



## East Cowes Town Council

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Minutes of a meeting of **East Cowes Town Council** held at East Cowes Town Hall, York Avenue, East Cowes **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 6pm**

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**Present; Chair:** Cllr Reardon (Mayor) **Councillors:** Packham, Palin, Webster, Lake

**Clerk:** S Chilton

**Also present:** 3 members of the public, Vicky Spencer & Ian Walton Environment Agency, Laura Moran & Adam Wilds, Southern Water

### Public Forum

Some very positive comments were made about the Christmas Market and a request that it should remain as an external event as it increased the footfall in the town generally.

A question was asked about the casual vacancy co-option. This was to be discussed as a confidential item.

A request was put forward regarding the inclusion of a changing area that could be used by the shrape swimmers in any plans for the upgrading of the Esplanade toilets. The Mayor said that this would be considered.

Meeting opened at 6.00pm

### 141/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were sent from Cllr Hendry owing to a Governors meeting and Cllr Love who was on holiday

### 142/23 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.

2.2 No written requests for dispensations were received.

### 143/23 MINUTES

The minutes of a meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> November were approved and signed.

**Resolved:** To approve the minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

### 144/23 EAST COWES FLOODING

4.1 The Mayor opened the discussion by reporting that during the recent flooding lots had gone wrong which had highlighted the problem areas that needed to be addressed. Vicky Spencer and Ian Walton, representing the Environment Agency (EA), reported that after the flooding on the 20<sup>th</sup> October a recovery cell had been set up which investigates what happened and why it happened. The IW Council (IWC) has commissioned a full internal independent debrief, to identify lessons from the storms. They will be putting in place resultant recommendations in a report to the Council Scrutiny Committee, which should be available in January 2024, this in addition to the Section 19 Flood Report. VS reported that a lot flood resilience work had been done and funding for further properties was available, but to date only 28 properties had applied. Commercial properties were not included. VS said it was important that incidents were reported so that a full picture can be built up.

Laura Moran (LM) and Adam Wilds (AW), SW gave a summary of the actions taken. AW had organised a multi-agency walkaround with Island Roads (IR), IWC & EA, Cllr Love had been invited. There was sharing of mapping with IR to determine crossover and responsibility. AW stated that widespread surface water flooding during the last week of October made operations at wastewater pumping stations and water supply works more difficult than normal. Thanks to the efforts of frontline teams customers' taps were kept running, and minimised flooding to properties. SW had worked closely with partner agencies, including IWC, IR, and EA, amid challenging conditions. Following an investigation, SW confirmed that the sheer amount of water entering the network caused the storms pumps at Albany Road Pumping Station to be temporarily overwhelmed and they failed to operate. The pumps are automatic so when surface water levels fell, they began operating once more. Councillors questioned the number and location of pumps and whether they had been switched on. Despite SW assurances that there are no other pumps in the area, Councillors agreed to further investigate, through local knowledge, the location of pumps in East Cowes. There are some highways schemes in the works for East Cowes to complete a catchment survey of the area, through the Clean Rivers & Seas Task Force. This will identify any defects to the sewer and identify any misconnections i.e. road gullies connected to the sewer in error. AW will provide an update as soon as the survey has been complete. Cllr Webster said that a lot of problems with flooding could be averted at planning application stage. That the Planning Authority should listen more to the EA and SW comments. LM stated that SW was not a statutory consultee and EA are only asked to comment on capacity checks for foul water. Both agencies found this very frustrating and agreed that planning can make a real difference. Cllr Lake said that the recent flooding had confirmed that East Cowes must have a robust plan in place to as it was clear East Cowes was on its own. EA agreed that the Flood Plan should be operational and that EA would contact IWC to assist in taking this forward. Councillors said that no one seemed to be answering phones, there was a lack of a coordinated approach. and they felt abandoned. It was agreed that there should be just one number to call in a flooding emergency. Both agencies agreed this would be a good idea.

