



EAST COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall, York Avenue, East Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO32 6RU
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Minutes of the meeting of **East Cowes Town Council Meeting** held on 22nd January 2026 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, Palin

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

6 members of the public

Sara Blackwell and associate, Cowes Fringe

6.00pm PUBLIC FORUM

A member of the public requested an update regarding the proposed closure of the local RNLI station. The Mayor advised that an invitation had been received to attend a stakeholders' meeting on 27 January. Councillor Love reported that he had attended a strategy meeting and encouraged residents to write to the RNLI Trustees. It was noted that a decision on the future of the RNLI is expected to be made in the first week of March and that any correspondence should be submitted prior to this date. Contact details for the Trustees were confirmed to be widely publicised. Concerns were raised regarding the drainage of the gabions, with reports that water was not escaping and that repairs had not been undertaken. It was agreed that details would be forwarded to Coastal Defence at the Isle of Wight Council for their attention. The Clerk queried this matter, noting that she had previously been advised by the Isle of Wight Council that the repairs had been completed; this would be followed up. The pollarding of trees at Albany Green was raised, and the Mayor advised that progress on this matter would be made very shortly. Concerns were also expressed regarding the ongoing maintenance of the gabions, including the infill and wire cages. The Mayor confirmed that this would be referred to Councillor Lake, as the project had been community led. A question was asked as to whether a date had been arranged to discuss progress at Saunders Way. Councillor Hendry advised that no date had yet been set.

AGENDA

1/26 COWES FRINGE

Sara Blackwell, Director of Cowes Fringe, attended the meeting and provided an overview of the Cowes Fringe event scheduled to take place at the Town Hall on the weekend of 22, 23 and 24 May. She advised that this would be the fourth year of the event and expressed a strong wish to include East Cowes as part of the programme. Reference was made to a pilot event held at the Town Hall on 17 January, which had been very successful. Ms Blackwell stated that future events would help to increase footfall and bring benefits to the town, the local community and the east of the Island. She highlighted the proximity of the Town Hall to Red Funnel, who were supporting the Fringe, as a key advantage, and advised that high-quality acts from London would be engaged. She further noted plans to hold the "Island's Got Talent" show at the Town Hall on 1 March and expressed the hope of also hosting the Mountbatten Gala Night at the venue. Ms Blackwell requested dispensation for the May weekend events as a one-off arrangement for the first year, with the intention that normal charges would apply thereafter. In response to a query regarding the status of the organisation, she advised that Cowes Fringe was originally a limited company but was in the process of transitioning to a Community Interest Company and was currently operating as a not-for-profit organisation. The Mayor thanked Ms Blackwell for attending and for her presentation.

2/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Lake and Cllr Brimble-Brennan who both had unavoidable family events to attend.

3/26 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 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.

3.2 No written requests for dispensations were received.

4/26 MINUTES

4.1 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

5/26 WATERFRONT REGENERATION UPDATE

5.1 The Mayor reported that she had recently attended a Waterfront Regeneration meeting and explained that much of the meeting was confidential at this time, but she could report that news on the project was imminent. The planning application for the Prom building was currently with Planning.

6/26 FLOATING BRIDGE

6.1 Statistics relating to the Floating Bridge were circulated. The Mayor advised that she would be attending a Floating Bridge User Group meeting and reported that the project was moving forward as planned. A recent meeting had taken place with a senior member of the Government's procurement team, who had provided helpful guidance on the flexibility of the procurement process and emphasised the importance of engagement with local providers. Councillor Love reported that the bridge was currently operating well and expressed satisfaction that councillors were involved in the working group, enabling them to provide constructive input into the process. He confirmed that marine advisors were being consulted. The Mayor confirmed that the project timescale was being adhered to and that further news was expected imminently. She reiterated that while councillors were not involved in the technical design, they were clearly setting out expectations for the replacement bridge. Councillor Hendry reminded the Council that the final decision would need to be considered by the Isle of Wight Council Economic, Regeneration and Infrastructure Committee and asked whether there was any indication of when this would take place. Councillor Love advised that Phil Jordan was seeking to have the funding for the replacement ringfenced. The Mayor and Councillor Love confirmed that no date had yet been provided, but that the matter was imminent and needed to be concluded by March. Councillor Hendry noted that officers could potentially delay the process, but the Mayor reiterated that pressure was being applied to ensure project deadlines were met. Councillor Palin reported that several maritime advisory companies had contacted the Isle of Wight Council with queries but had not received responses and had subsequently withdrawn from the process. He advised that this information had been received on 16 January and that Councillor Jones-Evans was aware. Councillor Love stated that the Council had been informed that several bids had been submitted. Councillor Palin commented that it would be helpful to understand how many companies had opted out of the process. Councillor Reardon confirmed that this should be followed up and that she would ensure this matter was raised with the project team.

7/26 FINANCE

7.1 Councillors considered payments as presented made by Direct Debit and BACS for December and January

7.2 Councilors noted the bank reconciliation for December 2025

7.3 The Clerk explained the report to councillors and commented that the council was still on target for the end of the year. Councillors noted the 3rd quarter budget report.

Resolved: To approve and ratify the payments including by Direct Debit and BACS, as presented for December 2025, to note the bank reconciliation for December 2025. To note the 3rd Quarter Budget report

8/26 ANNUAL BUDGET 2026/2027

8.1 Cllr Hendry suggested bringing forward items 9 and 10 as they may have an impact on the budget. This was agreed. Councillors then discussed those items.

The Clerk indicated that the budget papers were included in the councillors' papers and asked if the council wanted further clarification or had any questions. The Mayor said that as councillors had met frequently to discuss the draft budget all questions had been answered. Cllr Hendry thanked staff for their work on the budget. He stated that he always goes through the budget to ensure that the calculations are correct and they are. He said that sums allocated to budget headings were not permanent and could be moved to other headings should it become necessary. He also explained that the tax base used for calculating the Band D tax rate was not available until February. The Clerk confirmed that she had received the tax base recently for 26/27 as the council were meeting a week later than they normally would. The Clerk stated that the budget under consideration would mean that there would be no increase in the precept. Cllr Hendry agreed that it would be a zero increase. Cllr Palin stated that several major projects had been undertaken in recent years and that this had necessitated a slight increase in the previous precepts. He felt that the council should support this budget and was happy to propose it. Councillors agreed to approve a budget of £549,040.00 for 2026/2027 and to set a precept of £430,312.00.

8.2 The precept was set in conjunction with the approval of the budget.

Resolved: To agree a budget of £549,040.00 and to set a precept of £430,312.00 for the year 2026/2027, to advise IWC of precept demand

9/26 ROMANOV SPUR PATH

9.1 A request had been made through the clerk's office to install a spur path to the Romanov monument to enable disabled access. Quotes had been received and this would cost £2500. The Clerk informed the council that there was no budget available for this and that the council spent £52000 on paths for Jubilee in 24/25. It was agreed that this could not be supported

Resolved: Not to support this at present and review next year at budget setting time

10/26 IW COUNCIL PUBLIC REALM OFFICERS SCHEME

10.1 The Clerk outlined the revised scheme and associated costs. The Council considered whether to contribute to the Isle of Wight Council's enhanced Public Realm Officer scheme. Councillor Palin noted that the Council had declined this service on two previous occasions due to cost concerns, adding that the Isle of Wight Council has statutory responsibilities in this area and that East Cowes Town Council's own staff already carry out playground inspections. Councillor Love supported these comments. Councillors agreed that they did not wish to contribute to the service.

Resolved: Not to contribute to this service, advise IWC

The Council then reverted to Item 8 (146/26) – Annual Budget

11/26 REPORTS

11.1 Clerk's Report. The Clerk had received a request from IWALC to nominate two councillors for the draw for tickets to the Kings Garden Party. Cllrs Reardon and Warleigh-Lack were nominated. The Deputy Clerk gave an update on Well Rd Garden clearance. Island Roads intend to start in February.

11.2 Mayors Report – The Mayor reported that she was attending the RBL Annual meeting on Saturday 24th January. She was also attending the Floating Bridge working group and the Red Funnel regular meetings and would report back.

11.3 IWC Ward Councillor reports:

Cllr Love confirmed that the local elections for the island would be going ahead in May. He was looking into the works going on in New Barn Rd by Southern Water and would be meeting with them. He felt they needed to agree a strategy going forward in view of the impending Albany Green project. The work has begun on the Fire Station. If anyone has any concerns, please speak to Cllr Love.

Cllr Hendry stated there was no update on Saunders Way or the film studio

11.4 Town Councillor reports:

Cllr Pragnell gave an update on the Esplanade Shelter project he was leading on which was progressing well and. He explained what materials would be used and that apprentices at GKN were working on a design. He had managed to get a local company to lay the concrete base free of charge and was currently trying to get the demolition and disposal of the old shelter undertaken for free too.

Cllr Palin reported on the recent Red Funnel catchup meeting he had attended and said that it had been very positive. Hopefully this will continue. There were some flooding issues at Greenlands to deal with.

12/26 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The council agreed 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

Policy matters were discussed

Meeting closed at