



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 18th January 2024 at 6pm**

Present; Chair: Cllr Reardon (Mayor) **Councillors:** Packham, Palin, Hendry, Love, Lake, Irwin

Clerk: S Chilton

Also present: 4 members of the public

One minute's silence and a short tribute led by the Mayor, prior to the public forum to commemorate the passing of Councillor Margaret Webster was recognised.

Public Forum

A member of the public (AM) referred the council to matters discussed at the last council meeting concerning the flooding and the sandbag store in Well Rd being repeatedly and quickly emptied during the October flooding. The store only holds enough for use by the local community at risk. This was raised at the December Town Council meeting with visitors from Southern Water and the Environment Agency. On January 4th both Island Roads and the IW council were advertising the same 3 sandbags stores for whole island use. There were no additional stores advertised, despite severe flooding in Gunville Newport. The Environment Agency site advised checking local council information, which then directed back to the three stores for all island use. TR stated that she had recently met with the Flood Resilience Officer from the IW Council and was told that present funds would not allow an increase in what was available, and it was not a statutory requirement to provide them. AM asked if the council could write to the 3 agencies involved asking them not to advertise the Well Rd store for general all island use and suggest that each area needs a designated collection point, or a central depot at Newport. At the December meeting, representatives from Southern Water asserted there were no pumps in East Cowes. Following the discussion at the meeting, KM searched at the Heritage centre and found nothing to suggest there was. AM asked if the council could pursue this issue with the local authority or advertise for information from senior East Cowes. The council agreed to pursue these matters with the agencies concerned.

1/24 NEW COUNCILLOR

1.1 The Mayor welcomed Councillor Irwin

1.2 Councillor Irwin declared her acceptance of office and thanked the council for co-opting her to the Council. She was looking forward to working with everyone.

2/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies

3/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

3.1 Cllr Reardon declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the East Cowes Community Partnership and East Cowes Business Association. 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 Hendry declared a non-pecuniary interest as an IW Councillor.

3.2 No written requests for dispensations were received.

4/24 MINUTES

The minutes of a meeting held on **Thursday 14th December 2023** were approved and signed.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of 14th December 2023.

5/24 STANDING ORDERS

5.1 The Council considered omitting the highlighted words from Standing Order 5J:

“The first item of business at the Annual meeting shall be the election of the Mayor, **who can serve for a period of no longer than 2 years in a 4 year period. The 4-year period to begin from the date of the first term of office elected as Mayor at the Annual meeting.** The re-election of the Mayor will take place annually. The second item of business at the Annual meeting shall be the election of the Deputy Mayor, **who can serve for a period of no longer than 2 years in a 4-year period. The 4-year period to begin from the date of the first term of office elected as Deputy Mayor at the Annual meeting.** The re-election of the Deputy Mayor will take place annually. Following the election of the Mayor of the Council and Deputy Mayor of the Council at the annual meeting, the business shall include:

There was some discussion that the highlighted wording was not needed as there was the opportunity to change the Mayor and Deputy Mayor at every annual meeting. Cllr Hendry stated that he did not agree and that the wording had been carefully crafted to avoid the risk of one person holding the office continually and stopping the process of other councillors having the opportunity to take on this role. The wording was drafted in a way that would enable multiple people to take on the role. KL proposed that the highlighted wording be removed, and this was seconded. Cllr Hendry proposed that the highlighted wording remain, and this was seconded. A vote was taken on both proposals and Cllr Hendry’s proposal was defeated.

Resolved: To remove the highlighted text from Standing Orders

6/24 FLOATING BRIDGE

6.1 The council received an update on the Floating Bridge from the IW Council. The Clerk stated that the report on the floating bridge had still not been received. Cllr Love explained that the report on the floating bridge is still in draft form and cannot be released. He has asked for access to it as soon as possible. Any financial decision in respect of the bridge will have to be agreed by IWC Cabinet and Full Council. He suggested writing again to Phil Jordan asking that the town council see the report as soon as possible and prior to it being released to the media. Cllr Lake suggested we write to the IW Council asking for details on the planned maintenance for 2024 as this was skewing the operating figures being received.