145/23

## WATERFRONT/LUF REGENERATION

5.1 The council received a written response from Gino Woolridge, IW Council addressing the concerns that had been raised. GW stated that regarding the LUF funded Venture Quays projects (Columbine, Barracks and Public Realm) the project is on track to deliver the majority of its key deliverables. There will be a requirement to reduce the scope and/or value engineer a solution across the three projects due to a significant rise in project costs. Meeting the costs pressures of the project has been achieved. This is becoming more challenging as a substantial amount of value engineering has already taken place. This may require scope changes to deliver every aspect across the programme within the available budget. Pending the outcomes of the awaited survey, the costs, and options for the use of this space is unknown. IWC will need to take account of the practical and safety considerations of making use of this space given the works that may be required to the building. Concerns were raised regarding the time frame for the project and that it would not be completed by the Esplanade Centenary and 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the RNLI celebrations on the Esplanade in 2024. GW stated that to highlight the importance of this event, ERMCo have been requested to increase the weighting for the relevant section of the tender and that interested suppliers provide a clear strategy of how they will keep to this important deadline. He agreed with ERMCo that the Under the Prom area will be carried out in a separate tender to allow for the "green space" to be regenerated while the under the prom area undergoes the necessary due diligence to find a solution. Due to the short timeline and nature of the works at an exposed location, adverse weather or other unforeseen circumstances may delay completion. As such the IWC cannot guarantee the timeframe and recommend planning for an alternative location. GW stated that the funding allocation has not reduced, but the project is under significant cost pressures which are significantly higher than first anticipated. They are in negotiations with the preferred supplier for Phase One of the Barracks and are yet to have the report back for the Under the Prom element. They continue to work with ERMCo to find value solutions for the best outcomes within existing budget. Delays have occurred due to finding solutions to unexpected issues and undertaking significant value engineering. Once a supplier has been appointed and a timeline agreed, the IWC will provide ECTC updates on the delivery progress. The LUF have invited IWC to request a top up and this has been submitted, but IWC still await a decision. GW confirmed that the Town Council will be consulted before any significant decisions are taken on key project milestones. As key stakeholders the IW Council value ECTC's input and would continue to seek the Town Council's advice and ideas on these areas. Cllr Reardon reiterated that the Council would continue to insist that the original project as agreed is achieved.

#### 146/23 FLOATING BRIDGE

The Council received an update on the Floating Bridge from the IW Council. Cllr Webster asked if parents could be made aware of the agreed arrangements to use the bus service when adverse weather stopped the jenny boat from running. Cllr Palin asked if Cllr Phil Jordan, IWC, could be reminded about sending through the floating bridge report as soon as it was available.

**Resolved:** To ask the schools to advise parents of the arrangements for the use of the bus service and to send a reminder to Phil Jordan for a copy of the report

#### 147/23 SOLENT WATER QUALITY AWARD 2024

7.1 The Council considered whether to make an application for the Solent Water Quality Awards 2024

**Resolved:** To apply for the Solent Water Quality Award 2024

#### 148/23 FINANCES

8.1 The Council considered the payments as presented including by Direct Debit and BACS

8.2 The Council noted the bank reconciliation for November 2023

**Resolved:** To agree the payments as presented and to note the bank reconciliation

#### 149/23 COUNCIL POLICIES

9.1 The Council reviewed the following council policies

- Communications and Media Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Policy for Recording, Photographing and Filming of Meetings
- Social Media Policy
- Vexatious Complaints Policy
- Environment & Climate Change Policy

**Resolved:** The Council approved the Policies

#### 150/23 COMMUNITY CINEMA

10.1 The Council noted the report on the Community Cinema and discussed continuing matinee performances. Cllr Palin stated that he would investigate the possibility of working with the Youth Club in half term and holiday periods to introduce some combined activities in the hall, that could include a matinee performance. Pending agreement of the youth club the council agreed to continue the matinees for a further year and then review.

**Resolved:** Cllr Palin to discuss combined activities with the Youth Club and the cinema volunteers

#### 151/23 FACILITIES

11.1 The Council noted the report of the Facilities Officer. A member of the public raised concerns about the height of the new urinal and that it would be difficult for children to use. This was noted.

#### 152/23 REPORTS

12.1 The Clerk read a letter from the British Legion thanking the council for supporting the poppy appeal which raised £23.04

12.2 Mayors report – The Mayor reported on the Xmas Tree switch on event. Children from local schools had sung carols and Emma Willey from Holy Cross school had switched on the lights. She had also attended Osborne House for the Freedom Tree ceremony and Kynance residential home to sing carols with Churches Together.

12.3 There were no IW Ward Councillors reports

12.4 Town Councillors reports

Cllr Palin reported on being awarded Young Councillor of the Year by the National Association of Local Councils. The ceremony took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> November at a parliamentary reception at the House of Lords. Cllr Palin received his award from Baroness Scott of Needham. The Mayor congratulated Cllr Palin on behalf of the council and stated that it was a credit to the Council.

Cllr Packham stated that he had attended the pantomime and wished to congratulate them on a professional performance which he thoroughly enjoyed. He said that the lighting had been superb this year and rivalled Medina

Theatre. The Mayor echoed his comments and said that the panto had received very good reviews. Cllr Palin said that this should be fed back to the Theatre Committee.

Cllr Lake had attended the panto and had joined Cllr Reardon in manning the refreshments which had been extremely busy at all performances.

153/23 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.

Co-option and Staffing matters were discussed

Meeting closed at 8.00pm

Signed:

Dated: