 were approved and signed.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of 20th July 2023.

104/23 FLOOD & EMERGENCY PLANS and LCWIP

4.1 The Council considered adoption of the draft Flood and Emergency Plans drafted by the Business Apprentice, Charlie Marshall. CM explained that the basis of the plan was taken from the Yarmouth Plan and that Ian Laurie, IWC Resilience Officer and Vicky Spencer, Environment Agency, had been involved in its drafting. Questions were asked about the next stages, and it was explained that, if adopted, a chairperson would be required from the Council and then work could begin on forming a group of volunteers. SH asked why there were 2 plans and CM explained that the Flood Plan was very specifically focussed on Flood, whereas the Emergency Plan was to cope with a wider range of emergencies such as a major fire etc. SH said that he had no issue with 2 plans, but it was likely that the same volunteer group would serve for both. Council agreed that the plans should be adopted.

4.2 Councillor Reardon was nominated as Chair for both plans, which she accepted.

4.3 It was agreed to adopt the East Cowes & Whippingham LCWIP

Resolved: To adopt the Flood and Emergency Plans and begin the next stage of recruiting volunteers. To elect Cllr Reardon as Chair for both Plans. To adopt the LCWIP

105/23 GRANTS

5.1 The Council considered the following grant applications and agreed the amounts as listed:

1. Victim Support – £300
2. Citizens Advice - £1000
3. East Cowes Crafters - £298
4. East Cowes Heritage – £927
5. Ability Dogs – £300
6. Care in the Garden - £900
7. East Cowes Vics roof renewal

Resolved: The Council resolved to grant the amounts stated for applications 1 - 6. The Council agreed to grant the balance of the grant budget £1209, to East Cowes Vics on the condition that the Town Council was given proof of spend towards the roof. Until that proof was received the amount would be ringfenced for East Cowes Vics for this purpose.

106/23 WATERFRONT/LUF REGENERATION

6.1 The council received an update on the Waterfront/LUF Regeneration Plans. KL stated that we should be pressing them for completion and that he would like information on the procurement process. It was suggested that the council ask for a timeline on implementation of the project.

Resolved: To request a project plan/timeline and procurement information from regeneration Team of the IW Council

107/23 FLOATING BRIDGE

The Council received an update on the Floating Bridge from the IW Council. Comments were made about the changes to the IW council leadership and how that might affect the future of the floating bridge. KL stated that a full report was being generated to be presented to the Cabinet but that he was unable to discuss details at this time.

108/23 FINANCES

8.1 The Council approved payments made including by Direct Debit and BACS

8.2 The Council noted and accepted the bank reconciliations for July and August 2023

8.3 After some discussion the Council agreed to write off a bad debt outstanding from 20/21 for £30.00. They stated that in future anyone not paying should be barred from further hiring.

8.4 The Council considered the procurement of a Multipay bank card for staff use. It was explained that staff are having to use their own monies to purchase items and services when a company was unable/unwilling to provide a pr-forma invoice. Sometimes this could run into hundreds of pounds. It was agreed that the card was a sensible way forward and that Financial Regulations should be amended to ensure that conditions on use could be included to ensure the council's finances were safeguarded.

Resolved: It was resolved to approve payments as presented, to note the bank reconciliation, to write off the bad debt of £30, to apply for a Multipay bank card for staff use and to amend Financial Regulations to include this. Amended Financial Regulations to be brought to council for approval

109/23 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME CONSULTATION

The Council discussed the options put forward by the IW Council for the following years Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The options were for the scheme to stay as it is currently with the maximum level of support at 70%, to increase the maximum level to 75%, to decrease the maximum level to 65%. The Council agreed that with the current cost of living crisis that they should support the maximum level being raised to 75%.

Resolved: To support the maximum level of 75%

110/23 WIGHT ENERGY SHARE OFFER

10.1 The council considered whether they wished to take up the share offer to invest in Wight Community Energy (WCE). The Clerk provided additional information received from the general manger:

Withdrawing of share capital is subject to agreement by the WCE board. It is expected that share capital will be repaid by 2030. The only way investors can get their money back is by selling shares back to the society. Notice has to be given of the intention to withdraw share capital and directors have the right to refuse requests for withdrawal. Before May 2029 the WCE directors will only accept requests for withdrawal associated with death or other exceptional circumstance. Share withdrawal shares are not transferable. Whilst requests for withdrawal may be made before 2029, they are likely to be refused. After 2029 it will be an **objective** of WCE to repay all but the minimum amounts, thereby retaining many shareholders, but with a minimal amount of shareholder capital. For example, if an investor put £1,000 into the organisation, then they would receive the target interest of £60 per year until 2029/30, at which time WCE would seek to repay £750 to the investor, thereby retaining the minimum amount of £250 and the shareholder in the society. The Clerk informed the council that investors are not protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and do not have recourse to the Financial Services Ombudsman.

CP gave the council information on how many other parishes were taking this offer up. KL said that he was opposed to investing with an unproven company and that it was taking an unnecessary risk with public money. SH said that having looked at the business plan there was no mention of battery storage which would be needed to sell on the power and that the risks to earn 6% interest were not worth it. There were other more efficient methods of making the council's reserves work. MW said that she was opposed to the council investing.

Resolved: To refuse the Wight Energy share offer

111/23 REPORTS

11.1 The Clerk reported on the Bookings and Income report, which was noted, the Citizens Advice AGM invite for Wednesday 4th October at 6pm (zoom), councillors to advise if they wished to attend. A request from Kevin Legg, Island Roads to park the Town Sweepers barrow at the town hall was agreed. A key to park it at the rear of the Town Hall would be provided.

11.2 The Mayors report was issued in advance and was noted

11.3 IW Ward Councillors reports

Cllr Hendry had given his update on Kingston in public forum

Cllr Love has made numerous complaints about the cleanliness and excessive weeds in and around the town and the Esplanade. He thanked the volunteers for all their hard work regarding litter picking and said what a difference it was making. He gave an update on the Frank James hospital building that work was now being undertaken and that the IWC had informed him that the owners have now found some additional funding. He stated that the standard of work was unacceptable and that the building was uninhabitable. He asked if the Clerk could write to island Roads and ask if the District Steward could inspect the hedges and trees at John Nash Avenue and Sylvan Avenue as he felt they were dangerously overgrown. He commented on the rebuild of the Esplanade car park wall going well.

11.4 Town Councillors reports

Cllr Packham had attended the Environment & Sustainability Forum on the 19th September where the IW Council's Climate Environment Strategy for 2021/2040 was discussed. This included tackling poverty, sustainable communities and dementia hub projects.

Cllr Lake informed the council that the last of the plaques at the landslip had now been fixed and asked if the council could undertake this task in future. It was agreed that the Facilities Officer would contact Cllr Lake for information.

Cllr Palin spoke about the Beach Clean at the end of July. He had been in conversation with SAS group and had discussed how the beach hut might be used for raising awareness. He had also been in discussion with the Wildlife Trust on a similar theme.

Cllr Webster reported on the hazardous parking at John Nash Avenue to Oakley Way which reduced visibility, and which could cause an accident. KL had received a formal complaint about it and stated that it needed to go on the IR register, he said he would make some enquiries and see if anything could be done. There are no parking restrictions in place there currently.

Cllr Reardon gave an update on the community orchard replacement tree and that Care in the Garden were now watering it. She informed the council that the Facilities Officer had been replacing the floor in the beach hut and that it would be ready for projects for next year. Cllr Lake suggested an open day where groups could attend and arrange a programme of events. The hut should be used as a means of engaging with the community.

Cllr Reardon informed the council of Cllr Priddle's resignation and formally thanked him for his service. Councillors stated that it was a great loss to the council.

112/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, that it is in the public interest that the press and public are excluded. (1960 Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act s1 (2)).

Resolved: To exclude the press and public.

Confidential Minutes

Meeting closed at 8.20pm

Signed:

Dated: