



EAST COWES TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of the meeting of **East Cowes Town Council Meeting** held on 18th December 2025 at the Town Hall, York Avenue, East Cowes to discuss the following matters set out in the agenda.

Present: Councillors: Reardon, Pragnell, Warleigh-Lack, Love, Hendry, Brimble-Brennan

Clerk: S Chilton **Deputy Clerk:** C Jones

3 members of the public

6.00pm PUBLIC FORUM

Congratulations were given from Angie Mathews for the changes made to the council's website. Accessibility revisions have recently been implemented by the Deputy Clerk. She also queried the status of the Crossways planning application. Cllr Love informed her that it is still on the planning register, confirmed by Cllr Hendry. The Mayor stated that the council will keep a watching brief on this.

128/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Lake and Cllr Palin due to family commitments

129/25 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 Love declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the East Cowes Community Partnership and East Cowes Business Association and IW Ward Councillor and Governor of Holy Cross school.

2.2 There were no requests for dispensations

130/25 MINUTES

3.1 The Council approved and signed the minutes of the **Full Council** held on 18th December.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the Full Council for the 18th December 2025

131/25 WATERFRONT REGENERATION UPDATE

The Clerk reported that the planning application for Albany Green has been approved and is currently out for tender, with completion anticipated by June 2026. The application for the Prom building remains pending.

Cllr Love commented that Albany Green presents a valuable opportunity for the Council to utilise and develop. He provided an update on dredging works being carried out by Cowes Harbour Commission for the new marina, noting that these works are undertaken at their own risk and involve the Environment Agency and the IW Council Coastal Team. Cllr Love further reported that the Barracks building is nearing completion, with UKSA planning to develop the interior for use during the coming summer season. He also noted that the building on Albany Green is owned by Southern Water, which can occasionally cause issues when problems arise with the pumping station. These matters remain outside the Council's control until the lease for the area is formally transferred to the Town Council.

Resolved: No actions resolved

132/25 FLOATING BRIDGE

5.1 The Clerk reported that a meeting has been scheduled with Clare Chamberlain from the Government's Procurement Office to provide guidance on the procurement process for the floating bridge replacement. Members of the Isle of Wight Council involved in the procurement process, along with members of the Floating Bridge Working Group, have been invited to attend. The meeting will take place on 6 January.

The Mayor provided an update on the progress of the Working Group, noting that its work is proceeding well. She highlighted the importance of having appropriate expertise within the group and confirmed that suitable individuals have been identified. The Mayor expressed satisfaction with the group's progress to date and stated that she will continue to monitor developments. Cllr Love added that Isle of Wight Councillors had worked hard to secure representation on the Working Group, describing it as a challenging process. He noted that this is not the end of the matter, as the procurement stage for the floating bridge replacement is still to come.

Resolved: No actions resolved

132/25 FINANCE

6.1 Councillors considered payments as presented made by Direct Debit and BACS

6.2 Councilors noted the bank reconciliation for November 2025

Resolved: To approve and ratify the payments including by Direct Debit and BACS, as presented for November 2025 and to note the bank reconciliation for November 2025.

133/25 DISPENSATION REQUEST

7.1 Councillors considered a request from **Sarah Blackwell, Director of Cowes Fringe**, for dispensation of Town Hall hire charges for **22nd, 23rd, and 24th May 2026**, amounting to **£1,116.25**. The Clerk explained that Cowes Fringe is keen to bring this event to East Cowes as a trial, offering a weekend of entertainment to gauge community interest and explore opportunities for future events. The dispensation would assist in making this possible. Cllr Hendry queried whether the events would be ticketed and, if so, how profits would be allocated, noting that it may not be appropriate to grant dispensation for a commercial venture. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that at least one event, *Fanny Quivers*, would be ticketed. The Mayor suggested that further information was required and proposed inviting the organiser to attend the next meeting.

Cllrs Love and Warleigh-Lack highlighted potential non-financial benefits for East Cowes and asked whether utilities were included in the request. The Clerk clarified that the charges relate to hall hire and stage costs. Mike West, representing Cowes Fringe, explained that revenue is used to fund future events and pay performers. Cllr Love expressed support for encouraging such initiatives.

The Mayor reiterated the need for additional details before a decision could be made. Cllr Hendry noted that the request did not currently meet the criteria set out in the Council's dispensation policy and would require further consideration.

Resolved: To invite Sarah Blackwell to attend the January meeting to provide more information.

134/25 LUNCHEON CLUB

8.1 The Council received a financial summary for the Luncheon Club covering the past seven months, which showed a subsidy of £194.30. A grant had been received from the Masons for £300. The warming cabinet had been purchased. The Mayor said that the project was combatting loneliness. Members discussed whether to continue supporting the initiative. The Deputy Clerk reported that attendance had recently declined but was averaging around 16 - 20 participants. Cllr Hendry outlined that there could be a hidden cost of loss of potential hire hall which needed to be considered.

Cllr Love questioned whether the service was reaching those most in need. It was noted that assessing attendees' financial circumstances would be difficult, but the group generally comprised older residents. The Clerk highlighted that the Luncheon Club has evolved into a social event, providing an opportunity for those who may be lonely to meet and interact in a warm and welcoming environment.

Cllr Love suggested exploring grant funding options. Following further discussion around the merits of the project, it was proposed that the Council continue to subsidise the Luncheon Club for another year.

Resolved: To continue subsidising the Luncheon Club for a further year.

135/25 COMMUNITY CINEMA

9.1 The Council reviewed the financial summary for the Community Cinema, which showed that the project is currently breaking even. The initiative is run entirely by volunteers, and attendance varies depending on the popularity of the films shown. It was noted that selecting popular genres is key to maintaining good attendance. Cllr Hendry raised a concern about potential loss of hall hire revenue during the times the cinema operates. The Deputy Clerk explained that scheduling for the cinema, along with other community projects such as the Luncheon

Club and Tea Dance, had been carefully planned to coincide with periods when the hall is less busy. Councillors agreed that the Community Cinema provides value to the community and should continue for a further year.

Resolved: To continue the Community Cinema for a further year.

136/25 COMMUNITY MARKET

10.1 The Clerk reminded members of previous discussions regarding the Community Market, noting that the Council had suggested moving to a quarterly, themed format. The Mayor agreed this was a good idea but highlighted the challenge of finding someone to organise the markets. It was noted that the same stallholders were attending each time and that buyer turnout remained low.

The Clerk reported that food markets tend to be popular, but attracting food vendors has proven difficult. Councillors expressed general support for continuing the market if ways could be found to make it more successful. The recent Christmas Market was adversely affected by poor weather.

Suggestions included holding a summer event such as a car boot sale and combining a Christmas evening market with the Christmas lights switch-on. The Mayor noted that the Christmas event had previously been organised by the Business Association. Councillors supported the idea of a car boot sale, possibly at Jubilee Recreation Ground.

The Deputy Clerk advised that if the Council wished to expand the event, a larger budget and dedicated organiser for marketing and coordination may be required. The Mayor expressed support for continuing the initiative, while Cllr Love suggested that car boot sales should be held regularly rather than as a one-off. The Mayor concluded that more information was needed and proposed that the matter be brought back to a future meeting. This was agreed.

Resolved: The Clerk to explore options and report back at a future meeting.

137/25 REPORTS

11.1 Clerk's Report: The Clerk read a letter from the RNLI, thanking the Council for its offer of support should closure due to relocation occur. This remains a proposal at present, with the situation to be reviewed in 2026. The RNLI anticipates operations continuing until 2027 and will advise the Council on how support may be provided at that time. Cllr Love noted that RNLI staff are in a difficult position regarding the uncertainty and confirmed he is in contact and will support employees.

The Clerk also read a letter from the Ellen MacArthur Trust, thanking the Council for its continued support.

The Deputy Clerk read a letter of thanks from the Victoria Cross Trust for the recent donation and advised that further work is planned for September.

11.2 Mayor's Report:

The Mayor reported on the recent Christmas events, noting that the Christmas Lights Switch-On was a fantastic success and very well attended.

11.3 IWC Ward Councillor Reports:

Cllr Love congratulated the Amy White Theatre on an excellent pantomime and formally thanked all volunteers involved. He provided updates on the Esplanade development and tree works at the far end, and reported that the Army Cadets will be forming an East Cowes branch, with the location to be confirmed.

He expressed concern regarding the potential RNLI closure, which could result in the loss of 70 jobs, and raised questions about future use of the extensive site and the impact on subsidiary companies. He confirmed that a campaign has begun to promote the merits of retaining the local RNLI operation rather than moving to the Poole model, and that he has written to lifeboat units nationwide seeking support. He stressed that 230 years of lifeboat building in East Cowes is at risk. Cllr Love also mentioned uncertainty around local elections, noting that Mayoral elections will not proceed and that the future of the IW Council, including possible amalgamation with a mainland authority, will be a government decision.

Cllr Hendry reported on Saunders Way, noting mixed views among residents regarding reopening. He and Cllr Love are exploring options. Cllr Warleigh-Lack raised concerns about parking and traffic calming, and Cllr Hendry noted that removing parking could lead to increased speeds and that parked cars currently provide some traffic calming. No official opening date has been confirmed.

11.4 Town Councillor Reports:

Cllr Warleigh-Lack praised the pantomime as an outstanding success and congratulated all involved.

Cllr Pragnell reported on work with three local companies to replace the Esplanade shelter, which is at the end of its life. He is involving GKN apprentices in the design and build process and hopes to secure donated materials and support from a woodworking company for seating construction. This initiative could save the Council approximately £30,000. Councillors thanked Cllr Pragnell for his efforts and hard work.

Cllr Brimble-Brennan reported on a Tree Warden event she attended on behalf of the Council, highlighting the benefits of the scheme and opportunities for funding, including from the Woodland Trust, which offers advice on planting and aftercare. She expressed interest in developing this initiative locally and suggested leading an event in the New Year. Councillors thanked her, and she will liaise with the Clerk's office to arrange.

138/25 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

12.1 It was 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

Contractual and Policy matters were discussed