Resolved: To write to Phil Jordan requesting that the report come to council asap and to write to Mark Downer requesting the planned maintenance dates for 2024

7/24 WATERFRONT REGENERATION PROJECT

7.1 The Clerk reported that no update had been received despite requesting this from Gino Wooldridge and Ross Edmunds. Cllr Love said this was most concerning given that they were aware that the council were planning events along the esplanade this year. It was proposed that GW/RE be asked to provide start and completion dates for the Waterfront Project. Cllr Lake reported that she had been approached by some students undertaking NCFE Level 3 Diploma in Sport, with UKSA. They are undertaking a sustainability awareness assignment to preserve the coast in some way and approached Cllr Lake about raising funds for the East Cowes landslip project. Cllr Lake had passed the information on to GW and RE. Cllr Lake felt that if they are prepared to raise funds it could mean that the pot may stretch further, and it would be great to have youngsters involved.

Resolved: To write to GW/RE requesting start/completion dates for the waterfront project giving them 7 days to reply

8/24 BUDGET 2024/2025

8.1 The council considered the draft budget for 2024/25. The Council’s aim was not to increase the precept. It was explained that by applying for a Public Works loan to fund the Skatepark and Esplanade toilets project totalling £250,000.00, the money that had been ringfenced for this purpose in reserves could be used to offset the overall budget required for 2024/25. Match funding could be sought for the skate park should the need arise. The anticipated repayment for a PWL had been included in the budget figures for 24/25, with an expected term equalling the existing PWL. If agreed, the budget presented would result in no increase in the precept and the capital projects could still be achieved.

Cllr Hendry proposed that the council agree the budget, and this was seconded.

8.2 The Council then resolved to agree the budget and set the precept for 2024/25

Resolved: To approve the draft budget of £547,120.09, minus income and receipts of £175,170.00, and set a precept of £371,950.09.

9/24 FINANCES

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

9.2 The bank reconciliation for December was not available

The 3rd Quarter budget report was circulated to Council and it was noted that actual expenditure was below budgeted expenditure at the 3rd quarter.

Resolved: To agree the payments as presented and to note that the bank reconciliation for December would be presented to the February meeting

10/24 DEPUTY CLERK/RFO

10.1 The Council received the recommendation of the HR Committee for the appointment to the post of Deputy Clerk/RFO

Resolved: To agree the recommendation and agree a start date

11/24 ANNUAL DISPENSATION OF HALL CHARGES

11.1 The council considered the request received for annual dispensation of key holder and caretaker charges from the community bingo group. Council suggested that the dispensation policy be made more public by use of social media.

Resolved: To agree dispensation for Community Bingo for 2024

12/24 REPORTS

12.1 Clerk's report – the Clerk asked whether the RNLI and the 100th Anniversary of the Esplanade were planned for the same dates. This was confirmed as the weekend of the 24th – 27th May

12.2 there was no report from the Mayor

12.3 IW Ward Councillors

Cllr Love reported that the IW Council had increased the tax relief level to 75% in line with the town and parish council's feedback. No news on Norris Castle. He had written to Southern Water and was awaiting a reply. He had been offered another boat which could be used as a flower boat on the esplanade. He had attended a meeting with the RNLI with the Mayor about the upcoming celebrations. There would be a procession and the painting should be completed by then. He had raised the issue of flood grants with the IW Council as it seemed that some owners had been unfairly treated. He had recently undertaken a drive around the town with Phil Jordan, Leader of the IW Council and raised various outstanding issues that he has committed to look at.

Cllr Hendry had nothing to report

12.4 Town Councillors reports

Cllr Palin stated that he had received 3 reports regarding the lack of lighting in Kingston Rd and that the public felt unsafe. He had approached Island Roads and they said there was nothing they could do and IW Council have no money. Cllr Reardon said that there was a lamppost there but that it was not lit. Cllr Hendry said he would check on this.

13/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Council resolved 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

Casual Vacancy and contractual matters were discussed.

Meeting closed at 7.45 pm

Signed:

Dated: