



EAST COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall, York Avenue, East Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO32 6RU
Tel: (01983) 299082 Email: clerk@eastcowestowncouncil.co.uk

Minutes of the meeting of **East Cowes Town Council Meeting** held on 19th February 2026 at the Town Hall, York Avenue, East Cowes to discuss the following matters set out in the agenda.

Present: Councillors: Reardon (Mayor), Love (Deputy Mayor), Pragnell, Warleigh-Lack, Hendry, Lake, Brimble-Brennan

Deputy Clerk: C Jones

4 members of the public

PCSO Ian Jones

6.00pm PUBLIC FORUM

PCSO Ian Jones attended and provided a detailed update on recent anti-social behaviour issues in the town, he reported that police had been responding to concerns at the Esplanade, where groups had been using the area to sit in vehicles and smoke cannabis. Councillors asked that these visits continue, particularly in the evenings when the area is quieter. The officer confirmed that residents and councillors can email any concerns directly and the information will be circulated to the neighbourhood team. The issue of shoplifting at the Co-op was raised; the officer stated that police respond where possible and liaise with staff when suspects are known or evidence is available. He explained that some related incidents had originated from a nearby property, but that the situation had recently stabilised. Residents also asked whether regular police “beat surgery” could be reinstated in East Cowes. The officer confirmed he attempts to attend community locations such as coffee mornings and youth sessions whenever duties allow and provided dates for upcoming sessions at the Pavilion and Waitrose. He agreed to share future dates with the Council so they can be publicised. He also confirmed that police continue to monitor local parks following past incidents of vandalism. This had previously required the Council to increase safety inspections from weekly to daily. The officer was not aware of all past incidents and agreed to take the information back to the team.

AGENDA

13/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Palin who had an unavoidable family event to attend.

14/26 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 IWC Ward Councillor and Trustee of Community Action IW, Cllr Hendry declared a non-pecuniary interest as a IWC Ward Councillor.

2.2 No written requests for dispensations were received.

15/26 MINUTES

3.1 The Council approved and signed the minutes of the Full Council held on 22th January 2026.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the Full Council for the 22nd January 2026.

16/26 WATERFRONT REGENERATION UPDATE

4.1 The Deputy Clerk provided an update to Cllrs, Crown Park were due to begin works on 2nd February but delayed due to awaited approvals from Southern Water. Documentation has now been revised and clarification supplied, with confirmation expected shortly. Mobilisation will begin once approval is issued and a “spade in the ground” event will be arranged. Discussion took place regarding the Prom building planning application and issues

surrounding disposal processes required by IWC before transfer. Members expressed concern about delays and emphasised urgency ahead of the pre-election period. Councillors requested that further pressure be applied to IWC to progress disposal and lease documentation.

Resolved: The Clerk to continue pressing IWC for confirmation and progress on disposal and lease documentation for Albany Green and the Prom building.

17/26 FLOATING BRIDGE

5.1 Councillors received January operating statistics. Comparisons with full-year statistics were requested for future reporting. Members of the Floating Bridge Working Group provided updates: the advisory group is now fully formed, including maritime expertise. Work continues toward procurement testing and design-and-build market engagement. Concerns were raised regarding a £600,000 three-year maintenance contract issued without consultation with councillors or the working group. Written clarification has been requested from IWC. Councillors also raised concerns about incomplete statistical reporting and requested more accurate operational data, including hours of service, hours lost, and scheduled maintenance disclosure.

Resolved: The Clerk to request more accurate statistical reporting and requested more accurate operational data, including hours of service, hours lost, and scheduled maintenance disclosure and Cllr Love to request clarification from IWC regarding the maintenance contract and reporting inconsistencies.

18/26 FINANCE

6.1 Councillors considered payments as presented made by Direct Debit and BACS for February 2026.

6.2 Councillors noted the bank reconciliation for January 2026

Resolved: To approve and ratify the payments including by Direct Debit and BACS, as presented for January 2026, to note the bank reconciliation for January 2026.

19/26 COUNCIL POLICIES

7.1 The Deputy Clerk presented the following policies for consideration: Alcohol on Council Premises Policy, Advertising Policy, IT Policy (together with the Website Accessibility Statement for noting) and the Commemoration Policy. The Council proposed amendments to the IT Policy, including the removal of the requirement for regular password changes, the addition of the use of multi-factor authentication where possible, and confirmation that any security incidents should be reported initially to the Clerk's office. Councillors also reviewed the Commemoration Policy and recommended that an additional point be inserted into Section 5 to state that the default action would be a one-minute silence.

Resolved: To adopt the Alcohol on Council Premises Policy, the Advertising Policy, the IT Policy, the Website Accessibility Statement (Appended to the IT Policy) and the Commemoration Policy, incorporating the agreed amendments.

20/26 HALL HIRE – CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEATRE RESERVE FUND

8.1 The Council considered the Theatre Committee request to allocate a percentage (5–20%) of full theatre hire fees to the Theatre Reserve. After discussion, councillors noted current low volume of theatre events. Council agreed that such arrangements may be reconsidered once a full events calendar is established.

Resolved: Not to allocate a percentage of hire income at this time. To review Theatre Committee Terms of Reference and bring back recommendations to a future meeting.

21/26 DATA PROTECTION PRINCIPLES

9.1 Councillors received and noted the report summarising the seven key Data Protection Principles. Members discussed issues such as email forwarding, retention, and councillors' responsibilities.

Resolved: To note the Data Protection Principles.

22/26 UK TOWN OF CULTURE

10.1 The Council considered whether to submit an Expression of Interest for the UK Town of Culture competition. Members noted the opportunity, workload, and suggested forming a working group once more information is gathered. It was agreed that the Clerk will circulate the application information and date options for an initial

brainstorming meeting.

Resolved: To explore submitting an Expression of Interest and convene a councillor workshop to develop content.

23/26 REPORTS

11.1 The Deputy Clerk reported that despite exploring options, no external grant funding had been secured for major Town Hall works; therefore, the allocated 2026 budget will be used to address worsening water ingress above the office area. Repairs to the star cloth and floodlights have been completed, and replacement gates for the paddling pool area are being arranged, with quotes underway for additional playground works. The skatepark remains in heavy use, with some wear to surrounding grass noted. Hall bookings continue to rise, with a strong programme of theatre groups and community events, and 2026 is expected to be particularly busy with new hires, including a boxing event, wrestling, weddings, choirs and Cowes Fringe activity. Community groups continue to thrive, and further grant funding is being explored to support Men's Art sessions. The Council was invited to participate in the 2026 Great British Spring Clean, and dates will be considered at the March meeting. Updates were also provided regarding Cowes Fringe hire requests and the Heritage Fund Project. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that youth club attendance is increasing and organisers will be invited to engage with Full Council in March.

11.2 The Mayor reported on recent meetings and ongoing liaison work with key partners. She confirmed continued attendance at the Floating Bridge Working Group and regular meetings with Red Funnel, where operational matters and local impacts are discussed. She also referenced the Royal British Legion Annual Meeting, which the Deputy Mayor attended in her absence. The Mayor noted her ongoing engagement with Isle of Wight Council officers regarding the Waterfront Regeneration project and confirmed that she will continue to update councillors as progress is made.

11.3 IWC Ward Councillor reports:

Cllr Love provided a detailed update on Isle of Wight Council's budget proposals, highlighting significant concerns regarding proposed changes to Floating Bridge fares. He stressed that increasing Saver Card charges for under-19s would disproportionately disadvantage East Cowes' young people compared with those living elsewhere on the Island. He has written formally to the IWC Policy & Finance Committee requesting removal of these proposals due to lack of consultation, absence of impact assessments, and the unequal effect on local families. He also emphasised that allowing the bridge to continue in its current form would result in ongoing losses and reiterated the need for the replacement project to remain properly funded. Cllr Love updated the Council on the ongoing discussions with the RNLI regarding the proposed relocation of the East Cowes station. He and the Mayor recently attended a stakeholder meeting and have submitted counter-proposals aimed at protecting local heritage and securing continued support for RNLI staff. Decisions are expected in March, and efforts continue to advocate for the station's long-term presence in East Cowes. Cllr Love also reported on the establishment of a new Army Cadets unit in East Cowes, following a positive meeting earlier in the week. He noted strong community links and the value the unit could provide through local service, heritage engagement, and youth development. Representatives will be invited to the March Full Council meeting to present their plans formally.

11.4 Town Councillor reports:

Cllr Pragnell presented the latest progress on the Esplanade Shelter replacement project. GKN apprentices have produced several concept designs following online research and inspiration from comparable coastal structures. These designs adhere to the existing footprint and include variations in roof structure and potential use of recycled or repurposed glass, subject to durability considerations. Councillors viewed the designs during the meeting and noted the involvement of several local companies willing to support the project through donated materials and specialist work. The designs will be circulated to all councillors for ranking and feedback to enable selection of a preferred option. He also proposed that the Council formally recognise the apprentices' contribution, potentially through commendations or inclusion of their names on a plaque incorporated into the finished shelter. Additional supporting companies may also be acknowledged.

24/26 MINUTES

12.1 The Council approved and signed the Confidential Minutes of the meetings held on January 22nd 2026.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the Confidential Meeting held on January 22nd 2026.

Meeting closed at 7.59pm